



## Daily Report

Monday, 18 May 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 18 May 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:51 P.M., 18 May 2020). 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

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ Offences Against the Administration of Justice: Prosecutions

**Philip Davies:**

**[46013]**

To ask the Attorney General, how many people have been prosecuted for (a) perverting the course of justice and (b) wasting police time in relation to false allegations of domestic abuse in the last 12 months.

**Michael Ellis:**

The Crown Prosecution Service does not maintain a central record of prosecutions against domestic abuse complainants for perverting the course of justice and/or wasting police time. Obtaining this information would therefore require a manual review of individual case files which would incur a disproportionate cost.

The Crown Prosecution Service takes cases of domestic abuse extremely seriously and is determined to bring perpetrators to justice and ensure victims are protected from repeated offending. The Crown Prosecution Service has specific guidance for prosecutors on how to approach cases where a complaint alleging a false allegation is made. When reaching a prosecution decision Crown Prosecutors apply the two stage test in the Code for Crown Prosecutors. There must be sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction and it must be in the public interest for a prosecution to be brought.

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Arts: Finance

**Giles Watling:**

**[45434]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 2 May 2019 to Question 247159, what progress has been made on tackling the widespread theft of the UK creative industries intellectual property rights by the pirate network beoutQ.

**Giles Watling:**

**[45435]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that the intellectual property of sports bodies is protected from piracy; what plans he has to investigate the potential commercial effect of the activities of the Saudi-based pirate broadcaster beoutQ on the UK's creative industries; and if he will make a statement.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Officials in the Intellectual Property Office work closely with their counterparts in the Department for International Trade work, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and

the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on matters relating to the protection of intellectual property (IP) rights around the world.

Government Ministers and HM Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have raised this matter with the Saudi Arabian Government and will continue to make representations about any alleged broadcast infringement activities of UK IP.

We understand broadcasting piracy in Saudi Arabia, through the pirate operator beoutQ, has now stopped. This followed pressure by the UK, the US, European countries, and major sports rights holders.

The Government will continue to work with the UK creative industries to try to understand the commercial effect of the alleged piracy by beoutQ.

## ■ Beer: Small Businesses

**Alex Norris:**

**[45399]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether brewery businesses with fewer than 50 employees will be eligible for payments from the Discretionary Fund for local authorities announced on 2 May 2020.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has announced that up to £617 million is being made available to Local Authorities in England to allow them to provide discretionary grants as part of the suite of Business Support grants to support businesses and local economies across England.

The additional Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs but not liable for business rates or rates reliefs. We are asking local authorities to prioritise businesses in shared spaces, regular market traders, small charity properties that would meet the criteria for Small Business Rates Relief, and bed and breakfasts that pay council tax rather than business rates.

Local Authorities are responsible for defining precise eligibility for this fund and may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need, subject to those businesses meeting the specific eligibility criteria. Businesses seeking information should refer to their Local Authority for further information on their discretionary scheme. Businesses already in receipt of the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF), Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF) or Self-employed Income Support Scheme are not eligible.

Guidance, intended to support Local Authorities in administering the Discretionary Grants Fund, was published 13th May.

Guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding>

This will not replace existing guidance for the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) or the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF).

Guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-business-support-grant-funding-guidance-for-businesses>

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

**Catherine West:**

**[45347]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure private companies provide adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for their workforce; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of penalising firms who reject requests from workers for PPE.

**Paul Scully:**

We have provided guidance on how to work safely in a number of different working environments, such as offices, factories, and working outdoors – so that employers can use the guidance which is most relevant to them. Ensuring the safety of all workers is at the forefront of this guidance. Our approach is clinically led, based on the expert advice of the UK's Chief Medical Officer for England, the NHS and Public Health England. We are led by the evolving science in this work and as the scientific and medical advice changes, the guidance will be updated to reflect this.

Where workers already wear PPE for protection against non-COVID risks, such as dust, they should continue to wear this PPE.

The best way to manage the risk of COVID-19 is to implement robust social distancing measures and other physical controls. Outside of a clinical setting there is very little evidence to support the use of PPE and we would anticipate that an employer's risk assessment and risk management decisions would reflect that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited.

We recommend that PPE is not used in working environments where it would not normally be required. Good hygiene and minimising social contact remain the most effective way of managing the risks of COVID-19. However, if an employers' risk assessment does show that PPE is required, employers must provide this PPE free of charge to employees.

Employers should consult with unions and employees when carrying out their risk assessment to make sure their concerns can be taken into account. If employees continue to have concerns, they can raise them with union safety representatives, or ultimately with the organisation responsible for enforcement in their workplace, either the Health and Safety Executive or their local authority.

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

**[45378]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Prime Minister's statement of 10 May 2020, if he will (a) list the industries and workplaces that can now reopen and (b) publish guidance for those sectors and workplaces to follow.

**Paul Scully:**

The list of businesses which must remain closed at present are published online and updated when relevant at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance>.

However, in consultation with industry, we have also produced guidance to help ensure workplaces are as safe as possible if they are able to reopen. Our approach has not been split by specific business types or industries, but by the type of work environment instead, such as factories, outdoor work or offices. The guidance reminds employers that they have a duty under UK law to protect the health and safety of their workers and other people who might be affected by their business. This includes considering the risks that COVID-19 represents. The guidance is published online at [www.gov.uk/workingsafely](http://www.gov.uk/workingsafely).

As part of the plan for Phase 2 of reopening of the economy, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of five taskforces: pubs and restaurants; non-essential retail (including salons); recreation and leisure (including tourism, culture and heritage, libraries, entertainment and sport); places of worship; and international aviation. Officials are now working on the details of how the taskforces will operate.

**Preet Kaur Gill:****[45380]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Prime Minister's covid-19 announcement on 10 May 2020 and pursuant to the Answer of 27 April 2020 to Question 35028 on Companies: Coronavirus, whether the guidance for workers concerned about health and safety referred to in that Answer remains Government policy.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The advice provided in the response to Question 35028 is still correct.

We have been working closely with business bodies, trade unions, Public Health England, and workplace safety experts to agree clear guidance on how individuals can return to work safely.

On 11 May, we published further guidance on how businesses should introduce reasonably practicable measures, such as risk assessments, to mitigate the risks of Covid-19. This guidance includes details of how to raise concerns.

If a business is not operating in line with the Government's guidance, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or relevant local authority can take enforcement action. Actions include providing specific advice to employers, through to issuing enforcement notices.

## ■ Climate Change Convention

**Matthew Pennycook:**

[\[45345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent progress the Government has made on bringing forward a UK Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement 2015.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

As part of our incoming COP Presidency, in partnership with Italy, we are urging all countries to come forward with ambitious new NDCs which represent their highest possible ambition. The UK will play its part and we are preparing to come forward with an enhanced NDC well ahead of COP26.

## ■ Construction: Coronavirus

**Rushanara Ali:**

[\[45219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to (a) reduce non-essential construction work (b) help ensure social distancing is observed on building sites during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Construction workers play a crucial role in supporting our public services, maintaining the nation's infrastructure, and providing safe, decent homes for people to live in. Therefore, the Government has stated that construction work can continue where it can take place safely.

In order to help ensure that it is safe for construction workers to operate in their workplace, the Government has worked with Public Health England (PHE) to develop sector-specific guidance on social distancing. We have also worked with the Construction Leadership Council to develop Site Operating Procedures, which provide practical advice to those seeking to implement the guidance.

The Health and Safety Executive has the powers to take enforcement action if a site is not consistently implementing the measures set out by PHE.

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

[\[45404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that construction work in urban areas does not increase respiratory risks to shielded people in those areas.

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

[\[45406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what reports he has received of brick dust affecting the respiratory functioning of people located near to construction sites during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Since the start of the Covid-19 outbreak, the Government has emphasised that people's health is the top priority. We have been clear that construction work can continue in England if it is undertaken in a manner consistent with the guidelines

issued by Public Health England. We have also published bespoke guidance to help those who work in outdoor environments, including construction workers, to understand how to work safely at this time.

The Health and Safety Executive has set out that dust from construction work does not usually pose a health risk to members of the public if the exposure is low and the duration is short. If high exposure and longer duration is likely, controls have been adopted to protect the workforce on a construction site; these are also likely to reduce the risk to members of the public. These controls include the use of low-dust products, as well as the use of water suppression or exhaust ventilation.

The Government is not aware of specific instances of brick dust affecting the respiratory functioning of people located near to construction sites during the Covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

**[45405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that building sites adhere to social distancing regulations during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Paul Scully:**

The health and safety of construction workers is a priority for the Government. To help ensure that it is safe for construction workers to operate in their workplace, the Government has worked with Public Health England (PHE) to develop sector-specific guidance on social distancing, and has also worked with the Construction Leadership Council to develop Site Operating Procedures (SOP), which provide practical advice to those seeking to implement the guidance.

The Health and Safety Executive has the powers to take enforcement action if a site is not consistently implementing the measures set out by PHE.

## ■ Coronavirus

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[45177]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has made to ensure a frictionless route to market for (a) covid-19 tests produced in the UK and (b) an approved vaccine for covid-19.

**Amanda Solloway:**

There is a clear and unprecedented demand for testing supplies and companies, including UK manufacturers, are ramping up their capacity as quickly as possible. We are working closely with industry to obtain maximum possible supplies for the UK and with the scientific community to explore innovative new options for test kits.

Where new testing solutions are developed, we are keen to ensure we are able to utilise them as soon as possible and will be working with the appropriate industry bodies, the UK diagnostics industry and regulators like the MHRA to ensure the most effective products being adopted meet our criteria for use.

The Government has established a Vaccines Taskforce to coordinate and make the most of all the work going on across government, academia and industry to accelerate the development and manufacture of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Work is proceeding at pace to ensure that the UK has capacity to deliver across different vaccine types whilst they are still under development. We will be carefully considering how we go from a newly manufactured and licenced vaccine, to distributing this to those who need it once it becomes available. We are co-ordinating closely with partners across the health and social care system.

## ■ **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

**Owen Thompson:**

**[46108]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what feedback the Government has received on the effectiveness of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme; and from whom that feedback has been received.

**Paul Scully:**

As of 10 May, over £6 billion worth of loans have been issued under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to almost 36,000 businesses.

Since the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme was launched, Government has listened to feedback from stakeholders and made changes to ensure that loans are processed as quickly as possible to allow businesses to get the support they need. These changes include:

- Extending the scheme so that all viable small businesses affected by Covid-19 are eligible;
- Removing previous restrictions on the following groups to enable them to access the CBILS, subject to other eligibility criteria being met: Employer, professional, religious or political membership organisations and trade unions;
- Removing the ability for lenders to ask for personal guarantees for loans under £250,000, and reducing the personal guarantee for loans over £250,000 to 20% of the outstanding balance after recoveries;
- Introducing technical changes to ensure that applications will be processed faster;
- Removing the forward-looking viability test; and
- Removing the per lender portfolio cap.

Responding to concerns from larger businesses that were not eligible for the existing Government-backed loans, on 3 April, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the launch of the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLIBS) to support viable businesses with a turnover of above £45 million. Following feedback from businesses, banks and industry groups, the turnover cap was removed from the CLBILS.

We have also responded to feedback from smaller businesses that were struggling to access funding as quickly as they needed by introducing the Bounce Back Loan

Scheme. This allows businesses to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000. To apply for the scheme businesses complete a short, simple, online application form, meaning that applications are submitted and processed rapidly, and businesses can access loans within a matter of days.

In May, the Government will launch the Future Fund which will provide between £125,000 and £5 million to businesses that might be reliant on equity investment and are therefore unable to access the current loan schemes.

The Government continues to work with the British Business Bank, HM Treasury and lenders to assess how effectively these schemes are working.

**Owen Thompson:**

**[46109]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department's plans to publish more comprehensive Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme data will include an analysis of the most prevalent reasons for businesses' applications to that scheme being rejected.

**Paul Scully:**

In order to minimise administrative burden and therefore facilitate the issuing of as many loans as possible, the British Business Bank's system only gathers data from lenders when loans are offered and drawn. Decisions on whether to capture information relating to rejected loans are at the discretion of the lender.

The Government continues to work with the British Business Bank, and the lenders on providing transparent and regular data publication going forward.

## ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

**Munira Wilson:**

**[46805]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether an agency worker on a Contract for Services will continue to accrue holiday pay whilst they are not working due to being furloughed; and whether an employer is entitled to claim accrued holiday pay when calculating their employee's wage under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Paul Scully:**

Employment rights remain unchanged under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). Therefore, all workers', including agency workers on a Contract for Services, right to holiday accrues to the extent and in the same way it did prior to being placed on to furlough under the CJRS, as provided by the individual's statutory and contractual rights.

Employers are able to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme grant to cover wages paid to their workers, up to 80% of the worker's usual pay. This includes holiday pay, but where holiday pay owed exceeds the amount in the grant, the employer is required to make up the difference.

Further guidance to help employers manage holiday pay during Coronavirus is available on GOV.UK.

## ■ Engineers: Coronavirus

**Darren Jones:**

**[45393]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy what steps the Health and Safety Executive is taking to (a) support engineer surveyors to inspect sites while maintaining social distancing and (b) provide engineer surveyors with personal protective equipment.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

In order to help ensure that workplaces are safe for workers in the construction sector, the Government has worked with Public Health England (PHE), business representatives, and trade unions to develop guidance on safer working. Measures include undertaking risk assessments and implementing social distancing.

The Government has also worked with the Construction Leadership Council to develop Site Operating Procedures, which provide practical advice to those seeking to implement this guidance on construction sites.

The UK does not currently advise that face masks should be used outside of care settings, on public transport, and in some shops. However, PHE is continually reviewing its guidance in line with emerging evidence.

## ■ Exercise: Coronavirus

**Theresa Villiers:**

**[45030]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Prime Minister's covid-19 announcement on 10 May 2020, whether personal trainers are permitted to meet a single client in a park to undertake a personal training session.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has published guidance to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely during the coronavirus pandemic. If businesses are not required to close at this time, they can use this guidance to consider how they can operate to keep employees and customers safe.

Businesses should carry out a risk assessment to identify sensible measures to control risk in the workplace, wherever that might be. General guidance on how to complete risk assessments is available on the Health and Safety Executive website, and the guidance we published on 11 May sets out the steps employers should consider in relation to the risks of COVID-19. The guidance can be accessed at [www.gov.uk/workingsafely](http://www.gov.uk/workingsafely).

## ■ Holiday Leave: Pay

**Ben Lake:**

**[46131]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether (a) temporary and (b) agency workers will accrue holiday pay while on furlough; whether agencies and umbrella companies are able to reclaim holiday pay through the furlough

grant; what steps companies can take to support their workers who come from agencies and umbrella companies if those agency or umbrella companies do not agree to furlough employees.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has been clear that employment rights remain unchanged under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). Therefore, all workers', including agency and temporary workers', right to holiday accrues to the extent and in the same way it did prior to being placed on to furlough under the CJRS, as provided by the individual's statutory and contractual rights.

Employers are able to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme grant to cover wages paid to their workers, up to 80% of the worker's usual pay. This includes holiday pay, but where holiday pay owed exceeds the amount in the grant, the employer is required to make up the difference.

Further guidance to help employers manage holiday pay during Coronavirus is available on gov.uk.

In this unprecedented time, we would urge employers and agencies to take socially responsible decisions and listen to the concerns of their workforce. Employers and workers, including agency workers, should come to a pragmatic agreement about these arrangements. We have been clear that employers should carefully consider the guidance.

However, access to the scheme is not an employment right and it is up to the employer to decide whom to furlough.

■ **Industrial Health and Safety**

**Kate Osborne:**

[\[46172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with (a) employers and (b) trade unions on the health and safety of workers returning to work.

**Paul Scully:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy worked with a wide range of stakeholders to draft the guidance on safe return to work, as well as Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive.

The Secretary of State chaired seven roundtables and held other discussions involving employers, employees, unions, employer representative organisations and industry bodies. Additionally, there was extensive official-level engagement with those stakeholders as well as other Government department officials.

In all, the Department engaged in over 1000 one-to-one and group discussions. We made drafts of the guidance available to stakeholders to gather direct feedback, and we received over 750 responses to that consultation process. The final guidance reflects that incredible collective effort.

## ■ Life Sciences: Coronavirus

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[46058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to make changes to the Life Sciences Sector Deal to reflect priorities arising from the covid 19 outbreak.

**Amanda Solloway:**

As shown in the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy Update earlier this year, the two Life Sciences Sector Deals transform a significant part of the industry-led Life Sciences Industrial Strategy into government policy. The considerable government and industry investment in the Sector Deals was secured through extensive collaboration between government and the sector, working together strategically to enhance the attractiveness of the UK

Government is committed to continuing to work with the sector, including through the Life Sciences Council (a partnership between Government and industry) to deliver on the vision of the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy and the commitment to make the UK the leading global hub for life sciences.

Effective collaboration between the Life Sciences sector and government is vital to the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Protecting the health and safety of the British public is, and must always be, our number one priority.

## ■ New Businesses: Coronavirus

**Kate Osborne:**

[\[45488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support he plans to provide to newly formed businesses that are not eligible for his Department's covid-19 support schemes.

**Paul Scully:**

Government continues to monitor the Covid-19 schemes and is providing support across business for VAT and tax deferrals; and all business can reach out to their lenders and landlords for payment holidays during the Covid crisis.

Government is working with lenders to ensure that businesses can access finance. Depending on their eligibility newly formed businesses may be eligible for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) or Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs).

Businesses are eligible for the CBILS if they are UK-based in their activity, with annual turnover of no more than £45m. For start-ups, or SMEs which have traded for less than 12 months, the lender should estimate turnover based upon the SME's forecasted turnover for the first 12 months of trading.

Businesses are eligible for the BBLs if they are UK-based in their activity, were established on or before 1 March 2020 and have been negatively affected by Coronavirus.

All businesses in England including your constituency, can continue to access support through our GOV.UK website, the Business Support Helpline (0300 456 3565), and through their Local Growth Hubs.

#### ■ **Parental Leave: Coronavirus**

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[45426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support his Department provides to workers coming to the end of their statutory (a) maternity and (b) paternity entitlement on returning to work during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Paul Scully:**

Employees who end their statutory maternity or paternity entitlement and return to work during the COVID-19 outbreak have the same rights as before.

All employees on family-related leave (including Maternity Leave, Adoption Leave, Shared Parental Leave, Paternity Leave and Parental Bereavement Leave) have a right to return to the same job if they have been off work for 26 weeks or less and a right to return to the same, or a similar job, if they have been off work for more than 26 weeks. This has not changed.

For those on Maternity Leave, the normal redundancy protections apply. Maternity discrimination in the workplace is unlawful and there are clear regulations in place which every employer must follow.

The Government is committed to protecting jobs and has provided unprecedented support to employers to retain their employees and protect the UK economy through implementing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Employees returning from family-related leave can be furloughed if they and their employer agree to this.

In terms of what support employees can expect if they are returning to the workplace, the Government is working to ensure that all workers have the confidence they need to go back to work. New 'COVID-19 secure' guidelines are available to UK employers to help them ensure workplaces are as safe as possible. The guidelines have been developed with input from a range of stakeholders, including Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

#### ■ **Personal Care Services: Coronavirus**

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[45031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Prime Minister's covid-19 announcement on 10 May 2020, on what date the Government plans to permit the re-opening of (a) hairdressing and (b) beauty salons.

**Paul Scully:**

On 11<sup>th</sup> May we published our COVID-19 recovery strategy, which sets out a roadmap to a phased recovery. Over the coming months, the Government will introduce a range of adjustments to current social distancing controls, timing these carefully according to both the current spread of the virus and the Government's

ability to ensure safety. Each step may involve adding new adjustments to the existing restrictions or taking some adjustments further.

The ambition at step three of the roadmap is to open at least some of the remaining businesses and premises that have been required to close, including personal care (such as hairdressers and beauty salons), and we will work with the sector to develop safe ways for them to open at the earliest point at which it is safe to do so. The Government's current planning assumption is that this step will be no earlier than 4 July.

## ■ **Postal Services: Coronavirus**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[45176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the personal protective equipment requirements of postal workers providing key services during the covid-19 lockdown period.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is clear that we will support people in work during the COVID-19 outbreak. We are regularly engaging with industry stakeholders to ensure they are well prepared and that their operations remain in line with the latest health guidance.

Safety of workers is the number one priority for the Government. Public Health England advice remains that personal protective equipment is not necessary in the workplace outside clinical settings or where the Health and Safety Executive and employer risk assessments do not suggest it is necessary.

Postal operators should make sure they put appropriate measures in place to follow the legal obligations set out under Health and Safety legislation to protect their staff at work. Postal workers are advised to continue to follow the advice of their employers and make sensible workplace adjustments.

## ■ **Small Business Grant Fund**

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[46155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that wedding venue operators with rateable values above the cap for the Small Business Grant Fund have access to other covid-19 related grant funding.

**Paul Scully:**

The Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund are part of Government's unprecedented package of support for businesses to help with their ongoing business costs in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19.

Businesses that were in receipt of Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief as of 11 March 2020 will be eligible for the Small Business Grants Fund. Under the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grants Fund, businesses that would have been in receipt of the Expanded Retail Discount Scheme with properties that have a rateable

value of under £51,000 are eligible for cash grants of up to £25,000 per property. Businesses with a rateable value of £51,000 or over are not eligible for this scheme.

Businesses which are not eligible for the grant schemes should be able to benefit from other measures, including:

- An option to defer VAT payments by up to twelve months;
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, now extended to cover all businesses including those which would be able to access commercial credit;
- The Bounce Back Loan scheme, which will ensure that small and micro businesses can quickly access loans of up to £50,000 which are 100% guaranteed by the Government;
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, to support businesses with their wage bills;
- The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, to provide support to the self-employed.

Businesses can search for available support via the business support finder tool at: <https://www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder>.

## ■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

**Sir Roger Gale:**

**[44946]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to announce details of the discretionary local business grant scheme.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has announced that up to £617 million is being made available to Local Authorities in England to allow them to provide discretionary grants as part of the suite of Business Support grants supporting businesses and local economies across England.

Guidance, intended to support Local Authorities in administering the Discretionary Grants Fund, was published 13th May.

Guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding>

This will not replace existing guidance for the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) or the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF).

Guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-business-support-grant-funding-guidance-for-businesses>

The additional Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs but not liable for business rates or rates reliefs. We are asking local authorities to prioritise businesses in shared spaces, regular market traders, small charity properties that would meet the criteria

for Small Business Rates Relief, and bed and breakfasts that pay council tax rather than business rates.

Local Authorities are responsible for defining precise eligibility for this fund and may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need, subject to those businesses meeting the specific eligibility criteria. Businesses seeking information should refer to their Local Authority for further information on their discretionary scheme. Businesses already in receipt of the SBGF, RHLGF or Self-employed Income Support Scheme are not eligible.

**Mr Clive Betts:**

**[46545]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the additional funding announced by the Government on 2 May 2020 for local authorities to provide discretionary business grants, how the amount of funding available to each local authority has been calculated; and what guidance has been issued to local authorities on how that additional funding should be spent.

**Paul Scully:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy announced that up to £617 million is being made available to Local Authorities in England under the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF). This is in addition to the £12.33 billion funding previously announced for the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF).

The data return from Local Authorities of Monday 4th May 2020, which includes each Local Authority's assessment of eligible hereditaments for the Small Business Grants Fund (SMGF) and Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF), is used as the baseline for calculating the allocation of Discretionary Grant Funds for each Local Authority. The allocation for each local authority is 5% on top of their estimated spend of the Small Business Grants Fund (SMGF) and Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF). All 314 Local Authorities administering the scheme will receive a letter this week setting out their guaranteed minimum allocation, giving them confidence to set up their local schemes. If a Local Authority subsequently identifies and is able to fund more businesses from the Small Business Grants and/or Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund than they identified in their data return of the 4<sup>th</sup> May, we will increase their 5% allocation.

Guidance, intended to support Local Authorities in administering the Discretionary Grants Fund, was published 13<sup>th</sup> May.

Guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding>.

This will not replace existing guidance for the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) or the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF).

Guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-business-support-grant-funding-guidance-for-businesses>.

## ■ Small Businesses: Social Distancing

**Barbara Keeley:**

**[46021]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Government's Covid-19 recovery strategy published on 11 May 2020, what funding the Government will provide to small businesses to enable them to comply with the Covid-19 secure guidelines.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has put in place a package of support for businesses of all sizes, including small businesses. This includes guidance developed with industry experts, unions, business organisations, local Government, and other stakeholders to get people back to work safely. It helps organisations meet their obligations under health and safety law and employers are responsible for taking all reasonably practical steps to address health and safety risks.

The small business grant fund has been created, specifically for hereditaments in England that were eligible for relief on 11 March under the small business rates relief (SBRR) fund. The funding is to support small and rural businesses which are ratepayers on a property, as these businesses are more likely to have ongoing fixed costs during this period. Unfortunately, businesses that were not eligible for percentage SBRR relief on 11 March are excluded.

Nevertheless, there are other new measures to provide support to those businesses, including Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme; deferral of the next quarter of back-payments for firms until the end of June, representing a £30 billion injection into the economy; and a new fast-track finance scheme providing loans with a 100% government guarantee. In addition, there is also the bounce-back loan scheme, which will ensure that the smallest businesses can access loans in a matter of days. We are working currently with local authorities to try to make sure that this support is delivered as fast as possible.

## ■ Social Distancing: Coronavirus

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[45229]**

To the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance the Health and Safety Executive has issued to employers on the duty of care they have to employees who are self-isolating because they care for or live with someone who is shielding.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has introduced important social distancing measures for all types of businesses to consider in order to minimise the risk of transmission in the workplace. The Government has been clear that it is vital that all employers follow this guidance, which is clinically led and based on expert advice.

The Government has stated that vulnerable people who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) need to be particularly stringent in

following social distancing measures. Additionally, the government guidance sets out that members of staff who are vulnerable or extremely vulnerable, as well as individuals whom they live with, should be supported by their employers as they follow the required social distancing and shielding measures. Employers should help these individuals work from home if possible.

If clinically vulnerable people cannot work from home, they should be offered the safest available on-site roles, staying 2m away from others wherever possible. If they have to spend time within 2m of other people, employers need to carefully assess whether this involves an acceptable level of risk.

If a business is not operating in line with the government guidance, there is a role for the relevant health and safety enforcing authority – the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or a Local Authority. Where the enforcing authority identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks – for example, employers not taking appropriate action to socially distance or ensure workers in the shielded category can follow the NHS advice to self-isolate for the period specified – the enforcing authority will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. These actions include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements with the guidance.

#### ■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

**Andrew Percy:**

[\[45113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that airlines and travel companies provide customers with full refunds for cancelled flights and holidays.

**Paul Scully:**

Package travel agencies are required to comply with The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018, which protect consumers who have bought package holidays. Consumers are entitled to a refund if forced to cancel a package holiday due to unavoidable and extraordinary circumstances, which should be issued within 14 days, depending on the nature of the contract in place. Further information on the rights and responsibilities of consumers and businesses was published on 30 April by the Competition and Markets Authority who have also set up a covid-19 taskforce for consumers to register complaints.

**Patricia Gibson:**

[\[45297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support consumers who are unlawfully refused refunds from travel companies.

**Paul Scully:**

Package travel agencies are required to comply with The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018, which protect consumers who have bought package holidays. Consumers are entitled to a refund if forced to cancel a package

holiday due to unavoidable and extraordinary circumstances, which should be issued within 14 days, depending on the nature of the contract in place. BEIS officials have held regular discussions with travel and tourism sector representatives, travel businesses and consumer advocacy bodies to assess the impact of cancellations made in light of the covid-19 outbreak. Further information on the rights and responsibilities of consumers and businesses was published on 30 April by the Competition and Markets Authority who have also set up a covid-19 taskforce for consumers to register complaints.

**Patricia Gibson:**

[\[45298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department is having with travel companies which are unlawfully refusing to refund the cost of holidays to consumers.

**Paul Scully:**

Package travel agencies are required to comply with The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018, which protect consumers who have bought package holidays. Consumers are entitled to a refund if forced to cancel a package holiday due to unavoidable and extraordinary circumstances, which should be issued within 14 days, depending on the nature of the contract in place. Businesses are undoubtedly facing a significant and complex operational task in engaging with all their customers on refunds. The Government is working to find a balanced and a coordinated solution to the difficulties that have arisen as a result of covid-19 that supports the sector while protecting consumer rights.

## ■ Utilities: Fees and Charges

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[45174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he taking to ensure people paying for utilities on a pay as you go basis are not charged higher tariffs compared to people who pay through regular billing during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Consumers who pay for their energy on a pay as you go basis are protected by the Pre-payment Meter Price Cap which came into force on 1 April 2017. This cap applies to prepayment meter consumers on a non-fixed deal and without an interoperable smart meter and is set so as to ensure that prices are fair. Energy suppliers can price to the level of the cap or below it but cannot charge more. Ofgem are monitoring the energy market closely and will adjust the Prepayment Meter Cap to reflect changes in the underlying factors.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Cabinet Office: Directors**

**Douglas Chapman:** [46687]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the annual salary is of each of his Department's Non-Executive Board Members.

**Douglas Chapman:** [46688]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people applied for the four new Non-Executive Board positions and what the criteria was for selecting the successful candidates.

**Douglas Chapman:** [46689]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether any of the Non-Executive Board members have current contracts with any (a) Government Departments, (b) universities, (c) local authorities and (d) publicly funded NHS organisations in the UK; and if he will publish an annually updated register of interests for all Non-Executive Board members.

**Chloe Smith:**

Details of remuneration for Cabinet Office's Non-Executive Board Members is available in the Annual Report and Accounts, the latest edition of which can be found [here](#). The register of interests for the new Board Members will be published shortly. The roles were advertised publicly with the job description posted on the [HM Government Public Appointments](#) and on [GOV.UK](#). 163 candidates applied for these positions.

**■ Coronavirus: Death**

**Munira Wilson:** [46165]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of publishing the total number of UK deaths alongside the daily number of covid-19 related deaths.

**Chloe Smith:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA Response [PQ46165.pdf]

**■ Coronavirus: Disability**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:** [45274]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will ensure that all key information and communications on covid-19 are (a) accessible to disabled people and (b) available in a range of formats.

**Chloe Smith:**

Accessibility of public information on Covid-19 is a high priority for the Government. We have worked to ensure that key health advice like detailed social distancing guidance is available in alternative formats including large print, British Sign Language, braille in English and Welsh and audio description.

We ensure that we publish guidance on how to access a range of formats on our website through the gov.uk accessibility statement. We are continually reviewing our communications to ensure they are as accessible as possible.

**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**

**Daisy Cooper:** [45460]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will place in the Library the criteria which the Government used to select which publishers would be included in the All in, All together advertising campaign.

**Daisy Cooper:** [45534]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will place in the Library a list of the publishers who have participated in the All in, All together advertising campaign to date.

**Daisy Cooper:** [45535]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the budget is for the All in, All together advertising campaign; how much has been spent to date; and if he will place in the Library the amount agreed to be paid to each recipient publisher.

**Chloe Smith:**

The Government has developed a strong national campaign to provide information and reassurance to the public about COVID-19. As part of this, we have utilised advertising in over 600 national, regional and local titles across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A list of participating publishers will be placed in the Commons Library.

As with any media planning approach, titles are selected on their ability to engage with audiences at a national, regional and local level.

Cabinet Office publishes expenditure, including on public information campaigns, on a rolling monthly basis on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) as part of routine government transparency arrangements.

**■ Coronavirus: Wales**

**Hywel Williams:** [46564]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 4 May 2020 to Question 40518 on Coronavirus: Wales, when his Department plans to publish disaggregated data on Government expenditure as at May 2020 on the placing of advertisements in (a) national Welsh media, (b) local and regional Welsh media and (c) Welsh language media since the start of the covid-19 public information campaign.

**Chloe Smith:**

This is a national campaign, taking place on multiple channels in all four nations of the UK. We will publish expenditure on the whole campaign on a rolling monthly basis on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) as part of routine government transparency arrangements.

**■ Debt Collection****Damian Hinds:****[41977]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that debt collection by public sector organisations meets the standard expected of firms regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

**Damian Hinds:****[41978]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the May 2019 Fairness Group Joint Public Statement, what progress he has made in applying Fairness Principles to government debt management.

**Chloe Smith:**

The government recognises the importance of providing the right support for people who are vulnerable or in financial hardship during the debt recovery process. This position was emphasised by the joint public statement, drafted in partnership with the debt advice sector and other consumer groups.

The government's Fairness Principles are aligned with the Financial Conduct Authority's Treating Customers Fairly Principles. These provide a best practice framework that has been embedded into the Government Debt Strategy and the Government Debt Standard.

Debt management in local government is undertaken in line with specific legislation. When a customer is identified as being vulnerable, there is support available, tailored to individual circumstances. This includes longer repayment terms and consideration of payment holidays. Government has a duty to balance this against the need to recover money owed to taxpayers.

**■ Debts****Damian Hinds:****[41976]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the finding by the Centre for Social Justice in its report entitled Collecting dust, published in April 2020, that the personal debt owed to the Government and public bodies under the remit of his Department is £13.5 billion.

**Chloe Smith:**

We welcome the Centre for Social Justice's report, which highlights that progress has been made in government debt management and suggests further areas for improvement. The Centre for Social Justice report notes the work of the government Fairness Group, the Breathing Space policy and reduction in the rate of benefit deductions as recent advances.

The Government Debt Management Function will be launching a Call for Evidence in due course to gather views on the current debt management approach.

I would encourage the Centre for Social Justice, along with other interested parties to also submit evidence through the Call for Evidence.

## CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

### ■ Churches: Coronavirus

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[45018\]](#)

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is planning to take to allow it to reopen churches as soon as possible while limiting the risk of spreading covid-19.

**Andrew Selous:**

*[Holding answer 15 May 2020]:* The Church of England is committed to the reopening of buildings in a phased way, in accordance with the rules, restrictions and timetable established by Government. On 5 th May the House of Bishops issued guidance, which can be seen here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/house-bishops-backs-phased-approach-revising-access-church-buildings>

We are working with Government and with representatives of the heritage planning sector to assess the need for building adaptations related to public safety in our cathedral and church buildings, and in particular temporary additions or changes that might need to be made to enable social distancing and proper hygiene. We are committed to enabling our churches and cathedrals to make such changes as might be needed to allow them to reopen safely.

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[45480\]](#)

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps is the Government taking to work with churches and dioceses to ensure the safe opening of churches for religious worship.

**Andrew Selous:**

*[Holding answer 15 May 2020]:* The Church of England is committed to the reopening of buildings in a phased way, in accordance with the rules, restrictions and timetable established by Government. On 5 th May the House of Bishops issued guidance, which can be seen here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/house-bishops-backs-phased-approach-revising-access-church-buildings>

We are working with Government and with representatives of the heritage planning sector to assess the need for building adaptations related to public safety in our cathedral and church buildings, and in particular temporary additions or changes that might need to be made to enable social distancing and proper hygiene. We are

committed to enabling our churches and cathedrals to make such changes as might be needed to allow them to reopen safely.

**Mark Pritchard:**

[46581]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what discussions he has had with the Diocese of Hereford on lost revenues resulting from the closure of places of worship during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Andrew Selous:**

The Church Commissioners and National Church Institutions are in discussions with dioceses during this challenging period, including on the evolving financial impact. A series of structured interviews have been held with every diocese, including with the Diocese of Hereford at the end of April. Though too early for detailed conclusions, it was clear that the financial challenges will be significant.

The Church announced a national package of financial support for dioceses on 27 March, providing funds to support liquidity in dioceses where this was needed, with a further announcement following on 14 May. See:

<https://mailchi.mp/churchofengland.org/update-financial-support-for-dioceses-and-cathedrals-in-light-of-the-coronavirus?e=fbaf3379f3>

We are continuing to consider how best dioceses can be further supported in terms of both immediate needs, and in strengthening their long-term missional health and financial sustainability

**Mark Pritchard:**

[46582]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what discussions he has had with the Diocese of Lichfield on lost revenues resulting from the closure of places of worship during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Andrew Selous:**

The Church Commissioners and National Church Institutions are in discussions with dioceses during this challenging period, including on the evolving financial impact. A series of structured interviews have been held with every diocese, including with the Diocese of Lichfield at the beginning of May. Though too early for detailed conclusions, it was clear that the financial challenges will be significant.

The Church announced a national package of financial support for dioceses on 27 March, providing funds to support liquidity in dioceses where this was needed, with a further announcement following on 14 May. See:

<https://mailchi.mp/churchofengland.org/update-financial-support-for-dioceses-and-cathedrals-in-light-of-the-coronavirus?e=fbaf3379f3>

We are continuing to consider how best dioceses can be further supported in terms of both immediate needs, and in strengthening their long-term missional health and financial sustainability

**DEFENCE****■ Armed Forces Day**

**Mr Robert Goodwill:** [\[45067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has in place to reschedule the national Armed Forces day 2020 event.

**James Heappey:**

The Ministry of Defence has no plans to reschedule Armed Forces Day/Week in 2020. This is a timely opportunity to pay tribute to all our Armed Forces at a time of particular challenge.

Whilst the majority of Armed Forces Day events have been cancelled, we will still be encouraging the nation to show their support for our Armed Forces from their homes on 27 June.

Although there can be no National Event in Scarborough this year, I hope that its people will continue to support the day, albeit not as originally planned. I am also pleased to announce that Scarborough will be the venue for the Armed Forces Day National Event in 2021.

**■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus**

**Dr Julian Lewis:** [\[45949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the preparedness of UK (a) nuclear and (b) conventional forces to deter and respond respectively to military threats and aggressive behaviour; and whether an increase in (i) disinformation campaigns and (ii) aggressive behaviour by (A) Russia, (B) China, (C) Iran and (D) North Korea has been observed since the onset of the pandemic.

**James Heappey:**

It is taking longer than expected to respond to the hon. Member's question, therefore I will write to him shortly.

**John Healey:** [\[46546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many military personnel have been tested for covid-19; and of those how many have tested (a) positive and (b) negative.

**James Heappey:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is using a range of measures, including testing, to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 to its personnel and staff.

Defence personnel are included within the national testing programme established by Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the National Health Service, and testing has been incorporated into Defence's wider strategy of risk-reduction measures to minimise the potential risk to personnel deploying overseas.

Figures of Armed Forces personnel who have been tested positive for COVID-19 or have been hospitalised are included within the overall DHSC figures. The MOD does not routinely publish the number of tests administered to Defence personnel nor the number of positive and negative cases of COVID-19 within its workforce.

#### ■ **Armed Forces: Recruitment**

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

**[46145]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions has he had with senior representatives of Capita on a strategy for reintroducing face to face recruitment for the armed forces after the covid-19 outbreak.

**James Heappey:**

As part of the Recruiting Partnering Project contract the Army has with Capita, plans to restart face to face recruitment are progressing, with Assessment Centres due to open again in June. Recruitment processes are being reviewed and improved to incorporate lessons learned from recent virtual operations including compliance with Public Health England guidance.

Until then, candidates applying to join the Army can continue to progress much of their application online, with virtual support provided by both military and Capita recruiters.

Encouragingly, the number of Regular soldier applications to join the Army were at their highest in six years for the month of March.

#### ■ **Armed Forces: Sexual Offences**

**Caroline Nokes:**

**[R] [46631]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Office of Veterans' Affairs understands the potential effects of sexual assault and harassment on serving armed forces' personnel's (a) physical health and (b) emotional and psychological well-being.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The Ministry of Defence is absolutely clear there is no place for sexual offending in the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces are committed to addressing the issues of sexual assault and harassment through a range of actions, including awareness campaigns and training presentations around sexual consent.

We recognise the great courage it takes to come forward and report a sexual offence. Personnel who come forward can have full confidence that all allegations are thoroughly investigated; Commanding Officers must always refer any allegation of rape and sexual assault, or any other offence which may have a sexual element, to the Service Police. Anyone found to fall short of the Services' high standards or to have committed an offence is dealt with appropriately, up to and including imprisonment and dismissal from service.

The Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) was created as part of the Cabinet Office to be the voice for veterans across Whitehall. It is committed to understanding the experiences of all Armed Forces personnel and how their time in service might impact on their life as a veteran. Defence Ministers and officials maintain a regular and ongoing dialogue with the OVA, Department for Health and Social Care and third sector partners to ensure that we share best practice and the latest understanding of the most effective ways to address the health and wellbeing issues faced by the Armed Forces community, both serving and veteran.

### ■ Armed Forces: Standards

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[46537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the projected capabilities of the armed forces are adequate to address future expected threats to national security over the next 10 years.

**James Heappey:**

The Ministry of Defence has rigorous processes to assure, test and develop the capabilities and force structure that we have to make sure that they are robust against current and future threats. But we are not complacent, the threat picture is evolving quickly. Therefore, we are continuing with these processes to make sure our plans are delivering the right capability to keep the country safe now and in decades to come.

### ■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement

**John Healey:** [\[46553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress he has made on the procurement of the Fleet Solid Support ships.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my noble Friend, the Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence (Baroness Goldie of Bishopton), on 10 March 2020 to Question HL2182 in the House of Lords.

#### **Attachments:**

1. HL2182 - Royal Fleet Auxilliary [HL2182 - Royal Fleet Auxillary (2).docx]

### ■ Iraq: Cluster Munitions

**Sam Tarry:** [\[45504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which munitions the RAF dropped on Iraq in April 2020; what the cost of each munition was; how many enemy combatants were killed from those munitions; whether and (d) whether any death or injury was caused to civilians from those munitions.

**James Heappey:**

In April 2020, fourteen Paveway IV and one GBU-12 munitions were released in Iraq by the RAF. The weapon release mission reports indicate an estimate of three enemy killed in action. There are no reports of civilian casualties associated with the weapon release events.

Missile procurement costs are dependent on the quantity of missiles being procured, customer priorities and market conditions at the time. Specific cost details are commercially sensitive and therefore are not disclosed by the Ministry of Defence.

**■ Navy: Fisheries****Dr Julian Lewis:**[\[46517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the Royal Navy vessels (a) currently available and (b) which will be made available for fishery protection at the end of the transition period; and whether any further role is planned for HMS Clyde.

**James Heappey:**

The Royal Navy does not maintain vessels exclusively employed for fishery protection activities; however, it does have and operate three River Class Offshore Patrol Vessels currently in UK waters, that conduct fishery patrol tasking alongside their other Defence tasks. HMS MERSEY, TYNE and SEVERN are, and will continue to be, used to fulfil the Royal Navy's commitments under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Navy and the Marine Management Organisation. In addition, the Royal Navy maintains a number of high readiness forces in UK waters that could be called upon to assist if requested.

HMS CLYDE was operated by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) under lease from BAE Systems. This arrangement ended at the end of March 2020, and the ship was returned to the company. The MOD has no plans for a further role for HMS CLYDE.

**■ Reserve Forces****Mr Stephen Morgan:**[\[46142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment has he made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of armed forces reservists.

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**[\[46143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment has he made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on morale among armed forces reservists.

**James Heappey:**

With regard to the operational capability of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has robust processes and measures in place to conduct capability assessment, compare data sets and metrics, and identify trends in order to inform decisions. These processes have been dynamically and routinely used throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to help protect and prioritise critical and essential outputs, such as our permanent tasks.

To aid in delivery of these, non-essential commitments and activity has been minimised, postponed or cancelled. The MOD continues to assess which essential commitments and activity have required to protect all priority outputs, adapting accordingly.

Recruitment, retention, and morale of Reserve Forces is the purview of the single Services and therefore there will be differences in approaches.

Armed Forces recruitment, including for Reserves, continues online while in-person interviews and assessments have been paused in order to comply with current health and safety guidelines. At this early stage of the pandemic we are unable to make any firm pronouncement on trends or conclusions. A fuller assessment will only be possible much later in the year.

At this stage there is no evidence of a significant downturn in the recruitment of Reserve Forces, with the operational capability of the UK Armed Forces being as robust as ever, bolstered by augmentation in the form of our committed and highly skilled Reservists.

Far from seeing a retention issue, we have seen the re-engagement of many Reservists whilst morale remains high, evidenced by significant numbers of Reserve personnel both currently mobilised and on stand-by for future requirements. COVID-19 has actually proved a galvanising factor in giving Reservists the opportunity to step forward to support the nation in a time of need.

The Maritime Reserves (MR) are still receiving applications, albeit at a reduced rate. Virtual interactions and assessment processes are being developed to accommodate the requirement for social distancing. These should be trialled soon and will be supported with specific marketing to reignite the attraction of high calibre candidates. MR have not experienced any voluntary outflow because of COVID-19, and at present no additional specific retention action has been necessary. A continuous assessment of people, morale and wellbeing has been undertaken within MR units, using virtual methods to engage with personnel. Effect on morale is judged minimal overall.

Morale amongst Army Reservists is reviewed formally through the Reserve Continuous Attitude Survey and evidenced more informally through the levels of participation in Defence's contribution to fighting the pandemic. 1750 Army Reserves are currently mobilised, with many more volunteering and hoping to be utilised. That their service was engaged quickly and efficiently, and at scale, is indication of good morale. Innovative use of virtual training and communications (such as Defence Connect) has enabled units to maintain contact with their Reserve Soldiers on a weekly basis during the lockdown. This commitment, initiative, and shared purpose has been critical in enabling the maintenance of the morale of the Army Reserve.

No comprehensive assessment has been made of the morale amongst Royal Air Force (RAF) Reservists, however they are proud of their contribution to Defence's response to pandemic. This is evidenced by the initial trawl for Reservist Personnel

yielding over 800 volunteers, many of whom, with the consent of their employer, waived the 28-day notice period.

## ■ Reserve Forces: Recruitment

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

[\[46144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent comparative assessment has he made of trends in armed forces reserve recruitment and operational capability of the armed forces during the covid-19 outbreak.

**James Heappey:**

With regard to the operational capability of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has robust processes and measures in place to conduct capability assessment, compare data sets and metrics, and identify trends in order to inform decisions. These processes have been dynamically and routinely used throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to help protect and prioritise critical and essential outputs, such as our permanent tasks.

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#### ■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Tankers

**John Spellar:**

[\[45955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will place in the Library his Department's report on the Tide-force vessels contract.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Careful consideration has been given as to whether the MARS (Tide Class) Tanker Lessons Learnt report can be made public at this time. It has been concluded that it cannot as its disclosure would be prejudicial to the formulation of Government policy and commercial interests.

#### ■ Syria: RAF Akrotiri

**Sam Tarry:**

[\[45505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on how many occasions did RAF (a) C-17s, (b) C-130s and (c) A400M's departing from RAF Akrotiri land in Syria in April 2020.

**James Heappey:**

The safety of military personnel on operations and UK assets in the Middle East is of great importance to Her Majesty's Government, which has a duty to protect sensitive information the release of which could jeopardise UK security. It is therefore Ministry of Defence, and wider Government, policy to not comment on or disclose details of operational movements, including the details which you have requested.

## ■ Veterans: Coronavirus

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[46538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support his Department has provided to veterans during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Johnny Mercer:**

All of the existing 470,000 Armed Forces Pensions, War Pensions, War Widows Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments are continuing to be made as usual into nominated bank accounts, and all requests for welfare support are being met, the same day where at all possible. Welfare Managers continue to be available and are in contact with known vulnerable veterans and working closely with local and national business partners to ensure those in need of support are linked into local services.

## ■ Veterans: Northern Ireland

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[46824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to support improved mental health amongst veterans in Northern Ireland.

**Johnny Mercer:**

Upon discharge from the Armed Forces, the provision of healthcare, including mental healthcare, is the purview of the NHS in England, and the Devolved Administrations in the rest of the UK. We are currently working with the NI Veterans Support Office (VSO) to take forward the important work of delivering the Armed Forces Covenant to our veterans in NI. The VSO has developed strong links between the NI Government Departments, Local Government Veterans' Champions and the voluntary and charitable sector. This work with the VSO is key in building coherence and co-ordination among services through the NI Veterans Support Committee (NIVSC). The NIVSC was set up to improve cooperation between those organisations who are permanently based in NI and are committed to delivering support services to veterans.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

## ■ Broadband: Coronavirus

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[43616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to support the roll-out of superfast broadband to rural areas in response to the increase in remote working during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Matt Warman:**

Now, more than ever, it is important that people can get reliable connectivity to help them work. That is why the Government is working closely with the telecommunications industry to ensure that

the roll out of digital infrastructure continues during the current pandemic and exploring what can be done to make the roll-out as rapid as possible. It is also why telecoms workers have been designated as 'key workers'

Given the current situation and guidance from Government regarding COVID-19 measures, Building Digital UK (BDUK) has been in contact with their key Superfast suppliers to understand what impact this might have on BDUK contracts, and what contingency measures are being put in place or being considered to be put in place as the situation develops.

Currently, on site work continues whilst observing the guidelines around social distancing. BDUK is aware that this situation could change and will update their plans accordingly, if necessary. This not only applies to the Superfast programme but also for the Local Full Fibre Networks and Rural Gigabit Connectivity programmes also.

## ■ **Broadband: Standards**

**Chi Onwurah:** **[46066]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the increase in online working and education on the quality of broadband experienced by consumers.

**Matt Warman:**

The telecoms sector has undertaken a significant amount of work over recent years to prepare for a pandemic. DCMS is working closely with the main broadband providers to ensure the network remains stable and continues to have sufficient capacity for the increases in home-working and remote learning the country has seen as a part of its response to Covid-19.

Additionally, on 19 April the Government announced measures to ensure that vulnerable and disadvantaged children across England can access the internet. We are also working with the country's major telecommunication providers to make it easier for families, who are relying on mobile data, to access online educational resources.

Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-major-package-to-support-online-learning>

## ■ **Circuses: Coronavirus**

**Mike Hill:** **[37739]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support is available for circuses and travelling shows during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

My department is in constant contact with cultural sector representatives to assess the impact of Covid-19 on the sector and we are working to develop support for the sector in response to COVID-19. Significant support has already been delivered at speed by DCMS arm's-length bodies. Arts Council England having launched a

£160m Emergency Funding Package, the National Lottery Heritage Fund launching a £50m Heritage Emergency Fund, and Historic England launching a £2m Emergency Fund. All of these are delivering support across the cultural sector.

The Government continues to monitor the impact of these funds and the other measures announced by the government for the cultural sector.

DCMS is engaging daily with HMT and other government departments to ensure the needs of the cultural sector are factored into the developing economic response, and to support those working in the sector during this period.

### ■ **Community Broadcasting: Coronavirus**

**Barbara Keeley:**

**[45081]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support community radio during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The Government is strongly supportive of the community radio sector and recognises the great value that it offers to communities across the United Kingdom, in terms of providing quality local news, information and entertainment. The Government is also grateful for the interest that community radio stations have shown in broadcasting vitally important public health information during the current Covid-19 outbreak. I understand that the Community Media Association is liaising with the Cabinet Office and the government's external partners in this regard.

The Government also recognises the unique difficulties these stations face, which is why we are releasing emergency funding to help them to continue to provide programming and services for the communities they serve. This will provide a lifeline for community radio stations hit hardest by the coronavirus. Relevant stations were invited to bid for emergency grants to help meet their core costs through an Ofcom sponsored process. The window for applications opened on 4 May 2020 and closed on 11 May 2020. The awarding panel will meet in May 2020 to consider the applications.

As well as this, DCMS continues to have discussions with those in the community radio sector, including the CMA, in order to further understand the wider implications of the coronavirus outbreak on community stations and further support for recovery.

### ■ **Cricket: Coronavirus**

**Theresa Villiers:**

**[45978]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the revised social distancing guidance permits cricket coaching outdoors with one trainer and one learner.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The government has announced that people can now go outside more than once a day for exercise, alone, with members of their household, or with one person from outside their household, as long as they are following social distancing guidelines.

One to one training outside can take place, provided social distance is maintained and all current hygiene advice is adhered to.

**■ Culture: Coronavirus****Kevin Brennan:**[\[44992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he take steps to establish a fund to help support the survival of theatres and other cultural assets during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

My department is in constant contact with the cultural sector representatives to assess the impact of Covid-19 on the sector and we are working to develop support for the sector in response to COVID-19. Significant support has already been delivered at speed by DCMS arm's-length bodies. Arts Council England having launched a £160m Emergency Funding Package, the National Lottery Heritage Fund launching a £50m Heritage Emergency Fund, and Historic England launching a £2m Emergency Fund. All of these are delivering support across the cultural sector

The Government continues to monitor the impact of these funds and the other measures announced by the government for the cultural sector. DCMS is engaging daily with HMT and other government departments to ensure the needs of the cultural sector are factored into the developing economic response, and to support those working in the sector during this period.

**■ Exports: Economic Situation****Karl McCartney:**[\[45150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport, what assessment he has made of the value of esports to the UK economy (a) during the covid-19 outbreak and (b) at other times; and if he will make a statement.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

Esports has the potential to develop as an area of real national strength in the UK, building on our world-class video games, entertainment and sports sectors. The government continues to consider ways to further support the growth of esports in the UK, and officials have been in regular contact with esports companies to assess the impact of covid-19.

## ■ Leisure: Coronavirus

**Catherine West:**

[\[45350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support his Department provides to Leisure Trusts that are not eligible for the covid-19 business support schemes introduced by the Government.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Government is aware of the financial challenges that the leisure sector is facing and is in discussions with sector representatives and local authorities to explore what additional support is needed.

As set out on 1 May, the Government is making a further £617m available through a Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund to support small businesses previously outside the scope of existing business grant funding schemes. Grants up to a maximum of £25,000 will be available and the allocation of funding will be at the discretion of local authorities.

Through Sport England, DCMS has made available a £210m package of support to the sport and physical activity sector to support it through the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes a £35m Community Emergency Fund to support organisations suffering immediate financial hardship.

## ■ Motor Sports

**Karl McCartney:**

[\[46039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport, what recent meetings he has had with representatives of motorsport; and what the outcomes of those meetings were.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

I am having regular discussions with sector and industry bodies to understand the full impact of COVID-19 on sport and how the government can best provide support. This includes a fortnightly meeting with sporting organisations, at which motorsport is represented.

## ■ Snooker

**Karl McCartney:**

[\[46040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport, what recent meetings he has had with representatives of snooker; and what the outcomes of those meetings were.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

I am having regular discussions with sector and industry bodies to understand the full impact of COVID-19 on sport and how the government can best provide support. This includes a fortnightly meeting with sporting organisations.

■ **Sports: Governing Bodies**

**Giles Watling:** [\[45436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to protect (a) the Premier League and (b) other sports bodies following the denial by the Saudi Arabian Government of access by the Premier League to legal representation; and if he will make a statement.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

My officials are working closely with their counterparts in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Trade to ensure the international interests of the Premier League and other UK sports bodies are protected and promoted around the world. We know that the Premier League is a great soft power asset for the UK, and we will continue to encourage relevant national governments to ensure it receives parity of treatment in all international markets.

■ **Sports: Video Games**

**Karl McCartney:** [\[46038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent meetings he has had with representatives of e-sports; and what the outcomes of those meetings were.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

The government recognises the value of esports which has the potential to develop as an area of real national strength in the UK, building on our world-class video games, entertainment and sports sectors. Esports has also come to the fore during the Covid-19 lockdown, offering entertainment and a way to connect with others.

Ministers have met frequently with the creative industries, including meetings with the Creative Industries Council and weekly roundtable meetings during the current Covid-19 crisis which were attended by organisations such as UKIE that represent businesses in the esports sector. There has also been frequent discussion recently between officials and individual esports businesses and organisations.

■ **Swimming Pools: Closures**

**Catherine West:** [\[45351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of swimming pool closures on people that cannot exercise on land as a result of health conditions.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

It is vital that people continue to be active throughout the Covid-19 pandemic to support their physical and mental wellbeing. It is also important that those people who have to overcome specific barriers to getting active are supported as far as possible to continue to engage in activity.

The Government has not undertaken a specific assessment of the effect of swimming pool closure on this group of people. However, Sport England is gathering data on the impact of lockdown restrictions on different demographic groups via a weekly survey. It has also launched its 'Join the Movement' campaign which provides resources and tips via its #stayinworkout hub on how people can access activities that best meet their needs whilst maintaining social distancing.

## ■ **Swimming Pools: Coronavirus**

**Catherine West:**

[\[45349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take to enable the timely reopening of swimming pools after the covid-19 lockdown is lifted.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

On 11 May, the government published updated guidance on lockdown measures, including updates on how people can be active in outdoor spaces and on outdoor sports courts as long as they participate by themselves, or with members from their same household, or two metres apart from one member of another household.

The government has made it clear that it will adopt a phased approach based on scientific and medical advice, and that the primary goal is to protect public health. The government is in discussions with representatives from the sport and physical activity sector about the steps required to restart grassroots sport and will update the public when it is deemed safe to open up indoor facilities such as swimming pools, leisure centres and gyms.

## ■ **Treasure Trove: Codes of Practice**

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[45419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he will respond to the consultation on Revising the definition of treasure in the Treasure Act 1996 and revising the related codes of practice which closed on 30th April 2019.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

Work is continuing on the consultation response which is currently at the drafting stage. It has been necessary to balance resources with other policy demands, including the current response to the COVID-19 crisis. Subject to these demands, the government will publish the consultation response in due course.

## ■ **Youth Services: Coronavirus**

**Ben Bradley:**

[\[45421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many youth services have closed as a result of covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

Government does not hold data on the number of youth services that have closed as a result of covid-19.

This department recognises the unprecedented impacts the pandemic has had on the youth sector, and on the vital services it provides for young people. DCMS is engaging regularly with key youth organisations and other government departments to understand options for addressing this and the path for reopening services as lockdown measures are eased and when the science allows.

**Ben Bradley:**[\[45422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the provision of youth services as covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

This department recognises the unprecedented impacts the pandemic has had on the youth sector, and on the vital services it provides for young people.

DCMS is in ongoing discussions at both Ministerial and official level with colleagues from other government departments including the Home Office, MHCLG, and the Department for Education, as well a variety of youth organisations at local and national level.

**EDUCATION****■ Adult Education: Finance****Dan Jarvis:**[\[45223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to maintain the level of funding for residential adult education colleges.

**Dan Jarvis:**[\[45224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the (a) social and (b) economic effect of residential adult education colleges on local communities.

**Gillian Keegan:**

To help manage the pressures of COVID-19, we can confirm that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will continue to pay grant funded providers, including residential adult colleges, their scheduled monthly profiled payments for the remainder of the 2019/20 funding year. And for 2019/20 only, the ESFA will not carry out the final reconciliation for grant funded providers in receipt of ESFA funded adult education budget (AEB) and the advanced learner loans bursary (ALLB) fund, subject to them meeting certain conditions set out in the further education (FE) Operational Guidance on maintaining education and skills training provision, published on 23 March 2020.

The ESFA also confirmed in March 2020 the AEB provider allocations for 2020/21 for providers, including residential adult colleges. Advanced learner loans facilities and the associated bursary fund for the 2020/21 academic year will be issued later this month.

The government appreciates the importance of adult education to improving people's life chances. We are currently reviewing funding for Residential Specialist Designated Institutions, focussing on the residential support for learners funded via the AEB and the ALLB. We will complete this review in autumn 2020.

We are also looking carefully at all elements of FE funding in preparation for the forthcoming Spending Review.

### ■ **Breakfast Clubs: Coronavirus**

**Mr Richard Holden:**

**[46188]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will take steps to continue the National School Breakfast Programme during the May half-term holiday during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

As my right hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, have both made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19.

Our latest guidance for schools is set out below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings> .

Alongside our national approach to supporting pupils claiming free school meals, we are committed to supporting schools and children who benefit from our breakfast club programme. This programme operates during term-time periods.

Our suppliers Family Action, along with Magic Breakfast, are in contact with schools on the programme where possible. They are working closely with them to target the children most in need to continue to provide them with a healthy breakfast.

Family Action have reported that over 1000 schools in disadvantaged areas are registered to receive breakfast deliveries from this programme during the COVID-19 outbreak. These schools are located nationwide across England.

Schools on the programme can choose to support children in the way which works best for them. This may include parents collecting food parcels from open schools or breakfast food 'drop offs' to families. This should be arranged alongside the school's wider support for children on free school meals. Schools must follow Public Health England's advice on social distancing at all times.

These are rapidly developing circumstances. We will continue to keep the situation under review and to keep Parliament updated accordingly.

■ **Children: Coronavirus**

**Rachael Maskell:** **[46730]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the guidance published by the Government on 10 May 2020 entitled Our plan to rebuild, if he will publish the risk analysis that identified which children should return to school from 1 June 2020.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) established the Children's Task and Finish Working Group to provide consolidated scientific health advice to government. This advice has been used, alongside other sources of information, to inform decision making on the wider opening of schools.

An initial overview of scientific advice and information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-of-scientific-information-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

The papers from SAGE meetings are being published in tranches. The first batch was released on 20th March 2020 and a second on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Further batches will be released regularly.

The list of papers to be released to date is available by following the link below, including a number of schools-related papers. This list will be updated to reflect papers considered at future meetings:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies-sage-coronavirus-covid-19-response>.

**Tulip Siddiq:** **[46754]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many local authorities have used the new flexibilities on statutory duties for children's social under the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

**Vicky Ford:**

Local authorities are not required to log this information with the department; however, we are working with the sector to monitor their use. We are not currently aware of any local authorities having made use of the new flexibilities.

Following the temporary regulation changes made on Friday 24 April, it is for local authorities to decide whether it is appropriate to make use of these flexibilities, taking account of all available information. Decisions to do so will need to be agreed at senior manager level and recorded. Amendments should only be used when absolutely necessary and must be consistent with the overarching safeguarding and welfare duties that remain in place. We expect the regulator/inspector of services, Ofsted, to take note of any use of these flexibilities, so local authorities should be ready to explain why their use was necessary. Guidance relating to the amendments is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services>.

As both my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer have made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID 19.

Our latest guidance on vulnerable children is set out below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings> .

These are rapidly developing circumstances; we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

46754

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## ■ Children: Day Care

**Olivia Blake:**

**[46201]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support he plans to provide to parents who are key workers on irregular or weekend hours and who previously relied on now self-isolating family members to provide childcare during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

Early years and childcare settings are open for children whose parents are critical workers, and they are encouraged to attend.

We want to make sure that every single critical worker has access to childcare that gives them peace of mind whilst they are carrying out their important work.

Where critical workers are unable to access the childcare they need, they should contact their local authority. The local authority will help them make suitable arrangements. We are working with local authorities to support them to do this.

**Olivia Blake:**

**[46202]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) extending the 30 hours of free childcare available to parents of pre-schoolers to the parents of older children and (b) extending that provision to parents of pre-school age children who may have already started school but now require childcare during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

We want parents to have access to a range of affordable childcare, giving them increased flexibility in their working hours and helping children thrive in the crucial early years. The government-funded early years entitlements deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of free, high quality and flexible childcare for eligible 2 year olds, 3 year olds and 4 year olds for 38 weeks a year.

There are currently no plans to extend the 30 hours entitlement to the parents of older children. Vulnerable children and the children of critical workers are able to attend school at the moment.

There is support available for parents with childcare costs outside of the free early education entitlements. Tax-Free Childcare can save parents up to £2,000 per child on their annual childcare bill for children aged under 12 (or for children up to 17 for children with special educational needs or disabilities). Eligible families can also receive help with 85% of their childcare costs through Universal Credit, subject to a monthly limit. For further information, please visit <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>.

**Kate Osborne:** **[46810]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether grandparents who have no underlying health conditions and are under the age of 70 can provide childcare for their grandchildren when parents return to work during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

Our staying alert and safe (social distancing) guidance explains the measures that will help everyone to stay alert and safe as we continue to respond to the challenges of COVID-19.

Grandparents may only provide childcare for their grandchildren if they live as part of the same household. It is still not permitted to leave your house to visit friends and family in their home.

The government is looking at how to facilitate greater contact with close family or friends and will explain how this can be done safely in the coming weeks.

The guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>.

## ■ Coronavirus: Schools

**Dan Jarvis:** **[46662]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of school closures due to the covid-19 outbreak on the mental health of pupils.

**Vicky Ford:**

The department is continuing to assess the impact of the potential effect of school closure on children and young people's mental health. We are working closely with educational institutions, sector organisations, the Department for Health and Social Care, NHS England and Public Health England to understand the risks to mental health and wellbeing and identify the children and young people that need help.

We have published an initial list of online educational resources, including resources to support mental wellbeing, physical activity, and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education>. This information includes links to guidance that Public Health England has produced for parents and carers on looking after the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people during COVID-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>.

NHS services remain open and leading mental health charities are being supported to deliver additional services through the £5 million Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund. The Department for Education is working across government to consider what further support might be appropriate for educational institutions.

## ■ Education: Coronavirus

**Seema Malhotra:**

[46667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate the Government has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school pupils who are unable to access their school online classroom due to school closures during the covid-19 outbreak as they do not have digital devices or internet access at home by each (i) region and (ii) nation of the UK.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government has committed over £100 million to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children in England to access remote education. We are providing laptops and tablets to disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access and are preparing for examination in Year 10, receiving support from a social worker or are a care leaver. We are also providing 4G routers to care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school and disadvantaged Year 10 pupils who do not have sufficient internet connections.

The Department has ordered over 200,000 laptops and tablets and allocated devices based on its estimates of the number of eligible children that do not have access to a device.

**Mike Amesbury:**

[46790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops have been delivered to vulnerable children for online learning during the covid-19 outbreak; and whether those laptops have (a) preloaded and (b) funded licence agreements for Microsoft Office.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government has committed over £100 million to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children in England to access remote education and social care services, including by providing laptops, tablets and 4G routers.

The Department has ordered over 200,000 laptops and tablets, and allocated devices based on its estimates of the number of eligible children that do not have access to a device. The Department is working to provide these devices in the shortest possible timeframe; deliveries to schools and Local Authorities will start this month and continue in June.

Microsoft Windows laptops and tablets will come with Windows 10 installed. Schools can also apply for government-funded support to access one of two free-to-use digital education platforms: G Suite for Education or Office 365 Education.

**■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus****Alex Cunningham:** [\[45173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 6 May 2020 to Question 42022, what factors he plans to take into account when reviewing whether free school food schemes will continue over the Whitsun school holiday week in May 2020.

**Vicky Ford:**

As indicated in my previous answer, the provision of free school meals is ordinarily term time only. The department met the cost of this provision for eligible pupils during the Easter holidays, and this was to reflect the immediate circumstances schools and families were facing as a result of school closures that had only recently been introduced.

These are rapidly developing circumstances; we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

**■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes****Daniel Zeichner:** [\[42066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many codes requested by schools to Edenred to generate e-gift cards for the fortnight commencing 20 April 2020 have not been issued.

**Vicky Ford:**

During this period, we are asking schools to support pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals by providing meals or food parcels through their existing food providers wherever possible. However, we recognise that providing meals and food parcels is not a practicable option for all schools. That is why on 31 March we launched a national voucher scheme as an alternative option, with costs covered by the department.

Voucher codes are being processed and many thousands of families are redeeming them. As of Tuesday 12 May, our supplier, Edenred, reported that over £70 million worth of voucher codes have been redeemed into supermarket e-gift cards by schools and families. Edenred has confirmed that it has issued all voucher codes ordered by schools that were due for delivery between 20 April and 3 May – the period specified in this question.

Edenred is also contacting schools that have started but not yet completed the ordering process, to resolve these incomplete orders. It is also contacting schools where voucher code emails to parents have bounced back, for example, where the school has provided an invalid email address for a parent.

Since its launch, we have been working very closely with Edenred to improve the performance of the national voucher scheme, including significantly reducing any waiting times that parents and schools previously experienced when accessing the website. We are very grateful to families and schools for their understanding and patience during these upgrades to the system.

These are rapidly developing circumstances. We continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

**Peter Kyle:**

**[43078]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking in response to reported failures in the service offered by Edenred on free school meals vouchers to ensure that any schools affected have adequate food provision to offer vulnerable students.

**Vicky Ford:**

As both my right hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, have made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19.

During this period, we are asking schools to support children who are eligible for and claiming benefits-related free school meals, by providing meals or food parcels through their existing food providers wherever possible. We know that many schools are successfully delivering food parcels or arranging food collections for eligible children, and we encourage this approach where it is possible. Where this is not possible, we have introduced a national voucher scheme to provide headteachers with additional flexibility to decide what is best for families at their schools. More information about the national voucher scheme is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>.

We are working closely with our supplier, Edenred, to improve the performance of the national voucher scheme. We are grateful to families and schools for their understanding and patience while we upgrade this service to meet increased demand.

Edenred has reported that over £70 million worth of voucher codes has been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by schools and families through the scheme as of Tuesday 12 May, and that over 16,500 schools had placed orders for the scheme as of Tuesday 28 April. Schools will continue to receive their core funding allocations as normal. However, if schools are unable to use the national voucher scheme and choose an alternative approach, they can be reimbursed. Further details are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools>.

These are rapidly developing circumstances. We continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

**Conor McGinn:**

**[46105]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of take-up for free school meals vouchers was for eligible pupils in (a) St Helens (b) Merseyside and (c) the North West in the latest period for which data is available.

**Vicky Ford:**

Throughout this period of partial school closures, we are asking schools to support children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals by providing meals or food parcels through their existing food providers wherever possible. However, we recognise that providing meals and food parcels is not a practical option for all schools. That is why, on 31 March we launched a national voucher scheme, with costs covered by the Department for Education.

Schools are best placed to make decisions about the most appropriate arrangements for eligible pupils. This can include food parcel arrangements, provision through the national voucher scheme or alternative voucher arrangements.

As of Tuesday 12 May, Edenred has reported that over £70 million worth of voucher codes have been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by schools and families through the national voucher scheme. Edenred has also reported that over 16,500 schools had placed orders for the scheme as of Tuesday 28 April. We do not collect data on the scheme at pupil level.

These are rapidly developing circumstances. We will continue to keep the situation under review and to keep Parliament updated accordingly.

**■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Standards****Dr Julian Lewis:**[\[44945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has in place to ensure that the GCSE and A-level grades awarded to pupils at improving schools in disadvantaged areas including New Forest Academy which are projected to achieve significantly better results in 2020 than in 2019 are an adequate reflection of those projections; and if he will put in place means of appeal other than on administrative grounds for students awarded grades that their school considers to be inappropriate or unfair.

**Nick Gibb:**

These are matters for the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and I have asked its Chief Regulator, Sally Collier, to write directly to the Honourable Member. A copy of her reply will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

**■ Higher Education: Coronavirus****Theresa Villiers:**[\[45029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish a response to the proposals from Universities UK on achieving stability in the higher education sector following covid-19, published 10 April 2020.

**Michelle Donelan:**

On 4 May, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced a package of measures, drawing on proposals from the universities sector, to ease pressures on universities' finances, boost support for students, stabilise university

admissions this autumn and ensure sustainability in higher education (HE) at a time of unprecedented uncertainty.

To stabilise admissions, temporary student number controls will be put in place for domestic and EU students for the academic year 2020/21. These measures mean that providers will be able to recruit students up to a temporary set level, based on provider forecasts, which allows additional growth of up to 5% in the next academic year, and ensures that the admissions process for students will be fair and orderly.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, will also have the discretion to allocate an additional 10,000 places on top of the controls, of which 5,000 will be allocated to students studying nursing or allied health courses, to ensure growing numbers that will support our vital public services. This measure will only apply to UK/EU domiciled full-time undergraduate students, with certain specified exemptions. These controls will not apply to international (non-EU) students.

The Office for Students (OfS), the regulator in England, will also consult on a new temporary condition of registration. The OfS's proposed condition would prohibit registered providers from engaging in any form of conduct which, in the opinion of the OfS, could reasonably have a material negative effect on the stability or integrity of the English HE sector.

The government has reprofiled tuition fee payments, expected to be worth £2.6 billion, for providers so that they receive more cash in the first term of academic year 2020/21. The government has also announced that £100 million of public funding will be brought forward to the current academic year to help protect vital university research activities in England. Additionally, the government has confirmed that providers are eligible to apply for the government's financial support schemes, which are estimated by the OfS to be worth at least £700 million to the sector.

Universities have an integral part to play in our economy, society and culture, which is highlighted now more than ever through their leading role in the fight against the COVID-19 outbreak.

## ■ Higher Education: Foreign Students

**Dr Ben Spencer:**

[\[43766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of availability of courses for international students at UK universities for academic year 2020-2021.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Teaching, learning and assessment in higher education (HE) are not stopping. We are working with the sector to ensure universities are able to make all reasonable efforts to enable all students, both international and domestic, to continue and complete their studies; for their achievements to be reliably assessed; and for qualifications to be awarded securely.

Despite the significant disruption being felt across the HE sector, students deserve appropriate support and recognition for their hard work and dedication - many universities and colleges have moved rapidly to develop new ways of delivering courses through online teaching and alternatives to traditional end-of-course exams.

Our universities will always be open to international students. Both the government and the HE sector are working together to ensure existing rules and processes are as flexible as possible under the current unprecedented circumstances, to ensure that international students who are planning to study at a UK institution from autumn 2020 can do so.

The UK looks forward to continuing to welcome international students in the future. They enrich UK HE culturally, socially and economically, and are one of the reasons why our HE sector remains world-class.

## ■ Nannies: Coronavirus

**Munira Wilson:** **[43174]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish guidance on whether nannies who do not live with their employer are permitted to work during lockdown.

**Vicky Ford:**

Nannies can work in their employer's home subject to them meeting public health principles.

This is detailed in the government's Covid-19 recovery strategy:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy#fourteen-supporting-programmes>.

Guidance on working, where that work cannot be done at home, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#working-in-peoples-homes-as-a-tradesperson-cleaner-or-nanny>.

## ■ Nurseries: Coronavirus

**Matthew Pennycook:** **[46760]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to allow maintained nursery schools to access funding for exceptional costs in response to the covid-19 outbreak for the period from March to July 2020.

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** **[46819]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons maintained nursery schools are not eligible to claim (a) free school meal vouchers and (b) funding for exceptional costs associated with the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government recognises that maintained nursery schools are an important part of the early years sector and provide valuable services, especially in disadvantaged areas.

We are committed to funding for maintained nursery schools in the longer term. Last October, we announced that maintained nursery schools would continue to receive supplementary funding for the whole of the financial year 2020-21 and this is unchanged by the COVID-19 outbreak, along with their funding for the usual early education entitlements through the dedicated schools grant. At the moment, our resources are focused on tackling the unprecedented challenges created by COVID-19. But resolving the long-term funding of maintained nursery schools is high on our list of priorities and we will return to it as soon as we are able. Any reform to the way maintained nursery schools are funded in the future will be accompanied by appropriate funding protections.

Unlike most state-funded schools, maintained nursery schools typically rely on private income for a significant proportion of their total income. Therefore, we have ensured that access to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is also available to maintained nursery schools, in line with the published guidance.

Maintained nursery schools can access the free school meal vouchers via Edenred.

**■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus****Rachael Maskell:****[46731]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of implementing social distancing measures due to the covid-19 outbreak for children in early years settings.

**Rachael Maskell:****[46733]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what risk assessment he has undertaken of the ability to implement social distancing for childminding services during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

We know that attending an early years setting is really important for young children as it helps them develop the vital social skills, communication skills and the building blocks of education that set them up for life. However, safety is of course vital too.

On 12 May, we published guidance on protective measures, which covers a range of measures for use in education and childcare settings:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

Physical distancing is more challenging with young children in early years settings and we are working with the early years sector to develop guidance to support and advise providers - including childminders - on putting appropriate measures in place.

This will be published as soon as possible and will cover advice on managing risks by keeping children in small, fixed groups (“bubbles”), and avoiding mixing between these bubbles and staff as much as possible, as well as other considerations around hygiene and day-to-day routines and procedures.

## ■ Public Sector: Coronavirus

**Stella Creasy:** **[46049]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) schools and (b) employment businesses that have continued paying contingent labour in the public sector during the covid-19 outbreak in line with the Cabinet Office guidance.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department has published detailed guidance on the support available for supply teachers and other contingent workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Schools, agencies, and staff should refer to section 11 of this guidance which sets out the approach we expect schools and agencies to take in paying contingent staff. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing#supply-teachers-and-other-contingent-workers>.

Schools report their overall financial spending on an annual basis. We are considering how and when such data should next be collected in the context of COVID-19.

As confirmed in our guidance on financial support for schools, schools will continue to receive their core funding allocations for the coming year, as usual, regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure. This will ensure that they are able to continue to pay their staff, and meet their other regular financial commitments, as we move through these extraordinary times.

## ■ Relationship and Sex Education

**Stephen Timms:** **[44948]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the current suspension of consultation exercises, what steps he will take to ensure adequate consultation is completed before the new relationships and sex education requirements take effect in schools; and if he will make a statement.

**Nick Gibb:**

We want to support all young people to be happy, healthy and safe. We also want to equip them for adult life and to make a positive contribution to society. That is why we are making Relationships Education compulsory for primary school-age pupils, Relationships and Sex Education compulsory for secondary school-age pupils and Health Education compulsory in all state-funded schools from September 2020.

The Department remains committed to supporting all schools in their preparations to deliver these subjects and has been working to assess the impact of COVID-19 on a

school's ability to discharge their duty relating to the implementation of these subjects. The Department will provide an update in due course.

These are rapidly developing circumstances; we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

## ■ Schools: Coronavirus

**Theresa Villiers:**

**[45979]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the National Education Union on the five tests the Government has proposed on determining when schools should re-open.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is currently working closely with the sector to determine the best way for schools to open for more pupils, in line with the five key tests set out by the Government. There continues to be extensive engagement with teaching unions, including the National Education Union, and other school stakeholders, both at a ministerial and official level.

Details of engagement:

- Weekly meetings with senior policy officials and key stakeholders along with other main teaching unions, governance, social care, school trusts and local government;
- A weekly meeting with wider stakeholders including support staff, further education and school business organisations;
- Weekly calls for evidence from key stakeholders on key policy questions to inform decision making on reopening;
- Weekly meetings between my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and the main teaching unions and stakeholder groups;
- Ad hoc additional stakeholder meetings to address key issues as and when they arise; and
- Weekly guidance update notifications are sent to stakeholders and school leaders.

**Rosie Duffield:**

**[46129]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Prime Minister's announcement of 10 May 2020, whether primary school children returning to a school setting on 1 June 2020 will return on a full-time basis where possible until the end of the summer term.

**Nick Gibb:**

From the week commencing 1 June, at the earliest, we will be asking primary schools to welcome back children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 on a full-time basis, alongside priority groups. We will only do this provided that the five key tests set by the Government justify the changes at the time. We are asking schools to plan on this basis, ahead of confirmation that the tests are met.

Guidance for schools and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>.

**Kate Osborne:** **[46170]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the Government's policy is on the implementation of social distancing measures in early years primary school.

**Kate Osborne:** **[46173]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, whether parents or carers will be fined if they do not send their children to school in the remainder of academic year 2019-20.

**Kate Osborne:** **[46176]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the return of children to education in academic year 2019-20 will be voluntary.

**Nick Gibb:**

From the week commencing 1 June, at the earliest, we will be asking primary schools to welcome back children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6, alongside priority groups. We will only do this provided that the five key tests set by the Government justify the changes at the time. We are asking school to plan on this basis, ahead of confirmation that these tests are met.

We have published guidance on implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

By returning pupils gradually, settings can initially reduce the number of children and young people in classrooms compared to usual and put protective measures in place to reduce risks.

Eligible children – including priority groups - are strongly encouraged to attend their education setting, unless they are self-isolating or they are clinically vulnerable. Parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time and schools and colleges will not be held to account for attendance levels. Further guidance for parents and carers can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>.

**Sir Christopher Chope:** **[46527]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how the priorities he has announced on re-opening schools during the covid-19 outbreak apply where there is a three tier education structure which includes middle schools; and if he will make a statement.

**Karen Bradley:**

**[46643]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that school children in the three tier education system are supported in their transition years of Year 4 and Year 8 given the Government's plans for Year 6 students in the two tier system to return to school from early June.

**Nick Gibb:**

From the week commencing 1 June, at the earliest, we will be asking primary schools to welcome back children in nursery, Reception, year 1 and year 6, alongside priority groups. We will only do this provided that the five key tests set by Government justify the changes at the time.

We want to get all children and young people back into education as soon as the scientific advice allows because it is the best place for them to learn, and because we know how important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers, carers and teachers. The safety of children and staff is our utmost priority.

Guidance for schools and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

The three year groups within mainstream primary have been prioritised because they are key transition years. Year 6 children are finishing Key Stage 2 and preparing for the transition to secondary school, in many cases, and the secondary curriculum and will benefit immensely from time with their friends and teachers to ensure they are ready. We expect all mainstream schools to follow the same approach, including middle schools.

## ■ **Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus**

**Rehman Chishti:**

**[41431]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional support he is allocating to schools catering for children with special educational needs during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

Schools will continue to receive their core funding allocations, as determined by the local authority for maintained schools and through the general annual grant for academies, for the 2020-2021 financial year – April 2020 to March 2021 for maintained schools and until August 2021 for academies and non-maintained special schools. This will happen regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure and will ensure schools can continue to pay staff and meet other regular financial commitments, as we move through these extraordinary times.

The department is providing additional funding for all schools, including special schools and alternative provision, to support them with unavoidable, additional costs

associated with the COVID-19 outbreak. Guidance on this funding is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools>.

As well as giving schools additional funding, we are providing them with a range of support, including guidance on supporting those with special educational needs.

Our guidance on supporting vulnerable children and young people during the COVID-19 outbreak sets out the different groups of vulnerable children who can attend educational settings. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>.

Our guidance on special educational needs and disabilities risk assessment builds on the guidance above. It explains the practicalities for local authorities and other providers in undertaking risk assessments for vulnerable children and young people with education, health and care (EHC) plans, in light of school closures. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance>.

Our guidance on EHC needs assessments and plans explains the temporary changes to some aspects of the law. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus/education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-guidance-on-temporary-legislative-changes-relating-to-coronavirus-covid-19>.

These are rapidly developing circumstances. We continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

**Theresa Villiers:**

**[45028]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will give priority to pupils (a) with an Education Health and Care Plan, (b) with a disability and (c) who have suffered physical or mental trauma in any forthcoming phased re-opening of schools and lifting of covid-9 restrictions.

**Vicky Ford:**

As part of the response to COVID-19, educational settings have and will continue to be asked to ensure vulnerable children and young people can attend. 'Vulnerable children' include those children and young people who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They are typically those with the most complex needs, including due to mental health and disabilities. They also include children and young people who do not have an EHC plan, who are assessed as 'otherwise vulnerable' and are, therefore, in need of continuing education provision.

Vulnerable children and young people across all year groups continue to be encouraged and expected to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for

them to do so. This should remain a priority for educational providers and local authorities, including as more children and young people begin to return to on-site provision.

■ **Students: Coroanvirus**

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[43013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that students are able to retrieve their possessions from university accommodation during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[43014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what the guidance is for students who chose to stay at university but who now wish to travel home.

**Michelle Donelan:**

As my right hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer have both made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19.

The government's COVID-19 recovery strategy published on 11 May sets out a cautious roadmap to ease existing measures in a safe and measured way. The strategy allows for certain necessary travel if people take precautions.

In light of this, we are developing guidance on students travelling to and from student accommodation and this will be published as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, we have made clear that we do not believe that students should be fined for failing to collect their belongings if this is the case because they are complying with the government's travel advice.

■ **Students: Coronavirus**

**Stuart Anderson:** [\[43754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to ensure university students are not financially penalised due to a delay to the academic year as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Students will continue to receive payments of maintenance loans for the remainder of the current academic year.

Universities offering good tuition online will continue to charge fees. However, the government has been clear that if universities want to charge full fees, they will have to ensure that good-quality courses are delivered which are fit for purpose and help students progress towards their qualifications.

The government's clear expectation is that providers should make all reasonable efforts to enable students to complete their studies. If institutions are unable to

facilitate adequate online tuition then they should seek to avoid charging students for any additional terms they may need to undergo as a consequence – therefore avoiding effectively charging them twice.

If students are concerned, there is a process in place. They should first raise this with their university. If their concerns are unresolved, students can contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

**Colum Eastwood:**

**[45509]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with (a) the Northern Ireland Executive and (b) other devolved institutions in Northern Ireland on creating a co-ordinated policy to provide assistance to students financially affected by continuing obligations to pay rent on student accommodation during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Michelle Donelan:**

As my right hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer have both made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19.

Housing and student maintenance loans are devolved matters, as is higher education. However, the department has been working closely with colleagues in Northern Ireland to discuss a range of higher education areas affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

English-domiciled students anywhere in the UK are continuing to receive scheduled payments of loans towards their living costs for the remainder of the current, 2019/20, academic year. Many higher education providers will have hardship funds to support students in times of need, including emergencies.

We have worked closely with the Office for Students to enable providers in England to draw upon existing funding to increase hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by COVID-19. As a result, providers will be able to use the funding, worth around £23 million per month for April and May, towards student hardship funds.

Students with a part-time employment contract should speak to their employer about the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19> ), which has been set up to help pay staff wages and keep people in employment.

## ■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus

**Stella Creasy:**

**[46048]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the reasons for which employment businesses on the Crown Commercial Services framework (a) and (b) have not furloughed supply teachers.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department does not collect data on the employment practices of private businesses. All businesses, including employment businesses, should make assessments of the work available for their employees before making decisions on using the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Businesses supplying services and/or labour to the public sector should also take into consideration the service continuity payments they are receiving and should not furlough staff where payments continue, as per the Cabinet Office Procurement Policy Note 02/20.

Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0220-supplier-relief-due-to-covid-19>.

Further information for schools on supply teachers is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing#supply-teachers-and-other-contingent-workers>.

**Stella Creasy:****[46050]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of long-term contracts for supply teachers as contingent labour that were cancelled in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department does not collect data specifically on the number of supply teachers or teachers employed by agencies.

The Department has published guidance for schools and the school workforce which sets out that schools should continue to pay staff that they directly hire. Where schools had contracts with directly hired staff that have been terminated earlier than the original terms set out due to COVID-19, these contracts should be reinstated on the terms previously agreed.

Guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing#supply-teachers-and-other-contingent-workers>.

**Supply Teachers: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme****Stella Creasy:****[46637]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to support supply teachers when the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is withdrawn.

**Nick Gibb:**

As both my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer have made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by Covid-19.

There is comprehensive support available for supply teachers during the Covid-19 outbreak, and the Department has provided detailed guidance to help schools, agencies and staff identify the right support available for each individual, available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing#what-should-schools-do-if-they-have-already-ended-contracts-with-contingent-workers-that-they-directly-employ>. This will depend on supply teachers' individual circumstances and, for some, may include access to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#agency-workers-including-those-employed-by-umbrella-companies>.

On 12 May, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme would continue until the end of October. This means that any supply teachers who have been furloughed by their employment agency will continue to receive 80% of their salary.

Schools will continue to receive their budgets, which ensures that they are able to continue to pay for staff that they employ directly and meet their other regular financial commitments, including paying their suppliers, such as employment agencies, as per Cabinet Office guidance, available at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0220-supplier-relief-due-to-covid-19>.

These are rapidly developing circumstances. We will continue to keep the situation under review and to keep Parliament updated accordingly.

**Stella Creasy:**

**[46638]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that supply teachers working for umbrella companies are furloughed at 80 per cent of their average wage during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

As both my right hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer have made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19.

The duration of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#agency-workers-including-those-employed-by-umbrella-companies> - has been extended this week by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, providing financial reassurance to many people in these unprecedented times.

The scheme is not sector-specific and its terms and conditions must be met by all employers, including umbrella companies.

Employers can claim for any regular payments they are obliged to pay their employees. This includes wages, past overtime, fees and compulsory commission

payments. However, discretionary bonus (including tips) and commission payments and non-cash payments should be excluded.

Full guidance on how to calculate 80% of employee's wages can be found at: [www.gov.uk/guidance/work-out-80-of-your-employees-wages-to-claim-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/work-out-80-of-your-employees-wages-to-claim-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme).

## ■ Teachers: Coronavirus

**Hilary Benn:** [46554]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether teachers in schools are allowed to wear face masks when teaching children during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools is not recommended. Face coverings may be beneficial for short periods indoors where there is a risk of close social contact with people from other households and where social distancing and other measures cannot be maintained (for example, on public transport or in some shops). This does not apply to schools, which should therefore not require staff, children and learners to wear face coverings. Cleaning and maintaining hygiene are important measures in controlling the spread of the virus.

Guidance for schools on how to implement protective measures can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

## ■ Universities: Finance

**Rachael Maskell:** [41110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure the financial sustainability of universities (a) during and (b) after the covid-19 lockdown.

**Michelle Donelan:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my noble Friend Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose to [HL3891](#).

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Agriculture: New Forest

**Sir Desmond Swayne:** [46831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the implementation of a reference period for delinked agricultural payments to replace basic payment scheme payments during the transition period, what representations he has received on managing animal stock numbers in the New Forest; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra has received several pieces of correspondence on this issue. On the substance of the department's response to those representations, I refer my Rt Hon Friend to the answer I gave to the Rt Hon Member for New Forest East on 11 May 2020, PQ UIN 41876.

[ [www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-01/41876](http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-01/41876) ]

■ **Agriculture: Sustainable Development**

**Andrew Percy:** [45117]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the merits of nature-friendly farming for the environment.

**Andrew Percy:** [45118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support farmers and land-users using agroecological approaches to their land and operations.

**Andrew Percy:** [45119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the merits of agroecology to (a) reduce greenhouse gas emissions, (b) the UK's food and farming industry, and (c) support a healthy rural economy.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Nature-friendly farming is fundamental to our new approach to England's agricultural system. We want to create new business opportunities alongside producing the great British food we all rely on, by paying farmers to adopt more environmentally sustainable farming practices and enhance our natural capital. [45117]

Our Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme will be the cornerstone of our new agricultural policy. Founded on the principle of "public money for public goods", ELM is intended to provide a powerful vehicle for achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and commitment to net zero emissions by 2050, while supporting our rural economy.

Farmers and other land managers may enter into agreements to be paid for delivering the following public goods set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan:

- clean air;
- clean and plentiful water;
- thriving plants and wildlife;
- protection from and mitigation of environmental hazards;
- mitigation of and adaptation to climate change;
- beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

Where nature-based solutions contribute towards the delivery of these public goods, they may be funded by ELM. We will determine in more detail what ELM will pay for as we further develop the scheme and are engaging with stakeholders to inform this.

The ELM scheme is being designed collaboratively with stakeholders. We are considering how more environmentally-sustainable farming approaches, including organic farming and agro-ecological approaches, may fit within ELM where these contribute towards the delivery of environmental public goods.

Meanwhile, Countryside Stewardship (CS) provides a stepping stone to the future scheme, paying for environmental enhancements now as area-based payments are phased out.

CS supports Defra's Strategic Objective of 'a cleaner, healthier environment, benefitting people and the economy'. Through the scheme, farmers can apply for funding to improve their local environment – from restoring wildlife habitats and creating woodlands to managing flood risk.

We will continue to offer CS agreements in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

However, because CS is insufficient in scale to deliver the ambitious goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan, it will eventually be replaced with the new ELM scheme.

Those signed up to CS who secure a place in the ELM pilot, or join the scheme when it is fully rolled out, will be able to leave their agreements at agreed exit points, without penalty. [45118]

a) The merits of agro-ecology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions:

The Government is committed to taking action to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impact. Defra is looking at ways to reduce agricultural emissions controlled directly within the farm boundary, considering a broad range of measures including improvements in on-farm efficiency.

One of the public goods incentivised by ELM will be mitigation and adaption to climate change. ELM is about giving farmers and land managers an income stream for the environmental public goods they provide. We are considering how more environmentally-sustainable farming approaches, including organic farming and agro-ecological approaches, may fit within ELM.

Additionally, agroforestry can play an important role in addressing some of the key issues of climate and land use change in England, through the ecosystem services it provides. Tree planting can provide significant carbon storage benefits.

b) The merits of agro-ecology to the UK's food and farming industry:

Our new approach to the English agricultural system will create new income opportunities for farmers and land managers, by rewarding them for providing public goods and adopting more environmentally-sustainable farming practices.

We know that environmentally-friendly farming and food production can go hand in hand.

c) The merits of agro-ecology to support a healthy rural economy:

Our new ELM scheme is intended to provide a powerful vehicle for achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and commitment to net zero emissions by 2050, while supporting our rural economy.

We are committed to co-designing the ELM scheme with stakeholders to produce the best outcomes for both the environment and our farmers and managers.

As we continue to design ELM, we will assess the impact of our proposals on a wide range of things such as the environment, our rural economies, and on England's ability to continue to produce food. [45119]

## ■ Boats: Coronavirus

**Anthony Mangnall:**

[\[46802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to allocate covid-19 funding to charter-boat businesses.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government has provided an unprecedented package of support measures to help businesses across the UK impacted by COVID-19, and at this stage we do not feel that specific support for the waterways sector would be appropriate. However, because the COVID-19 impacts felt in some sectors may be, or become, more acute than others, we are monitoring the impact that measures are having in supporting public services, businesses and individuals. We are also keeping all decisions under review.

## ■ Chemicals

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[45437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether work on the Government's Chemicals Strategy has been suspended; and what the timetable is for the publication of that strategy.

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[45438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) industry, (b) consumer and (c) environmental groups on the timetable for the Government's Chemicals Strategy.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Our work on a new Chemical Strategy has been temporarily paused to provide the Department with extra resources to focus on the national emergency response to COVID-19. This has been communicated to stakeholders, many of whom have contributed to early work to develop a new strategy. Defra is continuing some underpinning work and has encouraged stakeholders to continue submitting ideas and evidence which will support future work on the strategy. We are committed to resuming work as soon as possible. When the work recommences, the publication of our Call for Evidence will be the next key milestone.

## ■ Chemicals: EU Law

**Luke Pollard:** [\[45439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what safeguards he has put in place to ensure the continuity of (a) chemical regulation and (b) the protection of (i) consumers and the (ii) environment from potentially dangerous chemicals after the transition period.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[45440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has for the UK to diverge from EU REACH regulations.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[45441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what cost benefit analysis he has carried out on establishing a separate UK REACH programme.

**Rebecca Pow:**

At the end of the Transition Period the UK will have its own independent chemicals regulatory framework, UK REACH. We will bring REACH in to UK law and put in place the systems and capacity to ensure the effective management and control of chemicals which safeguard human health and the environment, and can respond to emerging risks. UK REACH will retain the principles and fundamental approach of the EU REACH system, with its aims of ensuring a high level of protection of human health and the environment, as well as enhancing innovation and competitiveness.

We want to provide industry with as much continuity as possible as we transition to UK REACH. As we will have our own independent chemicals regime we would be legally obliged to take our own decisions although there are no plans to actively diverge from EU REACH.

## ■ Coronavirus: Supermarkets

**Rosie Cooper:** [\[45057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether people identified as clinically extremely vulnerable can access priority slots at (a) one or (b) any supermarket.

**Victoria Prentis:**

People who register as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) either online or via the helpline, and indicate that they need help to access food, will have their details shared with supermarkets. The participating supermarkets are: Asda, Iceland, Morrisons, Ocado, Sainsburys, Tesco and Waitrose.

Supermarkets will check these details against their own customer databases and flag anyone who matches. They will then contact the CEV individual and offer them priority access to online delivery slots. The individual should be matched with any supermarket that they are already registered with, and they may choose which they

wish to use. Work is in hand to address the needs of people who do not have a pre-existing relationship with any supermarket.

## ■ Fly-tipping

**Tom Tugendhat:**

**[45305]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether local authorities may use their powers under section 71 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to (a) investigate and (b) quickly remove fly-tipping on private land.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The general power in section 71(2) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to require any person to provide specified information does not extend to local authorities and is limited to the Secretary of State and, in England, the Environment Agency. Under section 71(2A), local authorities have this power but only with regards to their right to search and seize vehicles under sections 34B and 34C. Local authorities do have a range of powers under section 108 of the Environment Act 1995 to investigate pollution incidents.

It is the responsibility of a landowner to dispose of waste fly-tipped on private land. However, under sections 59 and 59ZA of the Environmental Protection Act, local authorities are able to require an occupier or landowner to remove such waste from their land within a specified time, which is not less than 21 days. A local authority is also able to remove such waste in certain circumstances such as where it is necessary that the waste be removed immediately to prevent pollution of land, water or air or harm to human health.

## ■ Food Supply: Coronavirus

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

**[44994]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 29 April 2020 to Question 39481 on Food Supply: Coronavirus, whether the Government has plans to enable members of the public to receive a priority supermarket slot, without the need to register for free food packages, in cases where free food packages are not necessary.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Members of the public who have received a letter advising that they are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) can register to say that they are unable to get essential supplies delivered, and those individuals' details are shared with supermarkets to match them with priority delivery slots.

This system was designed with safety in mind to ensure that CEV individuals, who have been advised to stay at home at all times, could get essential supplies delivered to their homes if they had no alternative means of obtaining food. If an individual who is shielding obtains a priority supermarket slot, they can easily de-register from the system through the GOV.UK platform or by rejecting a box when delivery is attempted. The food package will be re-delivered to the next person in need.

## ■ Food: Waste

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[46533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce food waste.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In December 2018, the Government launched its Resources and Waste Strategy which sets out a new approach to address food waste from farm to fork.

We support the Waste Resources Action Programme and the Courtauld 2025 Commitment which aims to reduce UK food waste by 20% per capita by 2025 from a 2015 baseline. This will be achieved through cross-sector programmes including consumer campaigns, such as *Love Food Hate Waste*, and by working closely with business signatories on whole supply chain resource efficiency approaches. The most recent milestone report for Courtauld 2025 in January 2020 showed a reduction of 480,000 tonnes of food waste 2015-18, equating to a 7% reduction per person.

In 2018, a £15 million food waste fund was announced to do more to tackle food waste and make sure surplus food goes to those who have a need. Grants have been awarded to food redistribution organisations such as FareShare and the Felix Project to redistribute more food through providing infrastructure such as fridges and vehicles.

In response to the COVID-19 emergency, £5.1 million has been specifically made available to help redistribute surplus food to vulnerable people including £1.8 million from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport fund in support of charities.

This effort is now aided by Defra's Food Surplus and Waste Champion, Ben Elliott, who works with key businesses and individuals who have pledged to take action on food waste.

## ■ Recreation Spaces: Coronavirus

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[45323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make additional financial support available for environmental not-for-profit organisations experiencing hardship as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[45445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to provide (a) support and (b) guidance to (i) the National Trust, (ii) the RSPB, (iii) the Wildlife Trusts and (iv) other organisations to help them prepare their sites and facilities for the lifting of some of the covid-19 lockdown restrictions on access to open spaces.

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[45446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what additional financial assistance he plans to provide to (i) the National Trust, (ii) the RSPB, (iii) the Wildlife Trusts and (iv) other organisations to help them meet additional costs to prepare

their sites and facilities for the lifting of some of the covid-19 lockdown restrictions on access to open spaces.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Environmental charities make a valuable contribution to the Government's environmental agenda, through conservation of the natural environment; engaging people in the natural world; and providing access to our beautiful landscapes and coastlines. The Government will continue to work with these organisations on shared objectives during and after the Covid-19 outbreak.

There is no specific financial support available to environmental charities, including costs associated with re-opening sites and facilities. However, environmental charities may benefit from a number of the business support schemes the Government has launched. These include VAT deferrals, Small Business Grant Funding, business rates holidays for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, and the Job Retention Scheme (JRS). The JRS has already provided significant support to environmental charities, and is now being extended to the end of October. Full details of the unprecedented support the Government has made available are available at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>.

In response to Covid-19 we have also relaxed some grant requirements and deadlines, and eased some regulatory requirements, to relieve some of the financial pressure on environmental charities.

On 13 May we published guidance to the public and to land managers on accessing the countryside and open space safely. This guidance was informed by discussions with environmental charities and organisations. We will continue to work with them closely on any issues arising from the current crisis.

The development of guidance for site managers is being led by the relevant experts, including officials from Natural England (NE), Environment Agency, and Forestry Agency, in the Visitor Safety Group ( <https://vscg.org/> ) and will be published next week.

Furthermore, NE has formed an operational group with environmental NGOs to discuss practical issues arising in managing nature reserves, conservation field staff and volunteers and issues surrounding survey and monitoring. This forum provides an opportunity to share good practice and to agree on joined-up messaging.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### ■ Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

**Anthony Mangnall:**

[44041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the January 2020 report of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, what steps he is taking to support a longer-term funding cycle for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative projects.

**Nigel Adams:**

Funding for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) projects comes from a variety of sources. FCO-funded programmes within PSVI moved to a two-year programming cycle between 2018/19 and 2019/20 to allow for more strategic programming, although individual projects were contracted for one financial year to ensure effective learning and deliver value for money. Conflict Stability and Security Fund PSVI projects on the FCO baseline already operated multi-annually. The FCO will consider future funding cycles for FCO funded programmes as part of its preparation for the Spending Review, when that resumes.

**■ Aviation: Coronavirus****Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[45974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many EU Civil Protection Mechanism flights the UK has participated in since the start of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[45975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many EU Civil Protection Mechanism flights the Government has agreed to participate in since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK has activated the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM) on several occasions, as part of our international response to coronavirus, which has helped repatriate British travellers and EU citizens. As of 24 April, the EU estimated that around 2,000 UK citizens had been repatriated under the CPM.

**■ British Nationals Abroad and Foreign Nationals: Coronavirus****Seema Malhotra:**[\[46664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of (a) UK nationals and (b) British residents who are non-UK nationals who have been stranded overseas as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Seema Malhotra:**[\[46665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) UK nationals and (b) British residents who are non-UK nationals, who were stranded abroad on 7 May 2020.

**James Cleverly:**

We estimate that the number of British travellers that may still require support to return home across the globe is now in the low tens of thousands. It is difficult to be more precise, including in relation to the numbers on 7 May, because there have been instances of multiple registrations by the same individual and people not reporting their return to the UK via other means. Our priority has been to get British

travellers home. But, exceptionally, during the crisis, where there is space on HMG repatriation flights we are seeking to help vulnerable non-British UK residents with indefinite leave to remain return to the UK. This goes beyond what we usually do, since our consular assistance is ordinarily for UK nationals.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**

**Wayne David:** **[44990]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many applications for emergency repatriation loans have been rejected; and for what reasons those applications have been rejected.

**Nigel Adams:**

We estimate we have approved more than four times our annual average of emergency repatriation loans so far this year.

All of the following conditions must be met to be eligible for an emergency repatriation loan: the applicant must a) be a British national; b) live in the UK; and c) have exhausted all other options for getting funds to return home. Applications are rejected where these conditions have not been met.

Further information on our financial assistance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-assistance-abroad/financial-assistance-abroad#if-you-need-financial-help-abroad>

**Wayne David:** **[44991]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will publish criteria used by the Government's appointed travel partner Corporate Travel Management to facilitate the prioritisation of vulnerable UK citizens on special charter flights back to the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government is working with the airline industry and governments across the world to help British travellers to return to the UK as part of the plan announced by the Foreign Secretary on 30 March - with up to £75 million available for special charter flights from priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable travellers.

The FCO takes final decisions on prioritisations. We will prioritise vulnerable British travellers most at risk from the effects of Coronavirus who normally live in the UK and are trying to return home for these flights, together with their families who normally live with them in the UK. We are giving additional consideration to the local context and the situation of the individual themselves, this can include lock-down processes in country, access to reliable healthcare, possible reduction in access to routine medication, and those at additional risk if they contract the virus for example the elderly or those with pre-existing medical conditions.

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[45161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending beyond six months the repayment period for emergency repatriation loans.

**Nigel Adams:**

We recognise that this crisis will have had a significant financial impact on people who have found themselves overseas for a longer period than planned or have faced cancellations. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will work with British nationals to ensure we agree flexible repayment plans tailored to individual circumstances.

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[45165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what data sources his Department is using to assess demand for future special charter flights from countries where UK travellers are still awaiting repatriation.

**Nigel Adams:**

We will continue to work to bring British travellers back to the UK where commercial options do not exist, focusing on vulnerable British travellers most at risk from the effects of Coronavirus who normally live in the UK and are trying to return home for these flights, together with their families who normally live with them in the UK. We are giving additional consideration to the local context and the situation of the individual themselves, this can include lock-down processes in country, access to reliable healthcare, possible reduction in access to routine medication, and those at additional risk if they contract the virus for example the elderly or those with pre-existing medical conditions.

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[45365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many people have (a) registered for and (b) been allocated seats on repatriation flights as at 7 May 2020.

**Nigel Adams:**

Helping British travellers who need and want to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities. The UK Government continues to work with the airline industry and host governments across the world to help bring back British travellers to the UK as part of the plan announced by the Foreign Secretary on 30 March - with up to £75 million available for special charter flights to priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable travellers.

Numbers of registrations on a given date are not readily available. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does not have a central registration system. British travellers are only asked to register for flights with Corporate Travel Management when charter flights have been announced for a country and numbers are therefore constantly changing. Seats are allocated to British travellers on a first come first served basis, with priority given to the most vulnerable. As of 15 May, we have

allocated seats to over 32,000 people on 153 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 29 countries and territories

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[45366]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many UK citizens stranded abroad have been unable to afford flights back to the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

Helping British nationals who need and want to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities. Since the outbreak in Wuhan, we estimate that over 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes - the majority supported by our work to keep vital routes open. Additionally we have brought home over 31,000 people on 146 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 27 countries and territories.

Our embassies and consulates continue to provide consular support to those remaining British nationals who wish to return, including advice on medical support and financial assistance. The new repatriation loan scheme has made it easier for British nationals to access financial support when booking onto return flights. For those British Nationals that cannot afford the cost of a flight to return, and have no other funding options, they may be eligible for financial support through an emergency loan from public funds. More details can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-assistance-abroad/financial-assistance-abroad#if-you-need-financial-help-abroad>

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[45368]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how much money from the public purse has been paid out in emergency repatriation loans; and what the average size of loans granted has been.

**Nigel Adams:**

Helping British nationals who need and want to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities. Since the outbreak in Wuhan, we estimate that over 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes - the majority supported by our work to keep vital routes open. Additionally we have brought home over 31,000 people on 146 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 27 countries and territories.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) usually issues around 250 emergency repatriation loans per year. As of 8 May we estimate that over 950 loans worth over £495,000 have been issued this year. Some loans are still being processed. Since 7 April, the FCO has been working with Corporate Travel Management (CTM), which is authorised to administer such loans on behalf of the FCO, to extend the FCO's capacity to consider loan requests from British nationals.

**Derek Twigg:**

[45960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to his Department's guidance last updated on 7 April 2020, Financial assistance abroad, if he will provide additional assistance to UK citizens required to pay higher airline fees to return to the UK from overseas as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**James Cleverly:**

The welfare of British nationals remains our top priority, and we remain committed to ensuring that British travellers around the globe are able to return home.

We hope most travellers will be able to claim their costs from their travel insurance but for those British nationals that cannot afford the cost of a flight to return, and have no other funding options, they may be eligible for financial support through an emergency loan from public funds.

To help more British nationals who need a loan return to the UK during the coronavirus pandemic, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has streamlined the process for emergency loans, and begun working with a commercial travel agency (Corporate Travel Management or CTM) to ensure loan recipients' have travel arrangements in place to return home.

More details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-assistance-abroad/financial-assistance-abroad#if-you-need-financial-help-abroad>.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[45971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many repatriation flights for UK nationals have been arranged since the start of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[45973]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many UK nationals have been repatriated since the restrictions on travel during the covid-19 pandemic were introduced.

**Nigel Adams:**

Since 31 January, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has repatriated over 31,000 people on 146 flights from 27 countries and territories. We estimate that over 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes - the majority supported by our work to keep vital routes open.

The UK Government continues to work with the airline industry and host governments across the world to help bring back British travellers to the UK as part of the plan announced by the Foreign Secretary on 30 March - with up to £75 million available for special charter flights to priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable travellers.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[45972]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many UK nationals are awaiting repatriation as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Adams:**

Helping British nationals who need and want to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities. Since the outbreak in Wuhan, we estimate that over 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes - the majority supported by our work to keep vital routes open. Additionally we have brought home over 31,000 people on 146 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 27 countries and territories.

We estimate that low tens of thousands of British travellers remain overseas. We continue to work round the clock to keep them informed of options to return and support them where necessary when they choose to take those options, whether that is commercial routes or special Her Majesty's Government charter flights.

**Lisa Nandy:**[\[46636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 May 2020 to Question 42202, how much of the £75 million fund announced on 30 March 2020 on repatriating UK nationals has been spent to date; and if he will provide a breakdown of how that spend has been allocated.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Government has committed up to £75 million to help thousands of British travellers return home and this work is ongoing. Flights are leaving all the time, so figures are quickly out of date. The money is being spent directly on the transport required to get people home - this includes charter flights to the UK as well as the costs of ground transport and internal flights to get people to the departure airport. A proportion of the funding remains and the work is ongoing to utilise it to support the next phase of our repatriation effort.

**Seema Malhotra:**[\[46666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will publish (a) the countries from which charter flights have been commissioned by the Government to repatriate British citizens and (b) the (i) date, (ii) starting location and (iii) final destination of each such charter flight.

**Nigel Adams:**

British travellers who need and want to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities. Since the outbreak in Wuhan, we estimate that over 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes - the majority supported by our work to keep vital routes open. Since the Foreign Secretary announced £75m to support repatriation efforts on 30 March, the Government has so far delivered a programme of over 150 charter flights from where commercial options are no longer viable. These flights have brought over 31,000 travellers, from 27 countries and territories, back to UK airports in the East Midlands, London and Manchester.

## ■ Canary Islands: Coronavirus

**Kevin Brennan:**

[45968]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will arrange a direct flight from Fuerteventura in the Canary islands to the UK for British nationals and residents wishing to return to the UK during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Wendy Morton:**

Helping British nationals who need and want to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities. Since the outbreak in Wuhan, we estimate that over 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes - the majority supported by our work to keep vital routes open. Additionally we have brought home over 31,000 people on 146 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 27 countries and territories.

Special charter flights will only operate for priority countries where commercial flights are not possible. At the current time, there remain commercial options to return to the UK from Spain. Our Embassy in Madrid have been working closely with the Government of Spain, airlines and other travel providers to keep vital routes open and help bring back British travellers to the UK.

Our consular team continues to work around the clock to provide support, advice and information to British nationals in Fuerteventura. Our travel advice and social media pages are also regularly updated to ensure that those wishing to return are aware of further developments: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/spain>

**Kevin Brennan:**

[45969]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of British nationals and residents who have been unable to return to the UK from Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Wendy Morton:**

Helping British nationals who need and want to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities. Since the outbreak in Wuhan, we estimate that over 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes - the majority supported by our work to keep vital routes open. Additionally we have brought home over 31,000 people on 146 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 27 countries and territories.

Our Embassy and Consulates in Spain have helped 200,000 British nationals return home and continue to provide advice and support to those who remain and who have contacted us. In the case of Fuerteventura, we currently have five consular customers and, additionally, 80 British nationals have registered their desire to return to the UK with the local authorities.

Our consular team continues to work around the clock to provide support, advice and information to British nationals in Spain. Our travel advice and social media pages

are also regularly updated to ensure that those wishing to return are aware of further developments. <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/spain>

## ■ Caribbean: Coronavirus

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[44977]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to repatriate British citizens stranded in (a) Cuba, (b) Barbados, (c) Grenada, (d) Montserrat and (e) Antigua and Barbuda as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Wendy Morton:**

The welfare of British nationals remains our top priority, and we remain committed to ensuring that British travellers around the globe are able to return home. The UK Government is working closely with airlines, local authorities, and governments in the Caribbean region to help British travellers return to the UK as part of the plan announced by the Foreign Secretary on 30 March, with up to £75 million available for special charter flights from priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable travellers.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is working around the clock, through our Posts overseas and in London, to make sure all British people who need help are receiving the support and information they need. We have brought home over 32,000 people on 153 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 29 countries and territories. We have also supported over 11,000 people to return home from the Caribbean via commercial means.

There are currently no scheduled commercial flight options available to return to the UK from Cuba, Barbados or Grenada. We are aware of a commercial flight operated by British Airways which departed on Sunday 17 May and this was highlighted in our public messaging especially to those in Antigua and Barbuda and also to those in Montserrat who could benefit from this flight. Our consular network in the region continues to provide support to British nationals who require assistance.

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[44978]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of British citizens still awaiting repatriation to the UK from countries in the Caribbean region due to the covid-19 pandemic.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is working around the clock, through our Posts overseas and in London, to make sure all British people who need help are receiving the support and information they need. We have now brought home nearly 31,000 people on 144 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 27 countries and territories.

The welfare of British nationals remains our top priority, and we remain committed to ensuring that British travellers around the globe are able to return home. The UK Government is working closely with airlines, local authorities and governments in the

Caribbean region to help British travellers to the UK as part of the plan announced by the Foreign Secretary on 30 March - with up to £75 million available for special charter flights from priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable travellers. On 8 May, we brought back more than 300 people from Jamaica and Guyana on charter flights organised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. We have supported nearly 11,000 to return home from the Caribbean via commercial means.

We are aware that there are British nationals remaining overseas in the Caribbean region and our effort is focused on supporting their return as quickly and safely as possible.

### ■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

**Mr David Davis:**

[\[44961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what analysis his Department has carried out on the response to covid-19 in (a) South Korea, (b) Taiwan, (c) Singapore, (d) Hong Kong and (e) Australia.

**Nigel Adams:**

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) officials are in regular communication with British Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates to monitor COVID-19 developments across the world. Furthermore, Ministers and senior officials engage their international counterparts regularly. The FCO is looking closely at what others across the world are doing to tackle COVID-19, and is harnessing the UK's diplomatic network to best understand the approaches taken by others.

**Mr David Davis:**

[\[44962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what analysis his Department has carried out on the response to covid-19 in (a) Austria, (b) Germany, (c) Italy, (d) France, (e) Spain, (f) Sweden, (g) Norway and (h) United States.

**Wendy Morton:**

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) officials are in regular communication with British Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates to monitor COVID-19 developments across the world. Furthermore, Ministers and senior officials engage their international counterparts regularly. The FCO is looking closely at what others across the world are doing to tackle COVID-19, and is harnessing the UK's diplomatic network to best understand the approaches taken by others.

### ■ **Cuba: Coronavirus**

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[45136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 May 2020 to Question 40585 on Cuba: Coronavirus, if he will make representations to his counterpart in the US administration on the (a) blockade and (b) restrictions of covid-19 medical resources and humanitarian assistance to Cuba.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK Government does not support the US embargo against Cuba. We consider the extraterritorial impacts of the embargo, including those on UK companies, to be contrary to international law, and we are not persuaded that these sanctions encourage potential reforms and economic progress.

We are in regular contact with our US partners, who are aware of our opposition to the embargo. We communicate this both privately, and through our public statements. The United Kingdom unfailingly votes in favour of the annual United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for an end to the economic, commercial, and financial embargo. We have been working actively with the Cuban Government and other organisations on ideas to reform the business environment, and provide direct support to UK companies wishing to do legitimate business with Cuba.

**Democratic Republic of Congo: Coronavirus****Stephen Timms:****[45950]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many UK nationals had registered with his Department an interest to return from the Democratic Republic of Congo prior to 11 May 2020; and if he will make a statement.

**James Duddridge:**

Helping British nationals who need and want to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is working around the clock, through our Posts overseas and in London, to make sure all British people who need help are receiving the support and information they need. We have now brought home nearly 31,000 people on 146 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 27 countries and territories.

A repatriation flight, with capacity for 150 British Nationals, departed DRC on 14 May with 102 British nationals registered on the manifest. The flight then continued on to Cameroon to collect more British Nationals. This is in addition to the 73 British nationals previously assisted to depart DRC on chartered commercial flights in conjunction with other Embassies.

Our British Embassy in Kinshasa continues to provide support to British nationals who require assistance.

Our consular team continues to work around the clock to provide support, advice and information to British nationals in DRC. Our travel advice pages are also regularly updated to ensure that those wishing to return are aware of further developments.

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/congo>.

**Foreign Nationals: Coronavirus****Fabian Hamilton:****[44979]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prioritise the return from abroad of non-UK nationals who are

normally resident in the UK and who are (a) vulnerable and (b) classified as critical workers.

**Nigel Adams:**

Our objective remains to bring home British travellers who want to return to the UK, as soon as possible. British travellers will therefore be prioritised for seats on repatriation flights. From the outset, our priority for the charter flight programme has been getting British travellers home. But after we launched the charter flight programme, it became clear that there are people with indefinite leave to remain (ILR) who normally reside in the UK, and want to get back. So where possible, we are working to help vulnerable UK residents with ILR. This is beyond the scope of our standard consular assistance, which is usually just for UK nationals. But these are exceptional times. We are seeking to help vulnerable people with ILR wherever possible, provided that they have lived in the UK within the last year.

■ **Gibraltar: Disease Control**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[45022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, what assessment he has made of the effect of 14-day quarantine restrictions on (a) air and (b) land travel (i) to and (ii) from Gibraltar on its access to workers and essential supplies.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK plans a number of changes in arrangements at the UK border to protect the gains we have made in our fight against the virus. We will announce further details in due course. We are in regular contact with the Government of Gibraltar to discuss these measures. Border controls for arrivals into Gibraltar are a matter for the Government of Gibraltar.

■ **Kashmir: Coronavirus**

**Mr Steve Baker:**

[\[46633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Indian counterpart on internet communication between UK citizens with friends and family in Indian-administered Kashmir during the covid-19 pandemic; and if he will make a statement.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are in regular contact with the Indian Government regarding the situation in Kashmir. The Foreign Secretary most recently spoke about Kashmir with Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar on 20 April. We remain concerned about ongoing restrictions on internet services in India-administered Kashmir and call for these to be lifted as soon as possible.

■ **Quarantine: Gibraltar**

**Hilary Benn:** [\[44976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, whether he plans to require travellers from Gibraltar to the UK to observe a 14-day quarantine period.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK plans a number of changes in arrangements at the UK border to protect the gains we have made in our fight against the virus. We will announce further details in due course.

■ **Repatriation: Coronavirus**

**Stuart Anderson:** [\[44035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans his Department has to repatriate people with non-UK passports that have indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

From the outset, our priority for the charter flight programme has been getting British travellers home. But after we launched the charter flight programme, it became clear that there are people with indefinite leave to remain (ILR) who normally reside in the UK, and want to get back, particularly in countries such as India and Pakistan. So where possible, we are working to help vulnerable UK residents with ILR. This is beyond the scope of our standard consular assistance, which is usually just for UK nationals. But these are exceptional times. We are seeking to help vulnerable people with ILR wherever possible, provided that they have lived in the UK within the last year.

■ **Republic of Ireland: Coronavirus**

**Mark Pritchard:** [\[46015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when he plans to update his Department's Covid-19 Exceptional Travel Advisory Notice for the Republic of Ireland.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Foreign Commonwealth Office is advising British people against all non-essential travel worldwide due to the unprecedented international border closures and other restrictions currently in place in response to the global pandemic.

We are monitoring the international situation very closely and keeping all our travel advice under constant review to ensure it reflects the latest situation on the ground and our assessment of risk to British people. This advice does not affect travel between Northern Ireland and Ireland or intra-UK travel. British nationals in the UK should continue to follow government guidance on staying alert and safe during coronavirus, and those in Ireland should comply with the advice of local authorities.

## ■ Sudan and Zambia: Coronavirus

**Sarah Owen:**

[45477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to repatriate UK travellers stranded in (a) Zambia and (b) Sudan as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**James Duddridge:**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is working around the clock, through our Posts overseas and in London, to make sure all British people who need help are receiving the support and information they need. We have now brought home nearly 31,000 people on 144 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 27 countries and territories. The vast majority of the 8,000 British nationals in Zambia are long-term residents. The High Commission currently has no requests from British nationals for assistance in departing Zambia and commercial flights from Lusaka continue to operate. Information and support for British nationals in Zambia can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/zambia/return-to-the-uk>. The number of British nationals seeking to leave Sudan has sharply increased following the extension of airport closures to 20 May. We are looking at all options to help British travellers looking to return home from Sudan, and we encourage them to register their details via our Travel Advice page: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/sudan/return-to-the-uk>. We are working to establish whether a repatriation flight from Sudan would be possible later this month. Further information on this option for travellers will be shared on the Travel Advice page as soon as it is available.

## ■ USA: Coronavirus

**Jerome Mayhew:**

[45450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the US Centre for Disease Control allow British seafarers to travel through US airspace.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK Government's position on welfare was reiterated to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and International Maritime Organisation (IMO) at the start of this crisis, and we will continue to uphold the highest standards for our seafarers. Officials continue to work closely with the Centre for Disease Control to allow the disembarkation of British crew from cruise ships across the United States.

Where vessel operators request assistance to repatriate their employees, we stand ready to work as quickly as possible to help those who may need rapid consular assistance. This includes regular contact at the highest levels with our US partners on our joint response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

**■ Yemen: Coronavirus****Wayne David:**[\[44989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to repatriate UK travellers stranded in Yemen as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**James Cleverly:**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) suspended operations in Yemen in 2015. Since then our ability to offer consular assistance to British nationals in Yemen has been extremely limited. Since March 2011, the FCO has consistently advised against all travel to all parts of Yemen, and advised British nationals to leave the country. However, where possible, the FCO remains committed to doing what it can for those British nationals that remain in Yemen.

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent restrictions put in place by the authorities in Yemen, FCO officials have been in contact with nine British nationals who have expressed a wish to return to the UK. Officials have worked with the UN and regional partners to arrange departures to neighbouring countries, from where onward flights to the UK have then been secured. To date, five British nationals have successfully left Yemen.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Alex Norris:**[\[38654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients have been treated in urgent dental care hubs (a) in total and (b) by hub.

**Jo Churchill:**

As of 14 May, there are over 500 urgent dental care centres. Data is not currently available showing the numbers of patients treated by urgent dental care centres.

**■ Abortion****Olivia Blake:**[\[45515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what risk assessment his Department made of the 30 March 2020 amendment to the Abortion Act 1967; and what resources his Department has allocated to mitigate the risks that were identified.

**Helen Whately:**

On 30 March, Ministerial powers under the Abortion Act 1967 were used to temporarily approve women's homes as a class of place where both abortion pills can be taken for early medical abortion up to 10 weeks' gestation (subject to eligibility following a telephone or e-consultation with a clinician). Doctors' homes have also been approved as a place from which abortion medication can be prescribed.

In reaching this decision, account was taken of wider advice regarding the need for some groups to isolate, and information from service providers that a number of services were closed due to staff shortages and significant numbers of appointments were being cancelled. Access to abortion is an urgent matter: the procedure's risk increases at later gestations and there are legal gestational limits for accessing services. Clinical evidence from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence demonstrates that it is safe for both abortion pills to be taken at home for early medical abortion. Departmental officials are engaging regularly with abortion service providers and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to monitor the necessity for these measures and provision of services in accordance with these temporary measures. The temporary approvals will end once the risk from the COVID-19 pandemic recedes.

### ■ **Care Homes and Hospitals: ICT**

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[43872]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 April 2020 to Question 34959, when the 2,050 portals for social contact in health settings will be active; and what proportion of those portals will be in care homes.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The NHSX Facebook Portal pilot is ongoing with some regional partners still in the process of allocating to local care providers. As of 11 May 2020, over 1,000 Portals had been successfully delivered, with several hundred now deployed and helping care home residents and patients to connect with loved ones. It is expected that all 2,050 Portals will be deployed by the end of May 2020 or soon thereafter. As numbers stand, just over 70% of the Portals will be in care homes. The remaining devices will be deployed in hospices, supported living services, primary and secondary health services, or will be used to support individuals in their own homes.

### ■ **Care Homes: Death Certificates**

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[46722]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that a medical practitioner verifies the cause of death on death certificates of people in care homes during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

In response to COVID-19, the Department has published 'CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): Verifying Death in Times of Emergency' guidance. This guidance is designed to clarify existing practice for the verification of death outside of hospitals and to provide a framework for safe verification of death in this COVID-19 emergency period. It is for all cases outside hospital when verification of death may be completed by people who have been trained to do so in line with their employer's policies, including medical practitioners, registered nurses or paramedics. It is also to be exercised by other non-medical professionals, usually and normally independent of family members, who are verifying death using remote clinical support.

## ■ Carers: Protective Clothing

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[43072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the average cost of supplying personal protective equipment to personal carers for disabled people funding their own care.

**Jo Churchill:**

We continue to supply personal protective equipment (PPE) to selected wholesalers to support social care and additionally, we are pushing PPE to all Local Resilience Forums (LRFs). These multi-agency LRF partnerships are made up of representatives that include local public services and local authorities. This is intended to help LRFs respond to urgent local spikes in need across the adult social care system and other front-line services, where providers are unable to access PPE through their usual routes. LRFs have not been charged for the stock of PPE provided to them for onward distribution to local service providers.

## ■ Children's Air Ambulance: Coronavirus

**Jeremy Wright:** [\[43611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the Children's Air Ambulance charity during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Edward Argar:**

On 8 April, the Chancellor announced a package of £750 million funding support for the charities sector. As part of this, £370 million in funding is to be provided through the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF). This funding will support front line charities providing vital services and helping vulnerable people affected by COVID-19.

The criteria for this funding have not yet been released but the Children's Air Ambulance charity may be eligible to apply for the NLCF funding once this bidding process launches in the coming weeks.

## ■ Coronavirus: Death

**Sir David Evennett:** [\[41391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of adapting and using the eCDOP system, which records child deaths in real-time, to record deaths from the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 4 May 2020]:* The Department currently has no plans to use the eCDOP system to record deaths related to COVID-19.

## ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

**Clive Efford:**

[38868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on how many occasions the Government has decided not to follow the advice of its medical and scientific advisers on how to tackle covid-19; and if he will publish the alternative advice on which Government decisions were based.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Government has a world-renowned team of clinicians, public health experts and scientists working round the clock to keep this country safe. At all times the Government has been consistently guided by scientific advice to protect lives.

In the case of COVID-19, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies has been providing Ministers and officials advice throughout, based on external scientific evidence and a wide source of essential information.

Transparency is at the heart of what the Government does and the Government has recently published online statements and accompanying evidence which demonstrate how our understanding of COVID-19 has evolved as new data has emerged. These statements are available online at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies-sage-coronavirus-covid-19-response>

**Rosie Cooper:**

[39508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 21 April 2020 to Question 34316, what data his Department collects on the testing of close contacts of people who (a) have been or (b) are suspected as having been infected with covid-19.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 29 April 2020]:* Until 12 March, during the containment phase of the COVID-19 response, Public Health England (PHE) tested people with symptoms of COVID-19.

Close contacts of people who were or were suspected of having been infected with COVID-19 who did not display symptoms, were not tested. 3,494 contacts were identified from 302 confirmed cases up to 12 March. Those who developed symptoms were advised to be tested and that those who test positive were listed as cases in the national figures, available to view at the following link:

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

**Rosie Cooper:**

[41929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to give local authorities timely access to (a) SAGE and COBRA planning assumptions and (b) the NHSX covid-19 data warehouse to enable authorities to coordinate effectively their covid-19 response.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 6 May 2020]:* The Government is working closely with local communities to undertake contingency planning so we can ensure the public are kept safe, and any tragic loss of life is handled with the utmost respect and care. As the Government continue to learn more about the outbreak, and potential future measures that may be needed, we will set out those plans to local resilience forums.

The planning assumptions critically depend on the response the Government takes to mitigate the effect of the outbreak, and we are working with the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and others to develop assumptions that reflect those actions and that those assumptions are shared with the local level as soon as possible.

The National Health Service COVID-19 Data Store securely assimilates and protects all of the accurate, real-time information in England necessary to inform strategic and operational decisions in response to the current pandemic. It is available to use for SAGE planning, and the information feeds into relevant COBRA dashboards. Furthermore, there have already been a number of NHS Data Store COVID-19 requests from local authorities submitted and approved for public health responses.

**Henry Smith:**[\[43624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the process is for NHS England's review of the existing criteria to determine who should receive letters asking them to shield at home as a result of covid-19.

**Jo Churchill:**

Expert doctors in England identified specific medical conditions that, based on what we knew about the virus so far, place someone at greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19. These were signed off by the UK Senior Clinicians Group (including four United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers and clinical leadership at NHS England, NHS Digital, and Public Health England).

Shielding is an advisory measure to protect people who are clinically extremely vulnerable by minimising all interaction between those who are extremely vulnerable and others. The Government's position on shielding and social distancing is in line with the latest Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and clinical advice. The shielded patient list is dynamic as it allows for individual clinical decisions to be made about patients, and for it to evolve as evidence about COVID-19 develops.

General practitioners (GPs) and hospital specialists have been asked to recommend patients follow shielding guidance, based on clinical judgement and an assessment of each individual's needs. GPs and hospital specialists have been provided with guidance to support these decisions. Anybody who is concerned should contact their GP or specialist to discuss further.

**Gareth Thomas:**[\[43824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how he plans to recruit contact tracers to track cases of covid-19; how many contact tracers will be required; whether he

plans to prioritise the recruitment of people who have been furloughed; and if he will make a statement.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We are in the process of recruiting 18,000 staff to support enhanced contact tracing, and that number will be increased if needed. This will be a mix of call handlers (approximately 15,000) and health professionals (approximately 3,000). Call handlers are being sourced from the commercial sector and the recruitment of health professionals is being overseen by NHS Professionals. Recruitment could include staff who are currently furloughed, subject to approval from their employers.

**Sir George Howarth:**

[\[43838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of GDPR legislative framework on the Government's covid-19 testing and tracing programme plans.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The Government's test and trace programme will bring together the National Health Service COVID-19 app, expanded web and phone-based contact tracing, and swab testing for those with potential COVID-19 symptoms. Each element of the programme has been developed with full regard to all applicable data protection laws.

We have published a Data Protection Impact Assessment and Privacy Notice for the app's roll out to the Isle of Wight and will provide updates to these if there are any significant updates to the app and before the national roll out.

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[43906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the 18,000 contract tracers to be recruited will be (a) under a contract with private sector organisations and (b) located in communities.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 12 May 2020]:* We are in the process of recruiting 18,000 staff to support enhanced contact tracing, and that number will be increased if needed. This will be a mix of call handlers (approximately 15,000) and health professionals (approximately 3,000). Call handlers are being sourced from the commercial sector and the recruitment of health professionals is being overseen by NHS Professionals. This is in addition to existing public health experts from Public Health England and local government.

The work undertaken by the 18,000 additional staff will primarily be phone-based and these staff will be home or office based. Experts from Public Health England and local government will be nationally, regionally and locally based.

■ **Coronavirus: Gender**

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[37872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is collecting data on the gender of people (a) reporting symptoms of, (b) returning a positive

test for, (c) admitted to hospital with, (d) requiring intensive care as a result of, (e) requiring ventilation as a result of and (f) dying of covid-19.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 27 April 2020]:* Data on the sex of people reporting potential COVID-19 symptoms to the National Health Service 111 and 999 telephone services and 111 online is collected through the NHS Pathways Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard. This provides a count of the number of assessments, rather than the number of people reporting symptoms. Further information is available on the NHS Digital website at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mi-potential-covid-19-symptoms-reported-through-nhs-pathways-and-111-online/latest>

Public Health England publishes data on the sex of people in England who have tested positive for COVID-19. Further information is available on the GOV.UK website at the following link:

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

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for publishing mortality statistics for deaths registered in England and Wales. They publish provisional weekly deaths registrations, including deaths involving COVID-19, which are currently published for deaths registered up to 1 May 2020 and include breakdown by sex. This is available on the ONS website at the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregisteredweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/weekending1may2020>

Data on the sex of people admitted to hospital with, requiring intensive care as a result of, or requiring ventilation as a result of COVID-19 are currently not collected centrally.

■ **Coronavirus: Nurses**

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

**[37678]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department is providing to dental nurses who are redeployed to hospital wards during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

**[37679]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what training is being given to dental nurses who are redeployed to hospital wards during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

NHS England has issued updated guidance on 20 April covering the redeployment of the dental workforce to support the delivery of the National Health Service delivery plan during COVID-19. The guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/04/C0301-Permissions-Redeploying-our-people-clinical-dental-workforce-v2.pdf>

The guidance sets out that for dental nurses possible redeployment could include decontamination measures, administrative jobs, talking to relatives, helping with feeding, moving patients, donning personal protective equipment, bedside support, equipment preparation, acting as 'runner' between teams, turning and washing patients and providing bedside comfort.

The guidance also makes clear that redeployment should be aligned closely with current competencies and where training is needed that is provided.

### ■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

**Dr Julian Lewis:**

[\[42862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the performance of (a) reusable respirator hoods designed at Southampton University, (b) reusable surgical gowns manufactured in Derbyshire and (c) other recent developments of reusable personal protective equipment (PPE) for NHS staff; for what reason reusable items of PPE have so far only been ordered by individual NHS trusts; and if he will make it his policy to allocate resources to the acquisition of adequate supplies of reusable PPE.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 11 May 2020]:* The Government's personal protective equipment (PPE) guidance has been revised according to clinical guidance and clearly sets out that re-usable PPE can be used. Advice on suitable decontamination arrangements should be obtained from the manufacturer, supplier or local infection control.

Strategies for optimising the supply of PPE are being explored. Other countries have begun sterilising to decontaminate PPE. Public Health England, NHS England and the Health and Safety Executive are looking at these methods and are working at pace to assess the evidence base.

**Sir Roger Gale:**

[\[42865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the advice submitted to his Department by Public Health England on the provision and use of personal protective equipment was last updated.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Government updated its guidance 'COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE)' and its guidance 'Considerations for acute personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages' on 3 May 2020.

### ■ **Coronavirus: Pulse Oximetry**

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[43876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of encouraging households to obtain and learn how to

use a pulse oximeter as an aid to reliable remote assessment of whether hospital admission for covid-19 is advisable; and if he will make a statement.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

For patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, the monitoring and identification of ‘silent hypoxia’ and rapid patient deterioration at home is important. General practitioner practices already issue pulse oximeters to help diagnose and monitor patients, and NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with NHSX to look at how capacity can be boosted in a number of ways to support remote monitoring.

■ **General Practitioners**

**Nick Fletcher:** **[44061]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that patients can still approach their local GP surgery to (a) book and (b) attend vital appointments during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

The way in which people can access general practice services during the COVID-19 emergency response has changed: practices are offering more triage and remote consultations (video and online) to see as many patients as possible while protecting staff and patients from avoidable risk of infection. NHS England and NHS Improvement have produced a guide to support all general practitioner practices in England with the rapid implementation of a ‘total triage’ model using telephone and online consultation tools. This means that every patient contacting a practice is triaged before making an appointment. The guide is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0098-Total-triage-blueprint-April-2020-v2.pdf>

Where a face-to-face appointment or a home visit is clinically necessary, practices will take all necessary steps to reduce the risk of infection, including using personal protective equipment.

The National Health Service ‘Open for Business’ campaign has been created to encourage all patients requiring urgent and emergency care to seek appropriate medical advice and treatment, and reassure them that they won’t be a burden on the NHS. Further information on the campaign can be found at the following link:

<https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/nhs-resources-facilities/resources/open-for-business/>

■ **Health Professions: Sick Leave**

**Derek Twigg:** **[44980]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the sickness absence rate was for medical staff in each acute NHS trust hospital in (a) Merseyside and (b) Cheshire in (i) March 2020 and (ii) April 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department does not hold the data requested.

■ **Health Services: Coronavirus**

**Katherine Fletcher:**

[\[39680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to restore NHS services promptly that have been temporarily closed at (a) Chorley and South Ribble hospital A&E and (b) other hospitals in England during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Edward Argar:**

The accident and emergency department at Chorley and South Ribble Hospital has been temporarily modified to facilitate the treatment of acutely ill COVID-19 patients on a single site, at the Royal Preston Hospital. This temporary change is to ensure the most efficient and safe use of the available resources.

It has been necessary to implement some other temporary service changes across England in response to COVID-19. These will be kept under review during the period of the pandemic and services will be reinstated at an appropriate future juncture.

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[45186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people that are required to access the internet for advice and treatment for covid-19 symptoms that do not have (a) sufficient broadband connectivity and (b) the digital skills to arrange and conduct an appointment online.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The Government is committed to bringing faster, gigabit-capable broadband to the whole country as soon as possible. To achieve this, we are removing the barriers to industry speeding up broadband rollout and are investing £5 billion so the hardest to reach areas are not left behind. We are promoting the DevicesDotNow campaign to get internet-enabled devices and support to vulnerable people isolated in their homes without internet access. Devices are being distributed through community organisations that are also providing the support needed to enable people lacking digital skills and confidence to use them. NHSX in collaboration with NHS England and NHS Improvement are working to develop a standardised training package to train Digital Ambassadors to support those with no or low digital skills in accessing health services online. General practitioner practices are also still offering appointments that can be booked over the phone and having phone consultations with patients and inviting them into the practice where necessary.

■ **Health Services: Finance**

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[44042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the funding required to bridge the skills gap for primary care professionals that want to

form a primary care network in order that those professionals can deliver on the five required specifications in the contract for 2020-21.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[44043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the financial ability of GPs to deliver the five required service specifications in the enhanced service contract for 2020-21.

**Jo Churchill:**

The future vision for general practice is one where patients, depending on their requirements, will be able to choose from a range of specialists in a primary care multi-disciplinary team. This team would include highly skilled nurses, paramedics, occupational therapists, dietitians and other roles, able to provide personalised care to patients. The multi-disciplinary nature of these teams will be valuable in delivering the service specifications.

Through the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, Primary Care Networks (PCNs) will be guaranteed funding for 26,000 additional staff, such as physiotherapists and clinical pharmacists, by 2023/24. The roles will be reimbursed at 100%, further supporting PCNs to undertake recruitment or engagement of the roles. Funding entitlements are £430 million in 2020/21 and £1,412 million in 2023/24. Funding is also available through the Investment and Impact Fund which rewards PCNs for good performance against eight indicators, including flu vaccination for over 65s, health checks for people with a learning disability, and effective prescribing. The fund will be worth £40.5 million in 2020/21, increasing to £150 million in 2021/22, £225 million in 2022/23 and £300 million in 2023/24.

#### ■ Hospitals: Community Assets

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[45495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospitals have been registered on the Community Assets Register; and what assessment he has made of the effect of such registration on the ability to build replacement hospital facilities on different sites.

**Edward Argar:**

A list of hospitals registered on the Community Assets Register is not held centrally as the register is held by the relevant local authority.

#### ■ Hospitals: Dairy Products

**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[46524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of milk and dairy products used in hospitals in England that came from UK producers; what steps he is taking increase that proportion; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS Supply Chain, the main provider of consumables and equipment into the National Health Service, report that the great majority of their suppliers responded to a request for information on dairy products (milk, cream, eggs, yoghurt and cheese). All of these suppliers reported that 100% of the dairy products they supply into the NHS are produced in the United Kingdom.

**Intensive Care****Mr David Davis:**[\[45959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS plans to restart the (a) collection and (b) publication of data on critical care bed capacity across the NHS.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS England data sets are currently under review following communication from the NHS Chief Operating Officer to trusts on 28 March 2020. A date to restart collection and publication of this data has not yet been decided.

**NHS Trusts: Protective Clothing****Steve Brine:**[\[39612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his policy is on NHS trusts working with local manufacturers and businesses to secure supply of personal protective equipment; and whether trusts will be reimbursed for stock acquired locally.

**Jo Churchill:**

There are no restrictions in place on individual organisations sourcing personal protective equipment (PPE) from suppliers, providing the PPE is compliant with requirements.

**NHS: Computer Software****Mr David Jones:**[\[43848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what permissions the Government has (a) sought and (b) obtained from Apple for the use of the NHS test, trace and track app on iPhones.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We have sought and obtained permission from Apple to include the National Health Service COVID-19 app on the App Store.

**Chi Onwurah:**[\[43901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether individuals who download the covid-19 contact tracing app will be able to delete their data after it has been uploaded to the central database.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

App users can delete the National Health Service COVID-19 app whenever they want. If users delete the app, all data stored on the phone and not already shared

with the NHS would be deleted. If users do not opt to share their data, it will automatically be deleted on a continuous 28-day cycle within the app, on the phone.

If users choose to share their information with the Department and the NHS, it will remain under the control of the Department and the NHS throughout. Companies working with the NHS are bound by robust contract and data processing agreements that specify how and when the data must be stored, secured, used and destroyed.

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[43902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the central database of the covid-19 Tracking app uses software provided by Palantir.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The central database of the National Health Service COVID-19 app does not use software provided by Palantir.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** [\[44019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the protection of personal data within the coronavirus tracing app.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The app does not collect identifiable data from users. We have published a Data Protection Impact Assessment and Privacy Notice for the first phase of the app and will provide updates to these to keep app users fully informed if changes of the use of and access to data need to be made to continue to support the fight against COVID-19.

**Anthony Mangnall:** [\[44036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the covid-19 tracing app will work in rural areas with poor access to mobile networks and broadband.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The National Health Service COVID-19 app uses Bluetooth technology to detect proximity contacts between app users, access to a mobile network or broadband is not required for this. The times when the user is required to use mobile data or broadband are downloading and registering the app, submitting symptoms if the user becomes symptomatic, and receiving alerts for self-isolation. We expect the vast majority of the population will be able to use the app using their existing mobile network or home broadband service. Mobile coverage is improving, with 91% of the United Kingdom landmass covered by a good 4G signal from at least one operator. The recently announced Shared Rural Network programme will go further and see Government and industry jointly invest to increase 4G mobile coverage throughout the UK to 95% by the end of 2025.

**Damian Collins:** [\[45141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS covid-19 tracing app and in addition to the code for the app that has already been

published, if he will publish (a) the code for the backend processing of data, (b) the third party data services to be used and (c) the administrative roles involving that data.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Alongside the source code for the app, we have already published documentation which sets out the full application and system architecture. The data protection impact assessment lists the data processors and their roles.

**Damian Collins:**

[\[45142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS covid-19 contact tracing app is compatible with the Apple / Google contact tracing app in terms of (a) Bluetooth and (b) other functionality; and what discussions he is having with (i) Apple and (ii) Google on ensuring future changes to their app do not reduce any compatibility.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We continue to develop the National Health Service COVID-19 app and its compatibility with other apps. We are also in ongoing discussions with Apple and Google with regards to the app's functionality.

**Damian Collins:**

[\[45143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which companies or organisations will process the analytics of the (a) inferred and (b) other data gathered by the NHS covid-19 contact tracing app; and whether that data will be held and processed in the UK under UK legislation.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Amazon Web Services, the engineering firm VMWare Tanzu, Google and Microsoft are all providing services necessary for the proper functioning of the app. Data may also be shared with NHS England and NHS Improvement. Where data is held outside of the United Kingdom it will be held within the European Economic Area. The contracts governing the arrangements with data processors contain standard clauses requiring compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

The data that app users have chosen to share with the National Health Service may be retained for research in the public interest, or by the NHS for planning and delivering services, in line with the law and on the basis of the necessary approvals required by law.

Data will be stored securely and processed in the UK. Information that does not, and cannot, identify you may be stored and processed outside of the UK (for example, information purely about the number of proximity alerts issued, or the number of outcomes from tests).

**Daniel Zeichner:**

[\[45255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to use text messages to encourage people to download the NHS covid-19 tracing app.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The National Health Service will be launching a major campaign to support the launch of the app and we will consider a wide range of communications channels to promote it.

**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[45256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the value was of the contract awarded to Zühlke Engineering for the development of the NHS covid-19 contact tracing app.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Zühlke Engineering has been awarded contracts of £895,000 for mobile development, and £812,000 for build assurance and system integration. They have also been awarded a contract of £3.813 million (with extension options, if needed) to support the app once launched.

**Gill Furniss:**[\[45353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made on whether data collected using the NHS covid-19 contact tracing app can be categorised as anonymous under UK law.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The data collected cannot identify an individual. It is not however anonymous: the data is categorised as pseudonymous and therefore is treated as personal data although not identifiable.

Existing law and National Health Service standards set out a framework of protective measures to ensure the app is legally compliant and meets the standards expected to keep data secure and confidential. These include the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation 2016, Data Protection Act 2018, Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (as incorporated into United Kingdom law by the Human Rights Act 1998) and the common law duty of confidentiality.

**Gill Furniss:**[\[45355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of whether the NHS covid-19 contact tracing app complies with the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 in relation to Bluetooth usage and embedded trackers.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The app complies with the law around the use of data, including the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. The Information Commissioner's Office has worked with NHSX to ensure a high level of transparency and governance and we have appointed an independent ethics board to provide guidance on the app development.

## ■ NHS: Coronavirus

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [38527]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff have been tested for covid-19 in each trust in England.

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [38528]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff in each CCG have been tested for covid-19.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

This information is not available in the format requested.

## ■ NHS: Standards

**Alex Norris:** [44028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timetable is for the clinically-led review of NHS Access Standards.

**Edward Argar:**

As part of the National Health Service response to COVID-19, recommendations following the clinically-led review of access standards have been deferred and will be made in due course.

## ■ Obesity

**Alexander Stafford:** [43216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people in (a) England and (b) Rother Valley constituency are clinically obese.

**Jo Churchill:**

The latest Health Survey for England (2018) reported that 27.7% of adults (approximately 12,439,000 people) in England were obese. The proportion of children aged 2-15 who were obese in England in 2018 was 15.0%. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2018>

The latest National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP; 2018/19) reported that 9.7% (57,869) children in Reception and 20.2% (121,409) children in Year 6 were obese in England. The NCMP data is available to view at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2018-19-school-year>

Data is not available at constituency level, however it is available at local authority level. The below figures are for Rotherham local authority.

Public Health England calculations based on Active Lives Survey data estimated that 26.6% of adults in Rotherham were obese in 2017/18. The NCMP 2018/19 report

shows that 10.2% (309) children in Reception and 23.6% (749) children in Year 6 were obese in Rotherham. The Active Lives Survey data is available to view at the following link:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/public-health-outcomes-framework/supporting-information/further-info#obesity>

Data is not available for the number of children who are obese in England. Data is not available for the number of adults who are obese in Rotherham local authority.

## ■ Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group: Finance

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[45522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding will be allocated to Rotherham CCG in (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22, (c) 2022-23 and (d) 2023-24.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS England is responsible for funding allocations to clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), for which the process is independent of Government. The following table is the Core Services allocation data published on NHS England's website for NHS Rotherham CCG for their final allocation after place-based pace of change for 2020/21 to 2023/24.

NHS ROTHERHAM CCG	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Final allocation for 397,956 Core Services after place-based pace of change		412,589	426,775	440,359

## ■ Shotley Bridge Hospital

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[45496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the annual cost of maintenance and repairs is for Shotley Bridge Hospital in the most recent period for which information is available.

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[45497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS Estates charges County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust for Shotley Bridge Hospital.

**Edward Argar:**

For 2019/20 the annual NHS Property Services charge for rent, rates, service charges and facilities management at Shotley Bridge Health Centre to County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust was £1.744 million. This charge

includes approximately £577,000 relating to maintenance and repair costs (this is subject to a reconciliation exercise of actual costs incurred to charges).

In addition, NHS Property Services has also incurred £786,000 in 2019/20 of landlord capital statutory compliance costs at this property, which are not recharged to tenants.

## ■ **Speech and Language Therapy: Coronavirus**

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[37388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans Public Health England has to update the guidance published on 6 April 2020 entitled Covid-19 infection prevention and control to include the aerosol generating procedures undertaken by speech and language therapists.

**Jo Churchill:**

The evidence around aerosol generating procedures is being kept under review; the evidence review is led by Public Health Scotland.

This guidance has been written and reviewed by all four United Kingdom public health bodies and informed by National Health Service infection prevention control experts. It is based on Health Protection Scotland evidence reviews and the evidence and reviews have been endorsed by New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG). A rapid evidence appraisal has been conducted by Health Protection Scotland to assess the risk of patient to healthcare worker infection transmission associated with a wide range of potentially aerosol generating medical procedures. An updated evidence review and the position on the presented evidence review from NERVTAG is awaited.

## ■ **Surgery: South Yorkshire**

**Olivia Blake:**

[\[45519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in South Yorkshire were awaiting elective surgery before the covid-19 lockdown.

**Edward Argar:**

The following table shows the number of open elective pathways for each trust in South Yorkshire in February 2020. It should be noted that patients may be on more than one pathway concurrently and therefore the number of pathways shown may not equate directly to the number of patients awaiting treatment.

NAME OF NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE TRUST	NUMBER OF PATHWAYS WAITING (FEBRUARY 2020)
Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	12,620
Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	29,360

NAME OF NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE TRUST	NUMBER OF PATHWAYS WAITING (FEBRUARY 2020)
Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust	9,332
Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	47,500
The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust	15,384

### ■ Urology: Medical Equipment

**Jim Shannon:** [\[45201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has made an assessment of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the supply chain for (a) urinary catheters and (b) other (i) urology products and (ii) medical devices.

**Jim Shannon:** [\[45202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that people with urinary incontinence have access to (a) urinary catheters and (b) other medical devices during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Edward Argar:**

As part of our concerted national efforts to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department is working closely with industry, the National Health Service and others in the supply chain to help ensure patients can access the medicines and medical devices and equipment they need, and precautions are in place to reduce the likelihood of future shortages.

The Department shares regular information about impending supply issues and management plans with the NHS via networks in primary and secondary care and will liaise with relevant patient groups about issues affecting specific medicines, medical devices and equipment.

### ■ Ventilators

**Justin Madders:** [\[38602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many new ventilators have been manufactured in the UK since 31 January 2020.

**Edward Argar:**

At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in March there were more than 8,000 mechanical ventilators in hospitals across the United Kingdom. Today, we have around 11,900 mechanical ventilators available to National Health Service patients. As of 6 May, 344 of these have been provided by new UK suppliers responding to the Prime Minister's ventilator challenge and 118 by established UK suppliers.

This figure will continue to rise as we procure further equipment and more products from the Prime Minister's ventilator challenge become available.

■ **Ventilators: Manufacturing Industries**

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[40494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the production of ventilators.

**Edward Argar:**

At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in March there were more than 8,000 mechanical ventilators in hospitals across the United Kingdom. Today, we have around 11,900 mechanical ventilators available to National Health Service patients. As of 6 May, 344 of these have been provided by new UK suppliers responding to the Prime Minister's ventilator challenge and 118 by established UK suppliers.

This figure will continue to rise as we procure further equipment and more products from the Prime Minister's ventilator challenge become available.

**HOME OFFICE**

■ **Airports: Coronavirus**

**Mhairi Black:**

[\[39533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to test people arriving at UK airports for covid-19.

**Chris Philp:**

Travellers returning to the UK are not specifically tested for coronavirus, but are monitored for symptoms. Passengers arriving at UK airports are provided with information on symptoms and the latest social distancing advice to bolster public health measures already in place.

We will continuously review the most appropriate response at the UK border to the changing situation in relation to CV-19, both in the UK and across the international community.

The same social distancing rules apply to new arrivals into the UK as apply to the population as a whole, as per the clear advice PHE have set out. Anyone in the UK, whether or not they have been abroad recently, should be following the latest guidance to stay at home, avoid unnecessary contact with others and self-isolate should they or anyone they live with show symptoms.

■ **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund**

**Margaret Ferrier:**

[\[19911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund allocated to the UK was spent on (a) removal, (b)

resettlement and (c) asylum seeker and refugee integration in (i) 2014-15, (ii) 2015-16, (iii) 2016-17, (iv) 2017-18 and (v) 2018-19.

**Margaret Ferrier:**

[\[19912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to replace the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

**Chris Philp:**

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) UK Responsible Authority (UKRA) manage AMIF funds in the UK. The total amount allocated to the UK from AMIF is £518.5m.

The UKRA operates according to AMIF years YYYY and YYYY +1 rather than n (current year), rather than the financial year as set out in the question. Therefore, this response includes expenditure claimed from the EU in the AMIF period covered as set out in the header.

Furthermore, the UK does not include asylum seekers in integration activities as this is not appropriate until their status has been settled. In addition, the 'Integration' objective of AMIF applies to Third Country Nationals, including refugees. The UKRA has projects that focus on both, and as such it is not feasible to differentiate expenditure between that on 'refugees' and 'TCNs', so the response relates to all AMIF expenditure on Integration.

Also included in the UK AMIF allocation is an amount for a 'Resettlement Pledge' where the UK can claim an amount for resettling refugees from the EU. Depending on the type of case, figures for this have also been included below.

Any expenditure incurred in 2014-15 was recorded in the 2015-16 accounts.

2015-16 (Expenditure incurred 01/01/14 – 15/10/16)

(a) removal

Actual spend - £53,480,997.80

(b) resettlement

Actual spend - £0

Resettlement pledge - £19,130,434.80

(c) asylum seeker and refugee integration

Actual spend - £0

2016-17 (Expenditure incurred 16/10/16 – 15/10/17)

(a) removal

Actual spend - £10,877,122.00

(b) resettlement

Actual spend - £0

Resettlement pledge - £18,086,956.52

(c) asylum seeker and refugee integration

Actual spend - £3,052,638.95

2017-18 (Expenditure incurred 16/10/17 – 15/10/18)

(a) removal

Actual spend - £25,054,327.61

(b) resettlement

Actual spend - £1,863,468.65

Resettlement pledge - £0

(c) asylum seeker and refugee integration

Actual spend - £6,873,834.41

2018-19 (Expenditure incurred 16/10/18 – 15/10/19)

(a) removal

Actual spend - £0

(b) resettlement

Actual spend - £0

Resettlement pledge - £66,782,608.69

(c) asylum seeker and refugee integration

Actual spend - £0

The Home Office is currently assessing an alternative UK programme to the AMIF and this will form part of spending review discussions.

## ■ Asylum: Disease Control

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

**[39527]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that asylum seekers have adequate space and facilities to self isolate if those people have symptoms of covid-19 while living in shared Home Office-provided accommodation for asylum-seekers.

**Chris Philp:**

We are carefully following PHE Guidance which recommends that separate rooms should be provided for symptomatic people, or they should be moved to hotels.

Those with underlying health conditions and people over 70 years of age should also be moved to the appropriate hotel accommodation following PHE guidance, unless individuals do not wish to be moved. We are reviewing each case on an individual basis and continue to work with our providers to ensure the guidance is followed. If an asylum seeker enters the country displaying symptoms we have dedicated , sole

use accommodation that allows them to self-isolate before moving into the asylum accommodation estate

## ■ Asylum: Housing

**Shabana Mahmood:** [45084]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the dispersal of individuals and families seeking asylum has been, by local authority area, over the last five years.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office publishes quarterly figures on the number of asylum seekers housed in dispersed accommodation, by local authority in the Immigration Statistics release, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>

**Shabana Mahmood:** [46596]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the equity of distribution of the resettling of individuals and families seeking asylum throughout the UK by (a) geographical region and (b) in terms of the regional public service provision capacity.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office is working in partnership with Local Authority Chief Executives through the Home Office Local Government Chief Executive group's, who have agreed a change plan, that seeks to achieve a more equitable dispersal of asylum seekers across the UK and seeks to overcome barriers to ensure availability of service provision.

The plan has been paused in light of the current covid-19 crisis but will resume once restrictions on accommodation moves have been lifted.

## ■ Asylum: Iran

**Cat Smith:** [6159]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her policy is on the return of rejected asylum seekers to Iran.

**Chris Philp:**

The UK has a proud history of granting asylum to those who need our protection.

All asylum and human rights claims are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations under the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Each individual assessment is made against the background of the latest available country of origin information and any relevant caselaw. Our assessment of the situation in Iran is set out in the relevant country policy and information notes, which are available on the Gov.uk website.

The Home Office only enforces removal to Iran when it and the courts conclude that it is safe to do so, with a safe route of return. By definition, those whose asylum claim have been unsuccessful do not need protection and are not at risk on return.

Enforced removals are carried out in the most sensitive way possible, treating those being removed with respect and courtesy.

## ■ **Borders: France**

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[45337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of funding provided to the French authorities for securing the shared border in Calais and Dunkirk is used to ensure adequate reception facilities for refugees in that area; and whether that proportion has increased to support the French Authorities' current covid-19 sheltering operation.

**Chris Philp:**

Of the €50 million allocation made to implement the terms of the Sandhurst Treaty in 2018, £1.1 million was committed to support the development of reception centres for migrants in France. These centres provide support to vulnerable migrants, such as those who have been victims of violence and human trafficking.

As indicated in previous responses, £3.6 million of the Sandhurst package was specifically allocated to supporting the development of the Dublin and Dubs processes to support transfers of eligible children to the UK, including training for those working with unaccompanied children, family tracing and targeted information campaigns.

We continue to work closely with France on border and migration issues, including in response to Covid-19, but we have not been asked for funding to support reception centres during the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 lockdown in France, over 600 migrants have been moved from camps to accommodation centres to aid with social distancing measures. Within these centres, individuals are provided with medical and administrative support, and given the opportunity to lodge an asylum claim.

## ■ **Deportation: Iran**

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[5530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to stop all deportations to Iran.

**Chris Philp:**

All asylum and human rights claims are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations under the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Each individual assessment is made against the background of the latest available country of origin information and any relevant caselaw. Our assessment of the

situation in Iran is set out in the relevant country policy and information notes, which are available on the Gov.uk website.

We regularly monitor and review the situation in countries of origin, working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Home Office only enforces removal to Iran when it and the courts conclude that it is safe to do so, with a safe route of return. By definition, those whose asylum claim have been unsuccessful do not need protection and are not at risk on return.

Enforced removals are carried out in the most sensitive way possible, treating those being removed with respect and courtesy.

#### ■ **Deportation: Poland**

**Claire Hanna:**

**[46189]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it is the Government's policy that the private plane chartered from Stansted to Poland to remove EU nationals on 30 April 2020 was essential travel during the covid-19 outbreak; and what measures were taken to ensure social distancing on that flight.

**Chris Philp:**

We routinely help people with no right to remain in the UK return to their country of origin and we are committed to removing foreign national offenders wherever possible.

We take the welfare of those in our care very seriously. A safer system of work was adapted in line with Public Health England guidance; this included social distancing in transit and on the flight and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment for both escorting staff and detainees.

#### ■ **Detention Centres: Coronavirus**

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

**[46519]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many detainees have died from covid-19 in immigration removal centres in England and Wales since the start of the covid-19 lockdown.

**Chris Philp:**

The safety and health of people in the detention estate is of the utmost importance. We are following all Public Health England guidance and have robust contingency plans in place.

Any death in immigration detention is subject to investigation by the police, the coroner (or Procurator Fiscal in Scotland) and the independent Prisons and Probation Ombudsman.

As of 14 May 2020, there have been no deaths in immigration removal centres as a result of COVID-19.

As of 18 May 2020, there are no cases of Coronavirus in Immigration Removal Centres.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

**Jess Phillips:** [\[46084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's announcement of support for the domestic abuse sector from Fujitsu on 11 April 2020, (a) which organisations have received support and (b) how much support each such organisation has received since 11 April 2020.

**Jess Phillips:** [\[46085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the announcement on 11 April 2020 of funding from Fujitsu for domestic abuse charities, what the cost to the public purse of that funding is; and what the commissioning process was.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Fujitsu offered to provide IT expertise to smaller domestic abuse charities that might need assistance with new ways of working at the current time. This is an offer of assistance directly from the company to charitable organisations and there is no cost to the public purse. As such details of organisations which may have sought or received such support is not held centrally by the Home Office.

## ■ Exploitation: Children

**Catherine West:** [\[46762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect children from exploitation during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Answer:

We recognise that there may be greater risks to vulnerable children under covid-19 social distancing restrictions, and that is why the Government has taken clear steps to protect the safety and wellbeing of children during the pandemic.

In particular the Home Office response to vulnerable children during this outbreak has focused on:

- Stepping up communications through schools, online guidance, the private sector and charities.
- Addressing the hidden nature of abuse by identifying and mobilising protective “eyes and ears” within the community.
- Reinforcing the importance of multi-agency working.
- Working across government to support the charity sector.

The Home Office is working closely with other government departments to allocate a proportion of the £750m funding for charities announced by the Chancellor last month. This includes a total of £34.15 million in emergency support for charities helping vulnerable children who have been impacted by the coronavirus outbreak (this includes funds to be distributed by the Home Office and the Department for Education).

This is in addition to other significant investments to bolster the capacity of third sector partners, including a £6.5 million fund launched by the Youth Endowment Fund earlier this month, which is specifically geared towards identifying ways of supporting young people at risk of youth violence under social distancing guidelines. Similarly, across the Home Office-funded 18 Violence Reduction Units and 11 Trusted Relationships Fund projects, contact and support with vulnerable young people is being sustained through virtual communications.

On Thursday 21st May, the Prime Minister will host a virtual summit focused on 'hidden harms', including child sexual abuse. The virtual summit will bring together key decision makers to share insights, best practice and agree an approach for tackling these crimes as restrictions gradually ease and we move towards recovery.

#### ■ Foreign Nationals: Visas

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[45503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 April 2020 to Question 37868 on Foreign Nationals: Coronavirus, whether a person who is unable to apply to extend their visa during the covid-19 lockdown will be treated as an overstayer.

**Kevin Foster:**

Visa nationals whose leave expired after the 24 January and who cannot leave the country because of the COVID-19 pandemic are able to extend their visas. This will last until 31 May, but will be kept under regular review in case further extensions are needed.

No individual who is in the UK legally and whose visa expired after 24 January 2020, or is due to expire, will be regarded as an overstayer or suffer any detriment in the future if they cannot leave the UK because of travel restrictions related to coronavirus.

#### ■ Hate Crime: Coronavirus

**Bambos Charalambous:**

[\[46776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to prevent an increase in hate crime when the covid-19 lockdown is eased.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Home Office are working closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), civil society partners and social media platforms to encourage victim reporting of online hate crime during the pandemic. We are also working with the

NPCC to ensure that all police forces are providing reassurance to affected communities.

Government continues to work with communities around the country and the police to ensure people of all backgrounds have access to the latest information and are supported through this period

**Bambos Charalambous:**

[\[46778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Government's Hate Crime Action Plan, what data has been collated through her Department's collaboration with Cardiff University and the National Police Chief's Council on incidences of online hate crimes committed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Home Office does not hold Covid 19-related hate crime data from this collaboration. The NPCC partnership is still in development and intended to design a tool for understanding trends in hateful sentiment online. It does not monitor instances of online hate crimes for criminal investigations.

#### ■ **Health Services: Surcharges**

**Alison Thewliss:**

[\[45288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will remove the Immigration Health Surcharge for people working in the health and social care sector.

**Kevin Foster:**

We welcome the vital contribution NHS staff from across the globe make to our healthcare system.

The Government has recently announced a series of measures for key health workers on the frontline fighting coronavirus. Visas will be automatically extended for 12 months free of charge and there will be no Immigration Health Surcharge for the extension. These measures apply to NHS doctors, nurses and paramedics, and we have recently expanded this offer to cover more key NHS frontline health workers, including those working in eligible occupations in the independent health and care sector. This will also apply to their family members. The automatic extension offer will be for those whose visas expire between 31 March and 1 October. We estimate around 3,000 healthcare professionals, plus their families, will benefit.

#### ■ **Home Office: Written Questions**

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[45302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to Questions 38010 and 38011 tabled by the hon. Member for St Helens North on 20 April 2020.

**James Brokenshire:**

The responses for UIN 38010 was given on 14th May 2020 and UIN 38011 was given on 18th May 2020.

## ■ Human Trafficking: Victims

**Alex Norris:**

**[45400]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether (a) subsistence rates are payable to all victims of trafficking in the national referral mechanism and (b) those subsistence rates are means tested.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Potential victims and victims of modern slavery who are referred to the National Referral Mechanism, who have received a positive Reasonable Grounds decision, and have consented to enter the Victim Care Contract, will receive financial support. These payments are not means tested.

Those who receive a positive Conclusive Grounds decision will have their ongoing needs assessed using a Recovery Needs Assessment (RNA) to ensure that support is tailored to their recovery needs. The RNA considers whether the victim has financial recovery needs arising from their modern slavery experiences, and whether other sources of financial assistance outside of the Victim Care Contract are available and able to meet those needs.

## ■ Immigrants: Coronavirus

**Dawn Butler:**

**[33436]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to ensure that people with no recourse to public funds are (a) safeguarded and (b) able to self-isolate during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office is working closely with other government departments to support people, including migrants with no recourse to public funds, through this crisis. We are taking a compassionate and pragmatic approach and will continue to review the situation to consider if more can be done.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will help firms continue to keep people, including workers with no recourse to public funds, in employment with the government paying 80% of furloughed workers wages up to a cap of £2,500.

There are a number of measures in relation to rent and mortgage protections, food vouchers, and protections for the homeless, all of which are not considered public funds. Local Authorities may also provide basic safety net support if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases.

Covid-19 has been added to the list of infectious diseases so anyone experiencing symptoms, regardless of their immigration status, will be treated for free.

People granted leave under the family and human rights routes can apply to have a condition lifted or for access to benefits if their financial circumstances change.

**Kate Osamor:**

**[43999]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Office, what recent estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of suspending no recourse to public funds conditions during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Philp:**

The majority of migrants from outside of the European Economic Area have no recourse to public funds (NRPF); this includes those here for work or as the partner or parent of a British citizen. The public interest in migrants being financially independent and not being a burden on the State is long established.

Many of the wide-ranging Covid-19 measures the government has put in place are not public funds and therefore are available to migrants with NRPF. In light of the support available, we do not believe it is necessary to suspend the NRPF condition. We will keep the situation under review and consider further measures if needed.

The Home Office is, however, working closely with other government departments to support people, including migrants with NRPF, through this crisis. We are taking a compassionate and pragmatic approach to an unprecedented situation.

Migrants with leave under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have the NRPF restriction lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there has been a change in their financial circumstances. The Home Office has recently digitised the application form to make sure it is accessible for those who need to remain at home, and the applications are being dealt with compassionately.

The Coronavirus job retention scheme, self-employment income support and statutory sick pay are not classed as public funds for immigration purposes. Contribution-based benefits are also not classed as public funds for immigration purposes. Additionally, measures we have brought forward such as rent and mortgage protections are not considered public funds and can be accessed by migrants with leave to remain.

Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question.

The Government has made in excess of £3.2 billion of funding to local authorities in England, and additional funding under the Barnett formula to the devolved administrations to enable them to respond to Covid-19 pressures across all the services they deliver, including services helping the most vulnerable.

More information on the support available to migrants, including those with NRPF, can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-get-support-if-youre-a-migrant-living-in-the-uk>.

**■ Immigrants: Deportation****Chi Onwurah:** [\[43018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the ability of her Department to operate flights to remove people held in immigration detention during the covid-19 outbreak over the next (a) 28 days, (b) three months and (c) six months.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office continues to monitor the on-going changes to international flight restrictions and entry requirements imposed by receiving countries caused by the global response to COVID-19.

Enforced and voluntary returns continue on a case by case basis where we are able to do so. To some destinations, commercial scheduled routes are still open albeit limited. We will continue to work in this flexible manner over the next six months, being alert to softening of international restrictions, utilising a combination of scheduled commercial flights and specially arranged chartered flights with the support of receiving states to minimise detention time through the facilitation of returns

**■ Immigrants: Detainees****Chi Onwurah:** [\[45192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary for the Home Department, whether detainees released from detention centres have received testing for covid-19.

**Chris Philp:**

The safety and health of people in the detention estate is of the utmost importance. We are following all Public Health England guidance and have robust contingency plans in place.

All immigration removal centres have dedicated health facilities run by doctors and nurses which are managed by the NHS or appropriate providers. The Home Office, its suppliers and NHS England healthcare providers in immigration removal centres are following PHE guidelines for the management of COVID-19.

Universal testing is not currently recommended under these guidelines for those in detention or those being released. Testing of individuals in immigration detention, including those released from immigration removal centres, will be dependent on individual circumstances.

There are no cases of Covid-19 in the immigration removal estate at present.

**Stuart C McDonald:** [\[45262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been held in the UK's four short-term holding facilities in Calais and Dunkirk since the beginning of the UK's covid-19 lockdown.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office does not routinely publish location specific statistics on the people held in the short term holding facilities at juxtaposed ports.

Any high-risk individuals displaying symptoms are referred to French authorities in the first instance. Border Force continue to adhere to Public Health England guidance to ensure we follow the latest scientific advice to seek guidance of our frontline operations.

**■ Immigrants: Finance****Helen Hayes:**[\[38514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate her Department has made of the number of migrants and asylum seekers with the right to work but no recourse to public funds; and what plans she has to review that policy in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Philp:**

The majority of migrants from outside of the European Economic Area have no recourse to public funds; this includes asylum seekers but also extends to other individuals, such as those here for work or as the partner or parent of a British citizen. The public interest in migrants being financially independent and not being a burden on the State is long established.

However, the Home Office is working closely with other government departments to support people, including migrants with no recourse to public funds, through this crisis. We are taking a compassionate and pragmatic approach to an unprecedented situation.

Many of the wide-ranging Covid-19 measures the government has put in place are not public funds and therefore are available to migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

The Coronavirus job retention scheme, self-employment income support and statutory sick pay are not classed as public funds for immigration purposes. Contribution-based benefits are also not classed as public funds for immigration purposes. Additionally, measures we have brought forward such as rent and mortgage protections are not considered public funds and can be accessed by migrants with leave to remain.

Migrants with leave under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have the NRPF restriction lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there has been a change in their financial circumstances. The Home Office has recently digitised the application form to make sure it is accessible for those who need to remain at home, and I can assure you that the applications are being dealt with swiftly and compassionately.

Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example,

where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question.

The Government has made in excess of £3.2bn of funding available to local authorities in England to assist them in managing the pressures arising out of the pandemic.

Asylum seekers do not have an automatic right to work. However, they may apply for permission to work in the UK on jobs on the Shortage Occupation List if their asylum claim has been outstanding for 12 months or more, where the delay is through no fault of their own.

Those asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute are supported by the Home Office on application. An asylum seeker or failed asylum seeker who requires assistance can contact Migrant Help and make an application for support from the Home Office through the contact details below:

[ASCorrespondence@MigrantHelpUK.org](mailto:ASCorrespondence@MigrantHelpUK.org) Telephone: 0808 8010 503

As part of this Government's response to covid-19, we have ensured that asylum seekers who are provided with accommodation will be able to remain in their current accommodation for the next three months. This includes those granted refugee status or other leave who can access public funds, as well as those whose application for asylum has been refused. The situation will be reviewed at the end of June.

**Neil Coyle:** **[45248]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the High Court's decision of 7 May 2020 on her Department's no recourse to public funds policy.

**Chris Philp:**

The court's ruling on 7th May concerned the clarity in the policy for family and private life applicants who are seeking to have the no recourse to public funds policy not imposed on them, or lifted if already imposed.

The Home Office notes the court's judgment and that its full reasons will follow; we will consider these carefully when they become available.

**Neil Coyle:** **[45249]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the High Court's decision of 7 May 2020 on her Department's no recourse to public funds policy.

**Chris Philp:**

The court's ruling on 7th May concerned the clarity in the policy for family and private life applicants who are seeking to have the no recourse to public funds policy not imposed on them, or lifted if already imposed.

The Home Office notes the court's judgment and that its full reasons will follow; we will consider these carefully when they become available.

## ■ Immigration

**Stephen Timms:** [\[44947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were given leave to remain with the no recourse to public funds condition in the most recent period for which data is available.

**Kevin Foster:**

The information you have requested is not assured to the standard required by ONS for publication and as it would be too costly to do so, we are unable to provide it.

## ■ Immigration Controls: Coronavirus

**Stephen Doughty:** [\[46673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the evidence provided by the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Home Office to the Science and Technology Committee on 13 May 2020, if she will publish the full provisional management information on the number of arrivals at the UK border from 23 March 2020 to 13 May 2020.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office is due to publish the next quarterly Immigration Statistics on 21 May. In addition, an ad hoc statistical release 'Statistics relating to Covid-19 and the immigration system, May 2020' will be published on the 28 May.

**Stephen Doughty:** [\[46674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the (a) proportion and (b) number of people likely to have covid-19 that arrived in the UK from (i) Wuhan, China and (ii) Lombardy, Italy in each month since 1 January 2020.

**Chris Philp:**

On 23 March, SAGE advised that the effect of closing borders would have a negligible effect on spread of COVID-19, based on the fact that numbers of cases arriving from other countries were estimated to be insignificant in comparison with domestic cases, comprising approximately 0.5% of total domestic cases. The Home Office and SAGE have been keeping these figures under review. The numbers of passengers arriving in the UK are extremely small, and as such, there is uncertainty in any estimate at such a low level; however, we are confident that the percentage remains under 0.5% of total domestic cases.

## ■ Immigration Controls: France

**Helen Hayes:** [\[45336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps UK Border Force and UK immigration officials based in Northern France have put in place to safeguard the health of staff and those they are coming into contact with in (a) the short-term holding facilities and (b) more widely.

**Chris Philp:**

The security of the UK border, the safety of the staff who protect it and the public are our key concerns.

Short term holding rooms in Northern France are still in operation. High-risk individuals displaying symptoms of COVID-19 are referred to the French authorities in the first instance. All Border Force staff continue to adhere to Public Health England guidance to ensure we follow the latest scientific advice and seek specific guidance for our frontline operations.

Border Force continues to work collaboratively with its partners, including NHS England and Public Health England, to support the COVID 19 response.

**■ Immigration Controls: Northern Ireland****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[46572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Operation Gull is still operating in Northern Ireland.

**Chris Philp:**

Yes, Operation Gull is an intelligence led operation and is deployed on that basis.

**■ Migrant Camps: France****Caroline Lucas:**[\[41963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to end the direct return of refugees who arrive in the UK by boat in light of the (a) suspension of most cross-border travel during the covid-19 outbreak and (b) risk that refugees will return to informal camps in northern France without access to decent (i) accommodation, (ii) water and sanitation facilities and (iii) medical care.

**Chris Philp:**

We are working with France and other partners to ensure migrants claim asylum in the first safe country they reach as this is the fastest route to protection. We remain committed to seeking to return those who enter the country illegally and ensuring migrants are deterred and prevented from making dangerous journeys via small boats.

We continue to comply with the Dublin Regulation and are committed to ensuring transfers continue to and from the UK. This is a fast-changing situation and we, along with other countries across Europe, will be subject to wider Government decisions and travel restrictions related to Covid-19.

**■ Migrant Workers: Domestic Service****Jess Phillips:**[\[46683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect migrant domestic workers who entered the UK on the Overseas Domestic Worker visa; and what support her Department is providing to those migrant

domestic workers who have not taken part in a Government-provided information sessions on their rights during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jess Phillips:**

[46684]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support Overseas Domestic Worker visa holders in the UK whose six months visas are due to expire and who are unable to travel due to covid-19 lockdown measures.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government is committed to the safeguarding of migrant domestic workers entering the UK, which is why all domestic workers are provided with information explaining their rights and how to access help should they need it. Further help and information is also available online at [www.gov.uk/domestic-workers-in-a-private-household-visa/your-employment-rights](http://www.gov.uk/domestic-workers-in-a-private-household-visa/your-employment-rights).

The Home Office has put in place a range of measures to support those affected by the covid-19 outbreak and these provisions are being reviewed regularly. We will review the existing arrangements prior to 31 May and will publish information on Gov.uk prior to this date. [www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-immigration-and-borders](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-immigration-and-borders)

**Jess Phillips:**

[46685]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the remit of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority is for inspecting private households to prevent exploitation of migrant domestic workers.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) has powers under section 114B of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 for specially trained officers, known as labour abuse prevention officers, to investigate serious labour market offences, including modern slavery offences in England and Wales.

Where it is suspected that there is evidence of a labour exploitation offence, the GLAA can apply to the courts for a warrant to enter and search the premises. This includes private households where a domestic worker may be employed or where other evidence, including records of the exploitation, may be held.

## ■ Migrant Workers: Visas

**Helen Hayes:**

[38517]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to review the pay cap on the Government's proposed points based immigration system in response to the covid-19 outbreak to ensure that skilled nurses and carers are able to (a) continue to live in the UK and (b) travel to the UK to work.

**Chris Philp:**

We set out our proposals for the UK's Points-Based Immigration System in a Policy Statement published on 19 February:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uks-points-based-immigration-system-policy-statement>

Any employer wishing to sponsor a skilled worker under the new system must offer them a suitable salary. On the recommendation of the independent Migration Advisory Committee, the salary requirement for nurses and many other health professionals will be based on published national pay scales.

For those in other occupations, we will be lowering the general salary threshold from £30,000 to £25,600. This may be reduced further through tradeable points.

**Paul Blomfield:**

**[45155]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her letter of 29 April 2020 to the Home Affairs Committee on visa extensions for care workers and NHS staff, when she plans to publish detailed guidance on her commitment that dependants of NHS workers who die from Covid-19 will be granted immediate indefinite leave to remain without a requirement to pay a fee.

**Kevin Foster:**

As set out in the Home Secretary's letter to the Home Affairs Select Committee dated 29 April, we will grant immediate Indefinite Leave to Remain to families of frontline NHS health workers who die as a result of contracting Coronavirus. UK Visas and Immigration will work with NHS Trusts and employers across the whole of the UK to identify dependants in this tragic position. Details of immigration changes relating to COVID-19 can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-immigration-and-borders>.

## ■ Offences against Children: Internet

**Conor McGinn:**

**[38011]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what additional resources she has allocated to keeping children and young people safe from online sexual abuse and exploitation following the introduction of the Government's instructions to stay at home during the covid-19 outbreak.

**James Brokenshire:**

In 2019, the Government significantly increased resources to the National Crime Agency leading to a near doubling of the CEOP Command's online investigative capability. In September 2019, the Home Office announced an additional £30m funding for tackling child sexual abuse in 2020/21 to ensure offenders are no longer able to hide in the shadows preying on our society's most vulnerable.

We are working with Law Enforcement, the UK Intelligence Community, safeguarding partners and the third sector to assess the threat and ensure they have the resources they need to tackle offending and provide the greatest protection for vulnerable children during COVID-19. The NCA and UK policing continue to relentlessly fight the online child sexual abuse threat; in the last seven weeks the NCA has developed and

disseminated 2,600 online child sexual abuse (CSA) packages for police forces to investigate.

As part of this the Government has made £1.6 million available immediately for the NSPCC to expand and promote its national helpline for adults. Expanding the NSPCC Helpline will mean many more adults know how and where to raise concerns and seek advice or support about the safety and wellbeing of any children they are concerned about. The Home Office will further distribute £7.8 million in emergency support for charities helping vulnerable children who have been impacted by the coronavirus outbreak.

We are further working across government and agencies to ensure that teachers, parents and carers have access to the support they need to help keep children safe online. As part of this the NCA has stepped up its messaging on staying safe online through their #OnlineSafetyAtHome campaign and their ThinkUKnow resources. The Department for Education has published interim safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges encouraging them to disseminate advice on online safety and we have published guidance for parents and carers on gov.uk. We have also worked with our Five Country partners to galvanise industry action; in response, key industry partners have developed a campaign targeting parents, carers and children with information and advice on staying safe online.

## ■ Passengers

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[46045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many passenger arrivals to the UK there were by (a) air, (b) sea and (c) rail on each day between 1 January and 11 May 2020.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office is due to publish the next quarterly Immigration Statistics on 21 May. In addition, an ad hoc statistical release 'Statistics relating to Covid-19 and the immigration system, May 2020' will be published on the 28 May.

## ■ Slavery: Victim Support Schemes

**Alex Norris:**

[\[45401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether victims receiving outreach support through the Modern Slavery Victim Care contract will continue to be supported for the next two months during the covid-19 outbreak at the same level as victims in government funded safe accommodation.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The safety and security of those supported through the modern slavery Victim Care Contract (VCC) is a top priority for government. Contingency planning continues to consider how essential services and support for all victims of modern slavery can continue throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Victim Care Contract operates as a bridge to lift victims of modern slavery out of a situation of exploitation and help to establish longer-term stability and pathway to rebuild their lives. The Recovery Needs Assessment (RNA) informs tailored move on plans to help victims transition out of the VCC and back into the community where appropriate. The assessment considers the availability of alternative, and often more sustainable, support services and victims only begin a move-on process if it is suitable for them to do so, in line with their recovery needs.

In addition, should someone currently receiving outreach support experience a change in their situation which leaves them destitute and without accommodation, their needs, entitlements and risk factors will be assessed, so that they can be provided with the most appropriate safe and secure accommodation during this time.

### ■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

**[40965]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy that illegal immigrants detained in the UK after crossing the English Channel from France are either required to be returned immediately to France or placed in quarantine in the UK for fourteen days during the covid-19 outbreak; and if she will make a statement.

**Chris Philp:**

We only detain people where it is absolutely necessary and there is always a presumption on liberty.

Decisions to detain are made on a case-by-case basis and kept under constant review but it is only right that we protect the public from high-harm individuals, which is why the vast majority of those in detention are foreign national offenders.

We are following public health advice and providing appropriate health care as it is needed. There is no evidence to show that there is an increased risk from migrants.

We continue to work in line with Public Health England guidance; migrants arriving by small boats are not specifically tested for coronavirus but are monitored for symptoms and will be provided with accommodation where they can isolate if needed.

As a result of COVID-19 the vast majority of EU member states have temporarily paused accepting returns under the Regulations, but we are tracking those individuals and where appropriate will seek to return them when routes are available.

The health of those in immigration removal centres is of the utmost importance and Immigration Enforcement are following the latest guidance from Public Health England. Measures such as protective isolation will be considered on a case by case basis to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading to vulnerable groups in the immigration detention estate. Further measures including shielding, single occupancy rooms and the cessation of social visits have been introduced in line with the Government direction on social distancing.

**Henry Smith:**

**[41028]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many illegal migrants have entered the UK via the English Channel since 1 January 2020; and how many of those illegal migrants were returned to France in that period.

**Chris Philp:**

People crossing the Channel to enter the UK have come from a safe country – usually France – and so there is no reason why they need to make this trip in order to claim asylum. Those fleeing persecution should stay in the first safe country they enter.

The UK continues to work closely with France and other countries to return migrants who have entered the UK by small boat in order to provide a strong deterrent against these dangerous crossings.

The number of migrants arriving in the UK crossing the Channel by small boats for the months of January to March 2020 is approx. 450. These are provisional figures based on operational management information. The figures for April have not passed through a data quality check and cannot be assured. The final figures will be published at a later date, once they have been verified

Since January 2019, over 155 people who entered the UK illegally on small boats have been returned to Europe. However, as a result of COVID-19 the vast majority of EU member states have temporarily paused accepting returns under the Dublin Regulations, but we are tracking those individuals and where appropriate will seek to return them when routes are available.

The processes to manage clandestine arrivals are kept under regular review. In line with Public Health Guidance we are not currently providing routine testing for clandestine arrivals to the UK. In line with established processes, those arriving across the Channel are immediately assessed to establish whether there are any medical requirements. Those showing symptoms of COVID-19 are provided with suitable accommodation in which to self-isolate.

**Damian Collins:**

**[45145]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will provide details of the steps her Department is taking to detect migrants seeking to enter the UK by illegally crossing the English Channel.

**Chris Philp:**

Keeping our border secure is the Government's highest priority and it is committed to doing everything it can to stop these dangerous Channel crossings which are putting vulnerable lives at risk.

Through joint-working with France, the UK has funded the continued deployment of gendarme reservists along the coast of northern France, who are patrolling constantly in order to detect attempted crossings by migrants. Funding has been allocated, among other projects, for further improvements at ports in northern France and on

the ground, this now includes drones, specialist vehicles and detection equipment to stop small boats leaving European shores.

Intelligence flows are also key to dismantling the organised crime groups behind crossings. We have restructured and repurposed our approach to support the growing intelligence feeds which is used to inform and direct how and where resource is deployed.

**Tom Hunt:**

[\[45472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to (a) prevent illegal arrivals through unauthorised crossings of the English Channel and b) remove those people that entered the UK illegally.

**Chris Philp:**

Keeping our border secure is the Government's highest priority and it is committed to doing everything it can to stop these dangerous Channel crossings which are putting vulnerable lives at risk.

Through joint-working with France, the UK has funded the continued deployment of gendarme reservists along the coast of northern France, who are patrolling constantly in order to detect attempted crossings by migrants. Funding has been allocated, among other projects, for further improvements at ports in northern France and on the ground, this now includes drones, specialist vehicles and detection equipment to stop small boats leaving European shores.

Intelligence flows are also key to dismantling the organised crime groups behind crossings. We have restructured and repurposed our approach to support the growing intelligence feeds which is used to inform and direct how and where resource is deployed.

The majority of countries who are signatories to the Dublin Regulations which governs the return of those seeking asylum in the UK to a third country have announced temporary suspension of transfers to and from all EU Member States due to the Coronavirus. Returns to third-countries can still take place where there is a suitable route of return.

## ■ Visas: Married People

**Matt Western:**

[\[45388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to extend prospective marriage visas free of charge where weddings have been unable to take place as a result of covid-19.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office has put in place a range of measures to support those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic including extending visas for those affected with temporary stay to 31 May. We continue to monitor the situation closely and take these exceptional circumstances into account.

These are unprecedented times and we may make further temporary adjustments to requirements where necessary and appropriate.

## ■ **Visas: Travel Restrictions**

**Olivia Blake:**

**[46203]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her policy is on people who have vignette visas who are unable to travel to the UK due to covid-19 related travel restrictions; and if she will remove extension fees for vignette visas given the limited travel options available.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office has put in place a range of measures to support those affected by the covid-19 outbreak. It has been agreed that if an individual's 30-day visa to travel to the UK for work, study or to join family has expired, or is about to expire, a replacement visa with revised validity dates valid for up to 90 days may be requested free of charge until the end of this year (2020). Affected customers will need to contact the UKVI Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre. Full details of the Help Centre and how to make a request can be found at:

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

Our Visa Application Centres (VACs) overseas are currently closed due to the impact of covid-19. Customers will be contacted when they reopen in order to arrange for the replacement visa to be endorsed in their passport to enable them to travel.

These are unprecedented times and we may make further adjustments to requirements where necessary and appropriate, to ensure people are not unduly affected by circumstances beyond their control.

## ■ **Vulnerable Adults: Coronavirus**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

**[43960]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to safeguard (a) vulnerable people and (b) autistic and other neurodivergent groups of vulnerable people from abuse and exploitation (i) during and (ii) following the covid-19 lockdown.

**Victoria Atkins:**

We recognise that there are greater risks to vulnerable groups during the lockdown period. That is why the Government has taken clear steps to address these risks and ensure that we continue to support some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

In particular the Home Office response to vulnerable children in the COVID-19 epidemic has focused on:

- o Stepping up communications through schools, online guidance, the private sector and charities.

- o Addressing the hidden nature of abuse by identifying and mobilising protective “eyes and ears” within the community.

- o Reinforcing the importance of multi-agency working.

- o Working across government to support the charity sector.

The Home Office is working closely with other government departments and the third sector to allocate some of the £750m funding for charities, announced by the Chancellor last month, to charities supporting vulnerable people, including:

- o £2 million for community-based services for victims of domestic abuse

- o £28 million to help survivors of domestic abuse and their children by providing more safe spaces, accommodation and access to support services during the coronavirus outbreak

- o £7.8 million for organisations supporting vulnerable children at risk of abuse, exploitation and other serious harms; and

- o £1.73 million to support adult victims of modern slavery through The Salvation Army and their thirteen sub-contractor charities.

In addition, last month the Department of Education announced that more than £12 million will be spent on projects to tackle the increased risk some children and young people are facing as they stay at home to reduce the spread of Coronavirus.

We are continuing to work closely with other government departments to ensure that the necessary support is in place to continue to support vulnerable people beyond lockdown. As an example, the Government are continuing the progression of the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill through Parliament to better protect victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

We recognise the challenges that autistic people and people with neurodiverse conditions and their families face as a result of the response to COVID-19.

We are working with stakeholders and charities to ensure that all people with neurodiverse conditions are supported appropriately during the pandemic and after. Our support includes, for example, the development of specific guidance and access to online support and social groups. Guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

The Guidance includes information about supporting the physical and mental health, and wellbeing of people with learning difficulties and/or autism.

**HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION****■ Parliament: Coronavirus****Douglas Chapman:****[46690]**

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what plans the Commission has to ensure that safe social distancing due to the covid-19 outbreak takes place on the Parliamentary Estate should the House return to a purely physical Parliament after the Whit recess.

**Pete Wishart:**

The House Service is enforcing social distancing rules in and out of the Chamber. The updated government guidance sets out the steps employers must take to become 'COVID-19 secure' workplaces. For Parliament, this includes publishing risk assessments and outlining the measures in place to protect those working on the estate. Measures have been introduced to promote social distancing on the estate, including installing physical barriers and signage, and staggering shift and break times. The parliamentary authorities are continuing to work through the government advice to ensure a comprehensive set of measures are in place to enable a wider return to work on the estate after the Whitsun recess.

The House Service is currently working in conjunction with Public Health England to ensure we meet the government guidelines to become a 'COVID-19 secure' workplace, and to build on our existing measures to ensure all those working on the estate can do so safely. The Commission will be meeting to ensure that the appropriate level of services and safety measures are in place, should there be a return to physical-only proceedings after the Whitsun recess.

**Douglas Chapman:****[46691]**

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what plans the Commission has to safeguard (a) hon. Members, (b) hon. Members' staff, (c) House staff and (d) children attending the Parliament's nursery facilities during the covid-19 outbreak should the House of Commons agree to returning to a physical Parliament after the Whit recess.

**Pete Wishart:**

The House Service is currently working in conjunction with Public Health England to ensure we meet the government guidelines to become a 'Covid-19 secure' workplace, and to build on our existing measures to ensure Members, Members' staff and House staff working on the estate can do so safely. These include carrying out a Covid-19 risk assessment, which will also be carried out by the nursery provider. Where Members' staff and those of the House can continue their work at home they are being encouraged to do so, with appropriate support provided. The Commission will be meeting to ensure that the appropriate level of services and safety measures are in place, should there be a return to physical-only proceedings after the Whitsun recess.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Affordable Housing: Construction**

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[46647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether homes built under the £12 billion Affordable Homes Programme that are made available as shared ownership properties will be required to be sold with a commitment to build a replacement affordable house of the same size.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Affordable housing grant allocated using government subsidy is recovered or recycled through the Recycled Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) to be spent on new affordable housing, if there is a disposal of the grant funded property or if the use of grant funded property is changed. RCGF rules apply to shared ownership homes when a provider receives staircasing sales receipts - when a shared owner increases their share or purchases their home outright. Providers have three years from the date of the receipt to invest in replacement properties. If they are unable to reinvest the funds during the three years they are required to return the funds to Homes England or the Greater London Authority.

Any profits from the sale, for example as a result of house price increases, are retained by the Housing Association. Typically profits ("surpluses") can be recycled into investment into new affordable housing, or to other support Housing Association services (such as spend on community projects) as bound by their articles of association.

**■ Buildings: Safety**

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[46153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on what date he plans to publish the prospectus for the Building Safety Fund; and when that fund will be operational.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The prospectus for the £1 billion Building Safety Fund will be published this month and will open for registrations soon after.

**■ Community Assets: Coronavirus**

**Alex Sobel:** [\[45420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will extend the five-year listing period of Assets of Community Value currently listed on council registers under provisions in the Localism Act 2011 to cover the duration of the covid-19 lockdown; and if he will make a statement.

**Luke Hall:**

The matter of whether a building or land should be listed as an Asset of Community Value is a decision for local authorities. The five-year listing period set out in the Assets of Community Value scheme is one of several clearly defined thresholds which ensures that all parties are clear about how the scheme operates and their rights and responsibilities. There are no plans to amend this scheme in the short-term, however the government is committed to making it easier for community groups to protect and take over local assets and will continue to explore options to strengthen the rights of community groups do so.

**■ Council Tax: Empty Property****Caroline Nokes:**[\[45154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether local authorities may extend the three month discount on council tax for empty properties.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

The power to offer a council tax discount on empty properties is at the discretion of local authorities who can determine both the level of the discount and the length of time that it should be applied

**■ Food Supply: Coronavirus****Sarah Champion:**[\[46681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of dedicated local authority phone lines that have been set up to provide support for vulnerable people with getting access to food during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government is working closely with local authorities in the response to Covid-19. This includes supporting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to Covid-19 and have been advised by the Government to shield, as well as people who are vulnerable for other reasons. Local authorities are supporting with a wide range of functions including supplementing nationally provided food boxes where shielding individuals have additional support needs and providing social contact for those who are isolated.

As at 17 April, 98 per cent of local authorities had dedicated phone lines in place to provide support for the vulnerable in getting access to basic food supplies.

Local government and their Voluntary Community Sector partners are well-placed to understand and meet the needs of vulnerable people in their communities.

**Hate Crime: Coronavirus****Bambos Charalambous:** [\[46773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential threat of hate crimes towards the Chinese diaspora in the UK after the lockdown due to the covid-19 outbreak has been lifted.

**Bambos Charalambous:** [\[46774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential risk of hate crime towards the Muslim community in the UK once the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

**Bambos Charalambous:** [\[46775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential risk of hate crime towards the Jewish community in the UK once the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government takes hate crime and discrimination of any kind very seriously. We are alert to the risks that an easing of the lockdown restrictions presents and will not tolerate hate crime under any circumstances. We will not however speculate on potential future trends. We are a tolerant and welcoming multicultural society and we have one of the strongest legal frameworks in the world to report, record and prosecute hate crime. I would encourage anyone who experiences hate crime to report it to the police.

Government's Hate Crime Action Plan published in October 2018 sets out a comprehensive programme of work across Government and the police. We fund hate crime reporting platforms, including True Vision, and we continue to engage with communities of all backgrounds and local leaders including councils and the police to make sure we are aware of any concerns communities may have and can provide targeted support.

**Homelessness: Coronavirus****Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[45289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to help local authorities cover the costs of accommodating homeless people who have no recourse to public funds during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government is aware of concerns about those with no recourse to public funds experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis.

We are ensuring local authorities are supported, with £3.2 million in targeted funding to help support individuals who are sleeping rough off the streets, and an additional

£3.2 billion provided to local authorities as part of the wider government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This funding has been provided to help local authorities to reduce risks to public health and to support individuals on the basis of need.

The legal position on those with no recourse to public funds has not been amended.

The Government recognises that these are unprecedented times, and expects local authorities to support people who are sleeping rough, and also to minimise unnecessary risks to public health, acting within the law.

## ■ **Housing: Construction**

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[46154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment has he made of the effect of the First Homes scheme on the level of Section 106 contributions to social and affordable (a) rent and (b) shared ownership.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We have recently consulted on both the design of First Homes policy and options for its implementation. The consultation closed on 1 May and we are currently analysing the responses. As part of this we are considering the implications for other tenures.

We will publish a response to the consultation in due course.

## ■ **Lease: Bullying**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[45279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many complaints of bullying have been made against employees of Lease in each of the last three years.

**Luke Hall:**

The data figures requested fall below the safe threshold at which the Department could consider this sensitive data to be anonymous. As such the data requested cannot be provided, due to potential risk of disclosure of individuals' identity where bullying allegations have been made.

## ■ **Local Government Finance: Coronavirus**

**Jonathan Gullis:**

[\[45500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what fiscal steps he is taking to support (a) Stoke-on-Trent City Council, (b) Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and (c) Staffordshire County Council during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

The Government has made a commitment to support all authorities with the additional cost pressures from the extra work and the specific tasks we have asked them to carry out as a result of the pandemic, including in relation to social care –

both adult and children's, public health services, shielding the most vulnerable, homelessness and rough sleeping, supporting the NHS and managing excess deaths.

The £3.2 billion package of support, which has distributed £16.1 million to Stoke-on-Trent, £1.4 million to Newcastle-under-Lyme and £37.8 million to Staffordshire, recognises the additional costs and pressures on finances councils are facing as a result of the current crisis. It demonstrates the Government's commitment to making sure all councils have the resources they need to support their communities through this challenging time. This is a significant package of support which responds to the range of pressures councils have told us they are facing.

### ■ Local Government: Coronavirus

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

**[45108]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to provide additional longer term financial support to local authorities during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

This Government has made available £3.2 billion in un-ringfenced funding to local authorities, and introduced measures to ease immediate cashflow pressures, to make sure they have the resources they need to continue fighting the coronavirus pandemic

The package recognises the additional costs and pressures on finances which councils are facing as a result of the current crisis. It demonstrates the Government's commitment to make sure councils, including upper and lower tier authorities, have the resources they need to support their communities through this challenging time

Government is also providing additional resources to councils to support with specific issues, including an additional £600 million to support providers through a new Adult Social Care Infection Control and Workforce Resilience Fund

The Spending Review, later this year, will be the appropriate time to look at funding for local government in the round, and we will communicate our plans as early as we can through the provisional settlement. We will continue to engage councils on the best approach to the next financial year and work together to ensure they are managing as the pandemic progresses.

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

**[45110]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to compensate local authorities for loss of revenue from car parking receipts during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

**[45111]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to compensate local authorities for loss of revenue from rents during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

The Government is aware of the impact on local authorities' financial position as a result of Covid-19. We are collecting monitoring data on a monthly basis on income and expenditure. We will share a summary of the returns in due course. I would like to encourage local authorities to keep engaging with us through the second round of returns, which will provide valuable data about what is happening on the front-line.

On 28 April the Local Government Secretary announced allocations to individual local authorities of the additional £1.6 billion of funding to support councils in delivering essential front line services, that was announced on 18 April. The grant has been paid as an un-ringfenced amount, recognising local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the additional Covid-19 service pressures in their area. This funding is in addition to the £1.6 billion announced on 19 March.

The Government has made a commitment to support all authorities with the additional cost pressures from the extra work and the specific tasks we have asked them to carry out as a result of the pandemic, including in relation to social care – both adult and children's, public health services, shielding the most vulnerable, homelessness and rough sleeping, supporting the NHS and managing excess deaths.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[45329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the cost to (a) City of York Council and (b) other local authorities; and what plans he has to allocate additional financial support to those local authorities.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

Councils are providing monthly data to MHCLG on financial pressures they are facing due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This data collection is not a formal return but a best estimate that is helping to inform the Government's work to support local authorities.

The Government has made a commitment to support all authorities with the additional cost pressures from the extra work and the specific tasks we have asked them to carry out as a result of the pandemic, including in relation to social care – both adult and children's, public health services, shielding the most vulnerable, homelessness and rough sleeping, supporting the NHS and managing excess deaths.

The City of York Council has been allocated £10.4 million from the national total of £3.2 billion, to help respond to the Covid-related pressures they face.

**Local Government: Suffolk****Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[45109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he has taken to support the merger of Babergh and Mid-Suffolk district councils.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

In 2010 Babergh and Mid-Suffolk Councils engaged with my Department and with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) regarding a merger of the two districts, but in 2011 the Councils decided not to go ahead following a local referendum. There was further engagement with the Councils in 2018 about a possible merger, which again was not progressed, and currently there is no proposal for merger with the Department

**Local Plans: Coronavirus****Tom Tugendhat:****[45303]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has plans to relax the requirement on local planning authorities to meet their five year housing land supply in line with the postponement of local plan inspections during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Christopher Pincher:**

It is important to keep the planning system moving as much as we can, so that it is able to play its full part in the economic recovery to come. We note the concerns some authorities are raising on 5 year housing land supply and we will continue to monitor the situation.

On 13 May the Secretary of State announced measures to further support house building. This included: allowing more flexible working hours on construction sites which will support these sites in meeting social distancing requirements; a statement that site visits and the use of digital technology and virtual meetings should become the norm in planning casework by mid-June; and introducing a range of temporary measures to make it easier to operate the planning system, especially the development management process, within the current public health guidelines. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-planning-update>

**Markets: Coronavirus****Chi Onwurah:****[45189]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support the Government is providing to markets during the covid-10 lockdown; and what discussions he has had with the National Association of Britains Market Authorities to identify the requisite Government support.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

Retail markets are part of the fabric of towns and cities across the country. With the current closure of outdoor and indoor markets, with the exception of market stalls which offer essential retail, such as grocery and food, Government has been working with key stakeholders in the retail markets industry to monitor the impacts of the current situation and explore what support is needed. This includes the National

Association of British Market Authorities, with whom officials have active and ongoing engagement, including through the Retail Markets Forum on 4 May.

Self-employed market traders will be able to benefit from the support the Government announced on 26 March for the self-employed. The self-employed are eligible for a taxable grant worth 80 per cent of their average monthly profits over the last three years, up to £2,500 per month, through the coronavirus (Covid-19) Self-employment Income Support Scheme.

Eligible market stalls with a rateable value will also benefit from flat rate payments of £10,000 under the grant scheme for the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors announced on 17 March 2020.

On 1 May 2020 the Business Secretary announced that a further up to £617 million is being made available to local authorities in England to allow them to provide discretionary grants. This additional Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs but not liable for business rates or rates reliefs, including regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment.

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[45190]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on markets; and what discussions he has had with local authorities that operate markets on the provision of Government financial support for markets during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

Retail markets are part of the fabric of towns and cities across the country. With the current closure of outdoor and indoor markets, with the exception of market stalls which offer essential retail, such as grocery and food, Government has been working with key stakeholders in the retail markets industry to monitor the impacts of the current situation and explore what support is needed, including the National Association of British Market Authorities, who liaise with local authorities and the Local Government Association.

We agree that retail markets will have an important role to play in helping the revival of high streets and town centres in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, and Government will continue to work with the retail markets industry to help facilitate this.

## ■ Neighbourhood Development Plans: Coronavirus

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

**[45112]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to dispense with the need for community referendums to ratify neighbourhood plans during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department has no plans to remove the requirement for neighbourhood planning referendums during the COVID-19 pandemic as it is important that communities have

the final say on whether plans should be brought in to force. Regulations that postpone referendums until May 2021 will continue to be kept under review. We have made it clear in planning guidance that neighbourhood plans awaiting referendum can be given significant weight in planning decisions.

■ **Parish Councils: Finance**

**Dr Andrew Murrison:** [45026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will list parish councils by (a) reserves held and (b) indebtedness.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

This information is not held centrally.

■ **Parking: Coronavirus**

**John Redwood:** [44942]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will (a) encourage local authorities to provide additional free parking close to centres of employment while restrictions on the use of public transport during the covid-19 outbreak are in place and (b) reimburse those authorities for the provision of that free parking.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

In line with the Government's position on localism, parking is the responsibility of local authorities and it is for them to determine what is appropriate in their own area. However, central government does have an interest in how car parks are managed and is working closely with local government stakeholders to keep parking policies and guidance under review during the COVID-19 response. We have recently published guidance on Safer Public Places, which includes recommendations for the adaptation and management of urban centres and green spaces to facilitate social distancing.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/884698/A4\\_Portrait\\_Content\\_Document\\_REV\\_H\\_low\\_res.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884698/A4_Portrait_Content_Document_REV_H_low_res.pdf)

■ **Planning Permission: Coronavirus**

**Chi Onwurah:** [46646]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to undertake a review of review of the adequacy of space standards in planning regulations as a result of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Local planning authorities are able to apply the optional technical Nationally Described Space Standard where justified, through their development plan policies. The Government does not plan to review its space standard at present, although it does intend to consult shortly on the application of optional technical standards for accessible housing under Part M of the Building Regulations.

## ■ Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[45291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 4 May 2020 to Question 40672 on Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus, what plans he has to extend the current ban on tenant evictions; and if he will make a statement.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Emergency legislation is now in place so that landlords will not be able to start proceedings to evict their tenants for at least a three-month period. The courts have also suspended housing possession proceedings. As a result of these measures, no tenant in private or social accommodation needs to be concerned about the threat of eviction during this time.

The emergency legislation provides powers that allows the Government to keep this protection under review as efforts to tackle COVID-19 progress. Any decision to alter the duration of these emergency measures will be informed by the wider government approach to lockdown measures and Public Health England guidance, alongside consideration of the needs of tenants as well as landlords.

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[45293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to temporarily amend the right to treat rent as lawfully due for the purposes of (a) Schedule 15, Case 1, Rent Act 1977, (b) Schedule 2, Ground 1 of the Housing Act 1985 or (c) Schedule 2, Grounds 8, 10, or 11 of the Housing Act 1988 in order to prevent people renting their homes from being subject to eviction proceedings due to arrears caused by loss of income as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Emergency legislation is now in place so that landlords will not be able to start proceedings to evict their tenants for at least a three-month period. The courts have also suspended housing possession proceedings. As a result of these measures, no tenant in private or social accommodation needs to be concerned about the threat of eviction during this time. We have also been clear in guidance that there is a need for landlords to offer support and understanding to tenants – and any guarantor – who may see their income fluctuate. This could include reaching a temporary agreement not to seek possession action for a period of time and instead, pause payments or accept a lower level of rent, or agree a plan to pay off arrears at a later date. The Government has also put in place significant financial support measures to help renters continue to pay their living costs, including rent. This includes support for businesses to pay staff salaries, strengthening the welfare safety-net with a £7 billion boost to Universal Credit, and increasing the Local Housing Allowance rates so that they are set at the 30th percentile of market rents in each area. Any decision to alter the duration of these emergency measures will be informed by the wider government approach to lockdown measures and Public Health England guidance, alongside consideration of the needs of tenants as well as landlords.

## ■ Private Rented Housing: Evictions

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[45292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to repeal Section 21 of the Housing Act 1985, as announced in the Queen's Speech in December 2019; and if he will make a statement.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Plans to reform tenancy law, including the proposed repeal of Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, were announced in the Queen's Speech. A Renters' Reform Bill will enhance renters' security and improve protections for short-term tenants by abolishing 'no-fault' evictions and represents a generational change in the law that governs private renting.

Our recent consultation 'A New Deal for Renting: Resetting the balance of rights and responsibilities between landlords and tenants' sought views from across the private and social rented sectors. We received almost 20,000 responses to the consultation, which will be carefully considered. We will respond fully to the consultation on Tenancy Reform in due course, when the urgent concerns of this emergency have passed.

## ■ Rented Housing: Coronavirus

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[45294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an estimate of the number of people in rented property who have fallen into arrears since 23 March 2020 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department does not routinely collect information on rent arrears.

Emergency legislation is now in place so that landlords will not be able to start proceedings to evict their tenants for at least a three-month period. The courts have also suspended housing possession proceedings. As a result of these measures, no tenant in private or social accommodation needs to be concerned about the threat of eviction during this time.

In addition, the Government has introduced an unprecedented financial support package to help renters continue to pay their living costs, including rent. This includes support for businesses to pay staff salaries, strengthening the welfare safety-net with a £7 billion boost to Universal Credit, and increasing the Local Housing Allowance rates so that they are set at the 30th percentile of market rents in each area.

We have also been clear in guidance that there is a need for landlords to offer support and understanding to tenants – and any guarantor – who may see their income fluctuate. This could include reaching a temporary agreement not to seek possession action for a period of time and instead, pause payments or accept a lower level of rent, or agree a plan to pay off arrears at a later date.

## ■ Repossession Orders: Coronavirus

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[45295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of the temporary ban on eviction proceedings on the ability of local authorities to follow Closure Orders with proceedings to repossess a property.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Practice Direction to the courts suspending all possession proceedings applies for 90 days from 27th March 2020, and to all new and existing housing possessions proceedings. The Practice Direction is in line with public health advice and provides a temporary protection from eviction as a result of possession proceedings.

The effect of this is that landlords may start possession proceedings following a closure order, after giving notice – which has been extended to 3 months for most tenancies. However, the proceedings will not then be progressed while the Practice Direction is in force.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to anti-social behaviour. These provisions remain in place and these powers and tools continue to be applicable during the current period. It is for local agencies to determine whether their use is appropriate in the specific circumstances.

## ■ Sleeping Rough: Coronavirus

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[45290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 5 May 2020 to Question 40670, what estimate he has made of how many people continue to sleep rough before the end of the provision of emergency accommodation for rough sleepers during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Hall:**

This is a public health crisis more than anything and so requires a health response. To enable this our priority was to bring vulnerable people inside so they can self-isolate and stop the virus spreading.

In order to support local authorities to make offers of accommodation and reduce the risk to some of the most vulnerable in society, MHCLG has asked all local authorities to provide information on their rough sleeping cohort.

At the beginning of this crisis, local authorities across England provided an estimate of the total number of people sleeping rough and in accommodation with communal sleeping spaces, such as night shelters as at the beginning of this crisis and of this cohort, the total number of people offered accommodation to date. There are a range of factors that can impact on the numbers of people seen or thought to be sleeping

rough on any given night and we recognise that the movement of those new to the streets will impact the numbers of people seen to be sleeping rough.

More than 5,400 rough sleepers – over 90 per cent of those on the streets at the beginning of the crisis and known to local authorities – have been offered safe accommodation ensuring some of the most vulnerable people can stay safe during the pandemic. This includes those rough sleeping or who have been living in accommodation with communal sleeping spaces such as night shelters.

This is a truly remarkable achievement, and one which is the result of the hard work of local government, agencies and charities across the country, who have helped to get people off the street and into safe accommodation, protecting the most vulnerable in society and ultimately saving lives.

### ■ Temporary Accommodation

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[46648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people in the UK have been placed in emergency housing as a result of a risk of homelessness in (a) March and (b) April 2020.

**Luke Hall:**

Over 90 per cent of rough sleepers known to councils at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis have now been made offers of safe accommodation and we have announced Dame Louise Casey will spearhead the next phase of the Government's support for rough sleepers during the pandemic. As a result, we are ensuring some of the most vulnerable in society are protected from the pandemic. This includes those rough sleeping or who have been living in accommodation with communal sleeping spaces such as night shelters.

We have overhauled statutory homelessness data collection alongside the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. This will give us better insights into the causes of homelessness and the support people need. The new statutory homelessness data collection is called H-CLIC.

MHCLG publishes the H-CLIC data return on homelessness applications on a quarterly basis. The next statistics are due to be published in the coming weeks

## INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### ■ Bangladesh: Migrant Camps

**Rushanara Ali:**

[\[45217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the provision of (a) treatment, (b) beds and (c) medical facilities in Cox's Bazaar for people with covid-19.

**Nigel Adams:**

From the start of the crisis, DFID has worked with partners to help mitigate the impact of the virus on the Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar. UK funding is helping to establish isolation and treatment centres to treat severe and critical cases, as well as the delivery of home-based healthcare and monitoring. We are also assisting with the provision of oxygen supplies for the isolation and treatment facilities; and supporting WHO to coordinate the health response with the Government, including surveillance, diagnosis, infection prevention and control, triage, referral, case management, and logistics.

Whilst every effort is being made to prevent transmission in the camps and scale up the health care system, the highly congested conditions and vulnerability of the population will pose major challenges when cases appear and reach peak levels.

**Rushanara Ali:**[\[45218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to support the establishment of covid-19 testing and quarantining arrangements for the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar.

**Nigel Adams:**

From the start of the COVID-19 crisis, DFID has engaged with the Government of Bangladesh and the humanitarian operation in Cox's Bazar to support preparedness activities, including the capacity to test, isolate and treat COVID-19 patients. There is now a field laboratory operating in Cox's Bazar Medical College, though the number of daily tests remains limited.

The UK has provided funds to UN agencies that are responsible for quarantining arrangements. There is a system in place for newly arrived refugees who are required to stay for a period of 14 days in a designated quarantine facility, following a full medical screening.

UK funding will help establish isolation and treatment centres, that are equipped to treat severe and critical cases, and capacity to deliver home-based healthcare and monitoring.

**■ Bangladesh: Rohingya****Rushanara Ali:**[\[45216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent steps her Department has taken to ensure the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

**Nigel Adams:**

DFID is working closely with our partners to ensure the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. As the second largest donor to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh, with £256 million provided since August 2017, the UK is committed to protecting the Rohingya community, among the world's most vulnerable people. We ensure consistent, in-depth monitoring, including regular field visits, though these are

now restricted due to the COVID-19 crisis. We are also actively involved in UN and development partner coordination processes to identify and address issues which are affecting the effectiveness of the response. This includes active engagement with the Government of Bangladesh Inter-sector Coordination Group and individual sectors of the response working on, for example, shelter, nutrition, and reproductive health services.

We work closely with the UN Office for Project Services to maintain oversight of our support on the ground. We recently assisted them to establish an office in Cox's Bazar, including staff funded by UK aid, to enhance coordination and routine monitoring.

#### ■ **Burma: CDC**

**Stephen Doughty:**

[\[46671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how much CDC has invested in companies operating in Myanmar in each of the last five years; and what the names are of those companies.

**James Duddridge:**

The amount CDC invested into companies in Myanmar in the each of the last five years is:

2015	NIL
2016	\$50,965,888
2017	\$5,534,404
2018	\$2,021,605
2019	\$20,273,679

The names of companies that received investment in this period are: Shan Orchard, Frontiir Co. Ltd, Solar Home Pte Ltd, MC Easy Microfinance Co. Ltd, Alliance for Microfinance in Myanmar Ltd, Advans Myanmar, Irrawaddy Green Tower Project.

**Stephen Doughty:**

[\[46672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether her Department routinely assesses CDC investments against her Department's partnership principles; and what assessment her Department has made of CDC's recent investment in Frontiir in Myanmar against those principles.

**James Duddridge:**

The Partnership Principles play an important role in the UK Government's decision-making process, helping to inform the extent to which we work directly with partner governments in countries where we have a bilateral aid programme.

CDC invests in private companies to achieve development impact. It does not lend to governments or invest in state owned enterprises. The Partnership Principles do not readily apply when making investments in private companies, however CDC nonetheless ensures that all its investee companies meet high environmental, social and governance standards through their Code of Responsible Investing.

CDC's investment into Frontiir followed their [Code of Responsible Investing](#).

## ■ **Burma: Elections**

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

**[45090]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what support her Department is providing to Burma in relation to the parliamentary elections to be held in November 2020 in that country.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government continues to support the ongoing democratic transition in Myanmar. Having committed £7.1 million between June 2019 to July 2021 to election support. The major focus is on raising public awareness and encouraging participation in the election, with emphasis on marginalised groups and the youth – aware of the fact that there are approximately 5 million people voting for the first time in 2020. The support also aims to support civil society initiatives, including local monitoring of elections.

Around 20% of this assistance is in the form of technical assistance and advice provided by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems to the Union Electoral Commission (UEC) to enable them to effectively change laws and procedures to align with international and regional best practices, and to provide the training that will allow the UEC to work towards more credible, fair, open and inclusive elections. This support is enabling open and constructive dialogues between UEC, civil society and political parties during the critical period prior to the 2020 elections.

## ■ **Burma: Frontiir**

**Stephen Doughty:**

**[46670]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what due diligence was carried out by CDC on the company Frontiir, operating in Myanmar, prior to their investment in that company.

**James Duddridge:**

In addition to a financial and development impact assessment, when making an investment CDC evaluates a wide range of Environmental and Social (E&S), as well as Business Integrity, risks through a rigorous due diligence process. All of CDC's investments follow its [Code of Responsible Investing](#).

In the case of CDC's investment into Frontiir, this included a stand-alone E&S due diligence with the terms of reference explicitly aligned to the CDC Code of Responsible Investing. The methodology included a site visit to Frontiir's operations and a review of relevant documentation. The scope of the due diligence placed a

focus on contextual factors including implications for any disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, indigenous peoples, alignment with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, forced labour/child labour, occupational health and safety and understanding how data security and privacy are handled, including censorship and government disclosure.

CDC provides further guidance on due diligence in its [ESG Toolkit](#).

## ■ **Burma: Overseas Aid**

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

**[45085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether her Department has plans to undertake a review of the Official Development Assistance it allocates to Burma.

**Nigel Adams:**

In response to the Rohingya crisis, in 2018 DFID reviewed and reshaped its programme in Myanmar to better focus on meeting the needs of the poorest, the most malnourished and excluded. This includes doing more in conflict-affected areas and with displaced people and refugees. Across Myanmar over 6 million people benefit from UK aid. DFID Myanmar does not provide any direct financial support to the Government of Myanmar and has introduced an enhanced due diligence regime for the private sector, including asking partners to avoid working with military owned companies. Allocations for all programmes are subject to rigorous due diligence and ongoing monitoring to enhance effectiveness and strategic impact.

In 2019, DFID again conducted a full review of its strategy. This review took stock of the changing conflict dynamics across the country, including the increasing conflict in Rakhine state, and the changing political situation in the country in the run up to the anticipated 2020 election. For DFID Myanmar this has reinforced the need to focus on supporting the most vulnerable including finding more durable solutions for Myanmar's long-term displaced population and helping to strengthen the longer-term foundations for peace, prosperity, inclusion and democracy. In the last two months DFID Myanmar have again reviewed their portfolio given COVID-19. They have prioritised supporting the health and humanitarian response, whilst addressing the possible secondary impacts on the economy, society and conflict. A cross-Whitehall discussion was convened in April to review DFID Myanmar's plans for responding to COVID-19.

## ■ **Burma: Refugees**

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

**[45087]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what additional Official Development Assistance her Department has allocated to tackling the covid-19 pandemic in relation to internally displaced people in Burma.

**Nigel Adams:**

DFID is monitoring the spread COVID-19 cases in Myanmar closely and have adapted programmes in response. The primary focus is on the needs of the most

vulnerable especially Internally Displaced Peoples and those living in conflict affected areas. The Secretary of State has agreed an additional £10 million in humanitarian funding to reinforce humanitarian support in response to COVID-19. To help prepare the humanitarian response, DFID Myanmar are asking partners to stockpile sufficient food and medicines to ensure needs can be met in the case of future lockdowns and quarantines; rapidly expanding water and sanitation facilities in camps and surrounding villages and treating severely malnourished children. They are also expanding food supplies to support newly vulnerable groups, advocating for access to health services, and supporting social distancing measures, including through aid delivery. DFID are ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable against increased risks of trafficking and violence against women through awareness campaigns.

The UK welcomed the decision of the Government to establish a committee to coordinate the COVID-19 response with the Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs). The ultimate success of the committee will need to be judged on the effectiveness of the Committee in enhancing the response to COVID-19 in ethnic areas, including Rakhine State.

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

**[45088]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she has held with her Burmese counterpart on restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid to internally displaced people in the states of (a) Rakhine, (b) Kachin and (c) Shan.

**Nigel Adams:**

On 1 April, Ambassadors in Yangon, including the UK Ambassador, issued a public call for a ceasefire to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid and to protect vulnerable internally displaced people from COVID-19. The UK Ambassador and DFID Country Director have actively engaged with the Myanmar Ministers and officials to raise the issue of conflict, access constraints, protection for aid workers, the internet ban and the potential impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable. On 12 May, the UK Ambassador raised the need to ensure that the most vulnerable and hardest to reach in Rakhine were included in the Burmese Government's "no-one left behind" policy with the Minister for the State Councillor's Office, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.

A specific area of concern is the safety of humanitarian workers. In particular, the UK was extremely concerned by the death of a WHO driver who was shot on 20 April while transporting COVID-19 samples. On 23 April, I sent my condolences to the family of the WHO staff member and raised the need for a ceasefire in Rakhine as well as for aid workers to have access and protection. DFID will continue to work with the UN, International Committee of the Red Cross, INGO's and civil society partners to ensure humanitarian support is provided to those who are vulnerable and most at risk, including Internally Displaced Peoples across Myanmar.

## ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[45371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to support countries that have not reached the peak of the covid-19 outbreak to lower those peaks with prevention projects and programmes.

**Wendy Morton:**

We are helping countries that have not yet reached the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak to respond to COVID-19 by funding bilateral programmes and multilateral organisations, globally and in specific countries.

This includes (1) supporting governments of lower income countries to prevent, detect and respond to COVID-19, (2) providing medical supplies and equipment to health facilities, (3) raising public awareness on the importance of hygiene for preventing the spread of infection; and (4) increasing access to the tools that people need to follow this advice such as handwashing stations, hygiene products and drinking water.

To date, the UK has committed £744 million to support global efforts to tackle COVID-19. £276 million of this will support vulnerable countries to respond and to become more resilient to the impact of COVID-19.

## ■ Coronavirus: Health Services

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[45234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what plans the Government has to use its position as co-host of the Coronavirus Global Response Summit to support legally binding arrangements with private and public partners to ensure that health technologies resulting from public investment are (a) priced fairly and affordably to healthcare payers and (b) free to the public at the point of care in all countries.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK is at the forefront of global efforts to ensure equitable access to potential COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests, and is funding key organisations central to the global response. We have committed over £313 million of UK aid to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the Wellcome Therapeutics Accelerator and the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics. This, alongside our £1.65 billion pledge to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, will support the development, manufacture and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests for people in the Global South.

We are proud to have co-led the successful Coronavirus Global Response Initiative pledging event on 4 May, which raised 7.4 billion Euros. The Prime Minister took part by video message, reiterating his call at the G20 in March for leaders to collaborate to rapidly develop a vaccine, making it available to everyone who needs it. We are committed to continued collaboration with public and private partners in the UK and internationally to this end. The Foreign Secretary welcomed the Action for COVID-19

Tools (ACT) Accelerator initiative to support international collaboration on development and global access to COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics at its launch on 24 April.

## ■ Costa Rica: Coronavirus

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[45233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the proposal from the Government of Costa Rica for the World Health Organisation to create a global pool of rights in covid-19 related technologies for the detection, prevention, control and treatment of covid-19.

**Wendy Morton:**

Proposals for the development of, and access to, new COVID-19 tools are currently being discussed, including at the World Health Assembly. The UK has long supported affordable and equitable access to essential medicines, vaccines and other health commodities in the UK and globally, and has worked with others to make that happen through global and national partnerships. We are committed to collaborating with public and private partners in the UK and internationally, including exploring existing voluntary arrangements, such as patent pools, to accelerate development.

The UK is also at the forefront of global efforts to ensure equitable access to potential COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests. We have committed over £313 million of UK aid to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the Wellcome Therapeutics Accelerator and the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics. This funding, alongside our £1.65 billion pledge to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, will support the development, manufacture and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests for people in the Global South.

## ■ Crimes of Violence: Females

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[46811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that data collated by international development agencies is disaggregated by (a) age, (b) gender and (c) ethnicity to inform responses to support women and girls in vulnerable communities facing a heightened risk of gender-based violence.

**Wendy Morton:**

DFID's Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan sets out our ambitions to increase the collection and use of disaggregated data, and to work with the United Nations and others to improve disaggregation at a global level. This is critical to understand who is being left behind, why, and how to reach them. Our focus is on disaggregation by sex, age, disability status and geography in the first instance, whilst we work with others in the international system to develop tools to disaggregate by other variables. In the longer term, we will move towards additional disaggregation variables; we expect this to include income, race and ethnicity.

DFID is investing £6 million to support the UN Women-led flagship programme initiative on gender data – Making Every Woman and Girl Count – and the joint UN Programme on Violence Against Women and Girls data. These programmes are working with developing country governments to improve the production, availability, accessibility and use of quality data and statistics on gender equality and gender-based violence. This includes developing new global standards for measuring violence against older women. The programme is currently supporting rapid assessment surveys focused on understanding gendered impacts of COVID-19 across a number of countries.

### ■ Developing Countries: Biodiversity

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[45129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to help (a) sustain conservation efforts and (b) preserve biodiversity in conservation areas dependent upon tourism in developing countries in response to the covid-19 pandemic.

**James Duddridge:**

Tackling climate change and biodiversity loss remain a high priority for this Government. As we help developing countries tackle COVID-19 and its economic impact, we continue to pursue our environmental and climate change goals. The Government recognises that action on COVID-19 and on climate change and the environment are crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and that investing in nature can bring multiple benefits, such as building resilience, creating jobs, restoring ecosystems, improving health outcomes, as well as protecting biodiversity.

DFID has a number of programmes that tackle the underlying drivers and systems that contribute to environmental degradation, for example our significant support for sustainable forestry and land use. The UK is also a strong supporter of the Global Environment Facility, and we are working closely with them on a COVID-19 action plan.

DFID does not currently fund programmes that support ecotourism specifically. DFID officials are working with Defra counterparts to take forward the £100 million Biodiverse Landscape Fund announced by the Prime Minister, which may include support for ecotourism.

### ■ Developing Countries: Clothing

**Rushanara Ali:**

[\[45215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to support workers in the ready-made garment factories in developing countries who depend on business contracts from fashion firms in the UK and other western nations during the covid-19 pandemic.

**James Duddridge:**

Measures to control the spread of COVID-19 are having a profound impact on global trade and supply chains. We are aware that businesses have been affected by cancelled orders, and the Department is engaging with businesses in the UK and in developing countries to understand the challenges they face with respect to protecting incomes and livelihoods in their supply chains. We are working very closely with other parts of the UK government including the Department for International Trade.

We are also investing in sector analyses to understand the impacts of the crisis on factories, workers and supply chains and we are working with retailers to ensure that there is workplace and hygiene safety in place where factories are continuing to operate.

For example, in Bangladesh, through the Better Jobs in Bangladesh programme, DFID will be supporting around 1000 factories and their workers safely return to work when the factories re-open.

Officials have met with many British businesses in this sector and are working to establish a programme that would protect people working in overseas supply chains, including in these sectors, to ensure that their livelihoods are protected and British people can access the goods they need.

My Ministerial colleagues and I will continue to engage with businesses as we work together to support vulnerable workers in supply chains.

**■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus****Rushanara Ali:**[\[45214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to support people in developing countries at risk of falling into poverty as a result of covid-19.

**Wendy Morton:**

COVID-19 is the biggest threat this country has faced in a generation. And we are not alone. All over the world we are seeing the devastating impacts of this pandemic, to health and economies.

The UK is a global leader in international efforts on the COVID-19 response, having already pledged £744 million in UK aid. This assistance includes immediate life-saving humanitarian and health interventions as well as assistance for countries and populations coping with the economic shock of the pandemic. At the global level we have given an additional contribution of up to £150 million of UK aid to the International Monetary Fund's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust. This will help to provide Governments with the financial space to support health and social protection responses. We have also doubled our £2.2 billion loan to the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust. At the country level we are working with our partners to review and, where necessary, adjust our programmes to support the most vulnerable

populations, including preventing the reversal of so many hard-won development gains.

The UK is also using its foreign aid budget and British expertise to stop the spread of COVID-19 internationally, build resilience in vulnerable countries, find a vaccine, new drugs and therapeutics. This is the only long-term solution to the pandemic.

We are helping to prevent the poorest countries – which represent a quarter of the world's population - from collapse by supporting their economies and access to skills and education. This will help save millions of lives and reduce the risk of future waves of infection, that could come to the UK.

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[46052]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps his Department is taking to help enable covid-19 testing in low-income countries.

**Wendy Morton:**

DFID is at the forefront of the global response to COVID-19. We are using UK aid to its full effect to counter the health, humanitarian, and economic risks and impact of this pandemic in the developing world. We are working hard to ensure that our help reaches those most in need through close collaboration with our partners.

So far, the UK has provided up to £744 million of UK aid to help combat the virus and sent UK experts to support vulnerable countries to prepare for the virus. Funding includes research on vaccines, therapeutics and tests. The UK's £75 million funding to the World Health Organization helps support its key role in providing technical support countries to establish COVID-19 testing strategies and capacity. DFID is also providing up to £23 million to the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics, a global non-profit organisation driving innovation in the development and delivery of diagnostics to combat major diseases affecting the world's poorest populations.

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[46179]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to co-ordinate its response to covid-19 in developing countries with local community groups.

**Wendy Morton:**

We are playing a leading role in the global response to COVID-19. The UK has, to date, pledged up to £744 million of UK aid to mitigate the health, humanitarian, and economic risks and impacts of COVID-19 in support of the poorest and most vulnerable.

We are working hard to ensure that our help reaches those most in need through close collaboration with our partners. Civil society plays a particularly important role in ensuring UK aid reaches the most vulnerable communities. Much of our work is delivered through our extensive country office network. We are currently reviewing our programme portfolio to be more responsive to COVID-19. For example, we are working with groups in Bangladesh to support and help mobilise a nationwide

network of 50,000 Community Health Workers and volunteers to raise awareness of COVID-19 in their communities.

The UK is also providing £55 million to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. They play a unique role in slowing the spread of this virus at the community level, by supporting local preparations and public communication on how to reduce risk.

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[46180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to adapt existing programmes to respond to the covid-19 pandemic in developing countries.

**Wendy Morton:**

We have focused our portfolios to respond to COVID-19 to ensure we are operating as flexibly and quickly as possible, responsive to need and context – and linking the health response with the economic response and social protection. This includes focusing over one hundred existing bilateral health and humanitarian programmes relevant to the COVID-19 response across 35 countries and regions to support developing countries and provide a safety net for the most vulnerable.

The UK is also at the forefront of the multilateral response and we are actively working with international partners to better track, monitor and respond to the impact of COVID-19.

## ■ Developing Countries: Disease Control

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[45191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what effect the covid-19 pandemic has had on her Department's planned budget for supporting developing countries in tackling future pandemic outbreaks.

**Wendy Morton:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of building strong and resilient systems to protect people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, against risks including health threats.

During the current pandemic, we want to ensure that any new investments we make to respond to COVID-19, also help to build back stronger systems in the longer term, including for health, nutrition, water and sanitation. At the same time, we are keeping a focus on our long-term investments to strengthen and scale up crisis response and preparedness systems through technical assistance and financial support directly to countries, through supporting the multilateral system, including the development banks, the World Health Organization, global health initiatives and other agencies to provide technical assistance and programmes, as well as funding research and development to increase access and reduce prices for new and existing essential health commodities.

**■ Disaster Relief: Coronavirus****Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[45457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what plans she has to increase the Rapid Response Facility for covid-19 to help support a rapid humanitarian response.

**James Cleverly:**

Decisions on allocating funds through the Rapid Response Facility (RRF) are being made in relation to the wider DFID COVID19 response. We will keep the funding under review as we do with all our humanitarian interventions. DFID is also adapting its programmes across its country network to respond to COVID-19 and has committed significant new funding through the multilateral system. We expect NGOs to play a key role in delivery through both these channels, and indeed recognise that in many places NGOs will be best placed to meet the needs of those most vulnerable, at risk and hard to reach. In addition, extra funding has been allocated to NGOs through the DFID Unilever COVID-19 Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition.

**■ Environment Protection: Education****Harriett Baldwin:**[\[42017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of global education in reducing carbon emissions and tackling climate change.

**James Duddridge:**

The world must take increased, urgent action to tackle climate change and environmental degradation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Across the world governments, businesses, financial institutions, communities and individuals all need to play a part, and the Government is working hard so that, at the international climate summit next year in Glasgow, we accelerate progress to address these twin global challenges. Education, training and public awareness have a vital role in increasing the understanding of the impacts of climate change and our ability to respond and adapt.

**■ Overseas Aid: Charities****Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[45456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to establish a £320 million stabilisation fund to ensure that UK charities working internationally can continue to operate during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Wendy Morton:**

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are key partners for DFID in our response to COVID-19 and we have pledged new funding specifically for CSOs to support our work to tackle the virus. This includes funding allocated through the Rapid Response Facility and significant funding through the DFID Unilever COVID-19 Hygiene and

Behaviour Change Coalition. In addition, International Non-Government Organisations will receive funding through multilateral organisations as downstream partners as part of the UK's response. As DFID's country network adapts programming to respond to COVID-19, country teams are considering how they can do this through partners, including through CSOs. For example, in Sudan and Nepal, preparedness and response plans will support both UN and CSO operations.

We are working flexibly with existing civil society partners to respond to the pandemic, maintain delivery of essential programmes and manage the impacts on organisations and staff. DFID is also offering support to all suppliers, including civil society, in line with the provisions of the Cabinet Office Procurement Policy Note and associated guidance for grants, which allows for relief on services and goods provided in the UK, to DFID aid programmes as a last resort and on a case-by-case basis for DFID contracts and grants. UK-based CSOs are also eligible for the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

#### ■ Overseas Aid: Coronavirus

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[45372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, which countries in receipt of Official Development Assistance have yet to reach the peak for covid-19 infections.

**Wendy Morton:**

The number of new reported cases of COVID-19 is increasing every day in almost all countries in receipt of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Data from the World Health Organization shows that the only ODA-eligible countries where the epidemic currently appears to be shrinking are: Belize, Dominica, Fiji, Namibia, Suriname, Timor-Leste, Eritrea, Mauritius, Montserrat, Cambodia, Laos. Most ODA eligible countries are therefore unlikely to have reached peak infections.

So far, the UK has pledged £744 million of UK aid to help end this pandemic as quickly as possible. This includes support to Imperial College London and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to model the future trajectory of the pandemic in low- and middle-income countries. This will help countries predict when they will reach their peaks, and to put in place measures to reduce their size.

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

[\[45459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if she will publish the funding her Department has allocated to each programme responding to the covid-19 pandemic.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK is at the forefront of the global response and has publicly committed up to £744 million of UK aid so far to support the global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19. This is split across three areas 1) £276 million to support UN, NGOs and Red Cross efforts to build resilience in vulnerable countries 2) £318 million to find a vaccine, new drugs and therapeutics and 3) £150 million to support countries facing the economic shock of COVID-19.

This is on top of our work to pivot much of our existing activity to provide health, humanitarian and economic support where it is needed most. This ongoing exercise includes close collaboration with our existing partners on their ability to operate and adapt their programmes during the pandemic.

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[46178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how much of the funding that her Department has allocated to international development multilaterals has been passed through to frontline NGOs and local groups responding to the covid-19 pandemic.

**Wendy Morton:**

NGOs are key partners for DFID in responding to the unprecedented challenges arising from COVID-19. We know that in many places NGOs will be best placed to meet the needs of those most at risk. About one quarter of our country programmes are delivered through CSOs.

The Secretary of State recently announced a further £200 million for charities and international organisations to tackle coronavirus in developing countries, which brings DFID's total support to date to £744 million. This includes funding for NGOs, including UK charities.

DFID is also adapting its programmes across our country network to respond to COVID-19 and we have committed significant new funding through the multilateral system. NGOs are also receiving significant extra funding through the DFID COVID-19 Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition. We will continue to keep our humanitarian investments under review.

DFID has been engaging regularly with the NGO sector to understand the challenges they are facing in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, including regular virtual meetings with Baroness Sugg and our Permanent Secretary, Nick Dyer. There will also be a roundtable on 21 May with the Secretary of State.

## ■ Overseas Aid: Non-governmental Organisations

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

[\[45458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether she plans to introduce greater flexibility for existing donor funds for UK NGOs to support the covid-19 response.

**Wendy Morton:**

The expertise, resilience and flexibility of our supply partners, both in the private sector and civil society, is vital to deliver UK aid to protect the most vulnerable in the world's poorest countries.

DFID is currently reviewing its entire portfolio and assessing the expected impact of COVID-19 on our programmes, both in-country and centrally, and prioritising (in this order) the health and humanitarian response; livelihoods, social protection, and support to the governments of vulnerable countries. Many of these programmes are delivered in part or wholly through NGOs. We are assessing each of our programmes

to evaluate their contribution to these objectives and for opportunities to adapt them to support the COVID-19 response.

## ■ Rohingya: Refugees

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[45089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how much and what proportion of Official Development Assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh has been allocated to Rohingya community organisations in refugee camps.

**Nigel Adams:**

Given the scale of the UK support to the Rohingya crisis, it is more effective to channel our funding through a limited number of organisations, both UN and NGOs. Our partners work with and consult thousands of Rohingya volunteers, including community organisations, women, and youth-led groups, on the COVID-19 response and in the delivery of critical services and programmes. There are, nevertheless, examples of DFID funding to community organisations such as the BRAC University Centre for Peace, which supports newly emergent Rohingya community organisations in the camps.

## ■ South Asia: Refugees

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[45086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what additional funding her Department has allocated to tackling the covid-19 pandemic in relation to refugees from Burma in (a) Bangladesh and (b) Thailand.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have allocated over £10 million to support COVID-19 preparedness efforts in the Rohingya camps and surrounding host communities in Bangladesh. This contribution has been allocated from previously announced funding and includes establishing treatment centres; distributing soap and building more handwashing structures; and producing and rolling out a range of communications tools to share vital information, including by reaching vulnerable older people with advice.

A majority of DFID's activities on the Thai/Myanmar border are now being focused on COVID-19 preparedness and response. On the Thai/Myanmar border, we have provided an additional funding to support the work of The Border Consortium (TBC) across nine of the refugee camps. On the Myanmar side we planning to provide funding of around funding, also through TBC. The funding will be used to carry out COVID-19 awareness activities and messaging in local languages, set up of hand washing facilities, increasing the value of the food vouchers to help households cope with lockdown training front line health workers and topping up civil society emergency response. This will benefit the refugees in Thailand and IDPs in Myanmar.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE****■ Overseas Trade: Far East****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[45970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to promote trade that was previously undertaken with China with Taiwan.

**Graham Stuart:**

China and Taiwan remain strategically important trade partners for the UK as the world recovers from Covid-19.

The Department is continuing work to identify market opportunities through its dedicated teams in Taipei and Beijing, who are ready to provide advice and support to ensure UK businesses take full advantage of emerging opportunities.

The UK also holds annual ministerial trade talks with Taiwan, and with China through the UK-China Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO), designed to develop our trading relationships further and improve market access.

**■ Trade Agreements: Dispute Resolution****Bill Esterson:**[\[45157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether it is her policy to include investor state dispute settlement mechanisms in international trade agreements.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

The precise details of any future Free Trade Agreement are a matter for formal negotiations, and we would not seek to pre-empt these discussions.

The United Kingdom has negotiated investment agreements with investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions with over 90 existing treaty partners and recognises the important role that investment protection standards can play in reassuring our investors abroad. For example, these provisions can ensure that the assets of British investors are not expropriated without compensation, and that they are not treated in a discriminatory or arbitrary manner.

**■ Turkey: Arms Trade****Kate Osamor:**[\[45339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government has issued any export licences to EDO MBM Technology Ltd for the export of military munitions and equipment or components to be used by the Turkish armed forces.

**Kate Osamor:**[\[45340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government has issued any export licences to companies for the export of military munitions and equipment or components to be used by the Turkish armed forces.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

Licences have been granted to both EDO MBM Technology Ltd and other companies for military items for use by the Turkish armed forces.

We continue to monitor the situation in Syria very closely and are considering the licensing position in the light of recent developments. No further export licences to Turkey, for items which might be used in military operations in Syria, will be granted while we do so.

HM Government publishes official statistics (on a quarterly and annual basis) about export licences on gov.uk; these reports contain detailed information on the type of export licences issued, refused or revoked, by destination type (e.g. military, other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences.

**JUSTICE****■ Child Arrangements Orders****Hilary Benn:**[\[46555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how Childcare Arrangement Orders are currently being enforced in respect of extended family members who have such an order in cases when access is being denied.

**Alex Chalk:**

The President of the Family Division has issued guidance on compliance with Child Arrangements Orders. A parent who is required by such an order to facilitate contact between their child and the other parent, or with another person named in the order, should continue to do so where practicable and consistent with the Government's updated guidance.

Where coronavirus restrictions cause the letter of a court order to be varied, the spirit of the order should nevertheless be delivered by making safe alternative arrangements for the child. Where either parent is reasonably self-isolating or genuinely protecting someone vulnerable then remote technology offers temporary alternative means by which to facilitate contact via telephone, the internet or social media which should be used. The Government encourages parents to adopt a pragmatic approach.

If an alleged breach of a Child Arrangements Order or other application is later brought to court then this will be a matter for judicial consideration.

**■ Fraud: Solicitors****Craig Whittaker:**[\[45125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what routes for compensation victims have when solicitors involved in fraud are struck off or jailed.

**Craig Whittaker:** [45126]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Solicitors Regulation Authority powers to compensate victims of land banking scams involving solicitors.

**Craig Whittaker:** [45127]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Solicitors Regulation Authority plans to change the discretionary status of compensations payments for victims of fraud involving a solicitor who has been struck-off.

**Craig Whittaker:** [45128]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans his Department has to review the (a) Legal Services Act 2007 and (b) Legal Services Board's oversight of the (i) Solicitors Regulation Authority and (ii) other regulatory bodies.

**Alex Chalk:**

Under the framework established by the Legal Services Act 2007, the legal profession in England and Wales, and the bodies that regulate it, are independent from government. It is the responsibility of the Legal Services Board (LSB), as oversight regulator, to ensure that the approved regulators are complying with the regulatory objectives set out in the 2007 Act.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) regulates the conduct of solicitors and those who breach the conduct rules can be struck off or prosecuted before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT).

The SRA has a discretionary compensation fund which is mainly for individuals where a solicitor's firm owes them money. The SRA does not routinely compensate consumers and it is not the role of the SRA to pursue funds lost by clients from specific financial schemes.

In response to the question on the discretionary compensation payments made by the SRA I refer the honourable Member to the answer I gave on 29 April 2020 to question PQ38895.

The latest reports on regulatory performance by the LSB are available online here <https://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/our-work/regulatory-performance#regulatory-performance-reports>.

There are no plans to review the Legal Services Act 2007. Arm's Length Bodies of the Ministry of Justice are subject to a regular cycle of reviews as part of the Cabinet Office Tailored Review programme. A Tailored Review of the LSB was published in July 2017 which found that the LSB is generally effective both in promoting the regulatory objectives set out in the Legal Services Act and in delivering its functions.

**Craig Whittaker:** [46031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will review the support available to victims of fraud involving a solicitor.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) regulates the conduct of solicitors and those who breach the conduct rules can be struck off or prosecuted before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT). Whilst the SRA does operate a compensation fund, this is for those who have suffered financial loss caused by a solicitor, rather than for those who have lost funds by other means. In response to the question of reviewing these discretionary compensation payments made by the SRA I refer the honourable Member to the answer I gave on 29 April 2020 to question PQ38895.

Where fraud cases are prosecuted, the court has powers to award compensation. In other cases, the Financial Ombudsman Service is available for complaints between consumers and businesses that provide financial services.

■ **Prison Accommodation****Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[46115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of inmates are housed in double cells in each prison as at May 2020; and if he will make a statement.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Upon arrival into custody, all prisoners' suitability to share a cell is risk assessed. These assessments are based on numerous factors including index offence, health concerns and security information (such as beliefs and prejudices).

We are creating additional space in the existing estate by deploying temporary accommodation cells. Alongside measures to limit prisoner movement and releasing low-risk offenders, this will help prevent our NHS being overwhelmed. These cells are a temporary measure to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Prisoners will return to their usual accommodation arrangements when it is safe to do so.

We have robust and flexible plans in place to keep staff, the public and prisoners safe. These are based on the latest public health advice, and there are positive early signs that these are proving effective.

The table below identifies the number of prisoners sharing cells holding two or more people as at 1 May 2020. The detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system.

PRISON	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS SHARING CELLS		PRISON	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS SHARING CELLS	
	PROPORTION	PROPORTION		PROPORTION	PROPORTION
Altcourse	673	64%	Leicester	234	72%
Ashfield	156	38%	Lewes	278	47%
Askham Grange	69	64%	Leyhill	0	0%

PRISON	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS		PRISON	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS	
	SHARING CELLS	PROPORTION		SHARING CELLS	PROPORTION
Aylesbury	0	0%	Lincoln	454	73%
Bedford	249	68%	Lindholme	328	36%
Belmarsh	473	59%	Littlehey	172	15%
Berwyn	1124	63%	Liverpool	428	61%
Birmingham	547	62%	Long Lartin	0	0%
Brinsford	250	49%	Low Newton	12	4%
Bristol	220	45%	Lowdham Grange	6	1%
Brixton	550	78%	Maidstone	60	10%
Bronzefield	110	23%	Manchester	316	41%
Buckley Hall	78	17%	Moorland	370	41%
Bullington	711	67%	New Hall	57	16%
Bure	10	2%	North Sea Camp	206	51%
Cardiff	436	61%	Northumberland	0	0%
Channings Wood	68	10%	Norwich	270	39%
Chelmsford	312	46%	Nottingham	378	46%
Coldingley	24	6%	Oakwood	832	42%
Cookham Wood	0	0%	Onley	156	22%
Dartmoor	0	0%	Parc	678	43%
Deerbolt	16	5%	Pentonville	596	65%
Doncaster	799	72%	Peterborough	372	45%
Dovegate	228	20%	Peterborough Female	88	30%
Downview	0	0%	Portland	134	27%

PRISON	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS		PRISON	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS	
	SHARING CELLS	PROPORTION		SHARING CELLS	PROPORTION
Drake Hall	59	22%	Prescoed	66	29%
Durham	832	87%	Preston	513	76%
East Sutton Park	96	99%	Ranby	326	34%
Eastwood Park	93	28%	Risley	196	18%
Elmley	735	65%	Rochester	254	41%
Erlestoke	74	15%	Rye Hill	158	24%
Exeter	340	70%	Send	0	0%
Featherstone	110	17%	Spring Hill	0	0%
Feltham	170	43%	Stafford	554	75%
Ford	0	0%	Standford Hill	0	0%
Forest Bank	847	60%	Stocken	248	24%
Foston Hall	118	39%	Stoke Heath	324	44%
Frankland	0	0%	Styal	227	61%
Full Sutton	0	0%	Sudbury	304	59%
Garth	22	3%	Swaleside	0	0%
Gartree	24	3%	Swansea	294	77%
Grendon	0	0%	Swinfen Hall	90	16%
Guys Marsh	102	23%	Thameside	702	63%
Hatfield	58	18%	The Mount	210	21%
Haverigg	0	0%	The Verne	30	5%
High Down	672	59%	Thorn Cross	52	14%
Highpoint	262	21%	Usk	213	86%
Hindley	250	45%	Wakefield	0	0%
Hewell	508	62%	Wandsworth	1102	77%
Hollesley Bay	66	14%	Warren Hill	0	0%

PRISON	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS SHARING CELLS PROPORTION		PRISON	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS SHARING CELLS PROPORTION	
Holme House	716	62%	Wayland	300	31%
Hull	612	60%	Wealstun	0	0%
Humber	294	30%	Werrington	0	0%
Huntercombe	228	49%	Wetherby	0	0%
Isis	272	46%	Whatton	120	15%
Isle Of Wight	152	15%	Whitemoor	0	0%
Kirkham	24	4%	Winchester	208	45%
Kirklevington Grange	0	0%	Woodhill	50	10%
Lancaster Farms	124	24%	Wormwood Scrubs	580	55%
Leeds	608	67%	Wymott	54	5%
<b>Grand total</b>				<b>29171</b>	<b>36%</b>

## ■ Prisoners' Release

**Philip Davies:** [\[45068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many of each category of offence people released on Home detention curfew committed who had received sentences of imprisonment of (a) up to 18 months and (b) 18 months to up to four years in each of the last three years.

**Philip Davies:** [\[45069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many of each category of offence people on home detention curfew committed after being released before the halfway point in their sentences in each of the last three years.

**Philip Davies:** [\[45070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders released early from prison on home detention curfew in the latest year for which information is available had previously committed (a) zero, (b) between one and four (c) between five and nine, (d) between 10 and 15, (e) between 16 and 25, (f) between 26 and 50, (g) between 51 and 75, (h) between 76 and 100, (i) between 101 and 150, (j) between 151 and 200 and (k) 200 or more other offences.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The information requested in your first question can be found in the table attached.

The information requested in your second and third questions could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

**Attachments:**

1. PQ 45068 Table [PQ 45068 final.xlsx]

**Philip Davies:**[\[45071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has had discussions with the Home Secretary on the proposal to extend the time that can be spent on release on home detention curfew from four and a half months before the halfway automatic early release point to six months.

**Philip Davies:**[\[45072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has had discussions with the police on the proposal to extend the time that can be spent on home detention curfew from four and a half months before the halfway automatic early release point to six months.

**Lucy Frazer:**

In answer to your first question, the Secretary of State for Justice wrote to colleagues in the Domestic Affairs and the Union Committee on 11 March 2020 to inform them of the proposed changes to Home Detention Curfew (HDC).

In answer to your second question, HDC is the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. The proposed legislation did not make any change to who was eligible for HDC nor to the way in which the police are involved in the HDC process. It solely extended the maximum period a prisoner could be released on HDC and the impact on the police would have been minimal. However, we did notify the National Police Chiefs' Council when planning to introduce the change.

The Lord Chancellor has decided that now is not the right time to proceed with the changes to HDC in the Statutory Instrument, given the department's focus on the rapidly changing and unpredictable situation created by Covid-19.

**■ Prisoners' Release: Coronavirus****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[43758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reason Government guidance entitled Coronavirus Restricted Temporary Release measures states that children serving sentences for drug offences, including simple possession of a class A drug under s5(1) and (2) of the Misuse of Drugs Act, are specifically excluded from consideration for release.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Protecting the health and well-being of our staff and the children in our care is paramount. Currently, the youth secure estate has sufficient headroom to enable

every child to have their own room and physical distancing is being observed in line with Public Health England guidance.

We will temporarily release a small number of children who are judged to be low risk and near the end of their sentence. Children who have committed drug-related offences are excluded from eligibility to ensure public confidence in the administration of justice. The threshold for custody is higher for children and young people so drug offences are likely to be more serious ones.

## ■ Prisons: Coronavirus

**Liz Saville Roberts:**

[\[45346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 6 May 2020 to Question 42148 on Prisons: Coronavirus, how many cases of covid-19 there have been in Welsh prisons, by prison as of 11 May 2020; and whether her Department will publish that information on a weekly basis.

**Lucy Frazer:**

As at 11 May, the below positive cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in prisons in Wales:

	STAFF	PRISONERS
HMP Berwyn	11	22
HMP Cardiff	17	22
HMP Parc	6	7
HMP Swansea	10	12
HMP Usk/Prescoed	17	18
	<b>61</b>	<b>81</b>

The department is considering the content of its regular publication schedule and whether that needs to be expanded.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[46591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department intends to publish a roadmap for transitioning out of the COVID-19 lockdown measures within the custodial estate in England and Wales.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[46592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the effect of increased court activity resulting from the easing of covid-19 lockdown restrictions on the size of the prison population in England and Wales in the next six months.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

**[46593]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans his Department has to manage potential risks of further covid-19 outbreaks in prisons in England and Wales as a result of renewed activity in the courts, with regard to (a) the potential for increased overcrowding, and (b) the potentially limited capacity of reverse cohorting units.

**Lucy Frazer:**

As the Prime Minister has set out in his announcement on Sunday 10 May, we will be living with COVID-19 for some time. Prisons are a closed setting with many vulnerable individuals so it is important that we proceed cautiously. Any roadmap for transitioning out of the COVID-19 lockdown measures within the custodial estate in England and Wales requires close engagement across the whole of the criminal justice system, including with Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, to understand the effects of renewed court activity and the potential impact this may have on the prison population. This work has already begun and we will keep Parliament informed of progress.

We are continuing our work to install temporary accommodation units across the estate which will help us to complete the compartmentalisation strategy, which includes the reverse-cohorting of new admissions to isolate them from the rest of the prison for 14 days to reduce the risk of infection being brought into the prison. Nearly 500 such units have already been delivered across the estate, with plans in place for the installation of the next 500.

Any decisions on the next steps in prisons will follow advice from the NHS and Public Health England and Public Health Wales alongside an operational assessment of what can be achieved in custodial settings with social distancing advice. We will report publicly with more information in due course.

## ■ Probation: Coronavirus

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

**[43859]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether additional resources have been provided to community rehabilitation companies to fund the special circumstance payments for probation staff working face to face with clients during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Special Payments scheme was introduced to support prison and probation services during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically where additional working hours are required to respond to the impact of Covid-19.

Whilst primarily aimed at National Probation Service (NPS) staff during the pandemic, we support a wider application of the Special Payments scheme to include staff from the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), to the extent it is deemed necessary to meet challenging operational needs. The terms of the scheme offered are on the same principles applied for NPS employees.

We have agreed with CRCs that we will meet additional costs associated with their application of the special payments scheme subject to the wider terms of the financial relief provisions that we have implemented in order to assist suppliers to combat the impact of Covid-19. In particular we will require confirmation and evidence to demonstrate that they have exhausted any financial head room available within the payments made to them under contract and during the period impacted by Covid-19 that could be used to cover this additional cost.

## LEADER OF THE HOUSE

### ■ Government Departments: Written Questions

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[46743\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what assessment he has made of the potential effectiveness of Government Departments in responding to named day Questions from 2 June 2020.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

It is important that Government departments respond to all enquiries in a timely manner and provide substantive responses to named day questions by the deadline in most cases. I am aware that there have been strains on certain departments owing to the current circumstances and the desire to prioritise COVID-related correspondence and business. I would be happy to take up any particular concerns the hon. Member has on his behalf.

### ■ Members: Coronavirus

**Marion Fellows:**

[\[46713\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what steps he is taking to arrange for the participation in votes and proceedings of the House from 2 June 2020 of Members who have been advised by their country's Chief Medical Officer that they are clinically extremely vulnerable to covid-19 and must not leave their homes during the pandemic.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

It is the Government's clear view that the current hybrid arrangements are temporary, and that as essential workers, the vast majority of MPs must return to parliament physically so that we can pass legislation and enable proper scrutiny of government.

However, someone's health is a deeply personal matter and if any MPs have been advised to shield by the government and therefore cannot attend the House, the Government is looking at options for participation in some proceedings. For those MPs who will attend the House, we will continue to work in line with public health advice and will work closely with the House authorities to agree social distancing measures ahead of any physical return of Parliament.

## ■ Ministers: Coronavirus

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[46744\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what discussions he has had with the Cabinet Secretary on the capacity of Government Departments to support Ministers participating in physical parliamentary proceedings from 2 June 2020.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

The guidance to Government departments is the same as other workplaces. Ministers and their officials should continue to work from home where that is possible. Where Ministers are required to attend Parliament, they should do so in line with the latest Government guidance. Ministers should discuss their requirements with departments, so that support can be offered safely.

## ■ Parliament: Coronavirus

**Marion Fellows:**

[\[46714\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what discussions he has had with the House of Commons Commission on the effect on the Business of the House in the event that a case of covid-19 is confirmed in a person who had been present in the Chamber during a sitting of the House while infectious.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

I have been in regular contact with the Speaker and Clerk of the House throughout Parliament's response to covid-19. In the same way that we prepared for the House's virtual return after Easter we will work in collaboration with the House Authorities to ensure that we are ready for the physical return. The Commission will be meeting tomorrow to discuss these matters further. We are clear about the need to bring Parliament back to work in a safe, responsible way that aligns with public health guidelines.

**Marion Fellows:**

[\[46715\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what discussions he has had with the Chief Medical Officers of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the effect on the health and wellbeing of Members and staff on the parliamentary estate of the reintroduction of full physical parliamentary proceedings on 2 June 2020.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

The Government is clear about the need to bring Parliament back to work in a safe, responsible way that aligns with public health guidelines that apply to all places of work. We will work closely with the House authorities ahead of any physical return of Parliament and since March there has been frequent communication with Public Health England and all the House Authorities.

**NORTHERN IRELAND**■ **Abortion: Northern Ireland**

**Stella Creasy:** [\[46639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of exercising his powers under section 26 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to direct the Department of Health in Northern Ireland to commission services to comply with section 9 of the Northern Ireland Executive Formation Act 2019; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

In accordance with section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Act 2019, regulations are now in place to make provision for accessing abortions in Northern Ireland. I am pleased that some service provision has commenced on the ground in Northern Ireland through existing sexual and reproductive health services during this uncertain time.

I recognise the strain on the Northern Ireland health system at present. The Government stands ready to provide whatever support we can to the Department of Health in Northern Ireland to commission full abortion services, in line with the new legislative framework, as soon as possible. Consequently, no assessment has been made of exercising powers under section 26 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

■ **Marriage: Northern Ireland**

**Gavin Robinson:** [\[45240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he will publish the responses to his Department's consultation on same-sex religious marriage and entitlements in Northern Ireland which closed on 23 February 2020.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Government is still carefully analysing the submissions received in response to both consultations. We appreciate the input of the individuals and organisations who took the time to respond.

The Government responses to the consultations on same-sex religious marriage and conversion entitlements will be published in due course.

**PRIME MINISTER**■ **Prime Minister: Statements**

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[45097\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether the contents of the Prime Minister's address to the nation on 10 May were (a) discussed and (b) decided in Cabinet prior to the recording of that address; and if he will make a statement.

**Boris Johnson:**

I refer the Hon. Member to Sections 2.1 to 2.3 of the Ministerial Code. The Government's approach to tackling the coronavirus emergency has been discussed and agreed in Cabinet and Ministerial Committees throughout.

**Caroline Lucas:**[\[45098\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, on what date and at what time his statement on 10 May 2020 was recorded.

**Boris Johnson:**

For practical reasons, parts of the message were recorded on Saturday, and other parts Sunday. The video was finalised Sunday afternoon.

**SCOTLAND****■ Offshore Fixed Structures: Decommissioning****John Lamont:**[\[45384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps he is taking to support the offshore decommissioning sector in (a) Scotland and (b) the UK.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

The decommissioning of offshore oil and gas and renewables infrastructure on the UK Continental Shelf will be increasingly prominent in the years ahead as assets reach the end of their lifespan. It is the Government's ambition for the UK to capitalise on the sizeable market opportunity available on our doorstep (within the UKCS and the wider North Sea) and use this advantage to become a global centre of expertise for offshore decommissioning. Industry estimates that £15.2 billion will be spent on decommissioning oil and gas assets on the UKCS over the next decade, with the emerging global market worth \$85 billion (£67 billion), in the same period.

To support this ambition, last year the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy published a call for evidence to identify what more should be done to further strengthen Scotland and the UK's position as a global hub for decommissioning, examining our areas of expertise and the export potential of our services. The Government response to this call for evidence will be published in due course.

**TRANSPORT**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Clive Lewis:**[\[902645\]](#)

What recent steps the Government has taken to help prevent key workers who (a) work on and (b) use the rail network contracting covid-19.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Drivers and other public transport staff have been working hard to ensure that all those on the frontline can get to work. New safer transport guidance was published on 12 May, and we are working closely with transport operators across the sector on its implementation.

■ **Airports: Coronavirus****Conor McGinn:**[\[46106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on airports in (a) the North West and (b) other regions.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The aviation sector is important to the UK economy and the government recognises the challenging times facing the sector as a result of COVID-19. The Government continues to work closely with airports to support them to ensure there is sufficient capacity to protect global travel routes, to continue repatriation and freight, and to maintain vital connectivity.

The aviation sector will be able to draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor. We have been clear that if individual companies find themselves in trouble as a result of coronavirus and have exhausted the measures already available to them, then we are prepared to enter discussions with individual companies seeking bespoke support as a last resort. However, any intervention would need to represent value for money for taxpayers.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus****Jonathan Edwards:**[\[45130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent representations he has received from the Welsh Government on the need for quarantine restrictions for people entering the UK via international airports.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The Government will require international arrivals not on a short list of exemptions to self-isolate in their accommodation for fourteen days on arrival into the UK. We are working closely with the devolved administrations, including the Welsh Government, to coordinate implementation across the UK.

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[45479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions the Government has had with (a) commercial airline operators and (b) travel insurance providers on providing timely compensation to repatriated UK travellers who have had flights cancelled as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The Department for Transport is in regular conversation with UK airlines and is working with the sector, the regulator and consumer groups to help ensure airlines deliver on their commitments. The Government's position is clear - if a customer asks for a refund, that refund needs to be paid.

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[46678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what financial support he plans to make available to the UK aviation sector during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps he is taking to ensure that the UK aviation sector is able to compete globally after the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Aviation is an important sector for the UK's economy and businesses across the industry will be able to draw on the unprecedented package of economic measures we have put in place during this time. This includes a Bank of England scheme for firms to raise capital, two business interruption loan guarantee schemes for different sizes of business, Time to Pay flexibilities with tax bills, financial support for employees and VAT deferrals.

If businesses across the sector find themselves in severe and urgent financial difficulties as a result of coronavirus, even following the government's cross-economy wage and financial interventions, then we remain open to discussions about bespoke financial support but only as a last resort. Any intervention would need to be on terms to protect the interests of taxpayers. Requests may be made formally, in writing, to the Secretary of State.

In relation to the future of the UK aviation sector, we are working across Government and closely with the sector on establishing a clear vision and objectives for the recovery of the sector, protecting global travel routes, continue repatriation, freight and maintain vital connectivity.

We have established an aviation expert steering group. The Group comprises of representatives across the sector, including airports, airlines, ground handlers, industry bodies, officials from across government and unions, and will focus on the immediate issues around restarting the sector and its longer-term growth and recovery.

**■ British Airways: Coronavirus****Adam Afriyie:**[\[45080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the response of British Airways to the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) contractual rights, (b) job security and (c) financial security of its employees.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

We recognise that the recent announcement from British Airways will be very distressing news for employees and their families.

The Department for Transport is engaging on a regular basis with airlines, unions and Public Health England on the application of public health measures in aviation

The Chancellor has set out unprecedented support for workers of airline companies. Measures such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme are being used across the aviation industry to protect the sector against the Covid-19 economic crisis.

These measures, alongside other Government support measures such as Coronavirus Large Business Loan Interruption Scheme and the Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF), are helping airlines of all sizes get through this crisis and beyond. The Chancellor has noted that under exceptional circumstances bespoke support could be provided to airlines.

**■ Bus Services: Coronavirus****Gavin Newlands:**[\[45283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with the Confederation for Passenger Transport on the UK coach industry and the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on coach operators.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Ministers and officials have had regular meetings with the Confederation for Passenger Transport in recent weeks to discuss a wide range of matters. The Government has launched an unprecedented set of support measures to ensure that businesses, such as coach operators, have access to the funds they need to pay essential bills at this difficult time. This includes the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until the end of October. Officials are engaging with both MHCLG and HMT to understand what the ongoing risks and issues are for the coach sector, and how these could be addressed.

**■ Cycling and Walking: Greater London****Theresa Villiers:**[\[45977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Mayor of London on the potential effect on London's productivity of the London Streetspace programme announced by the Mayor of London on 6 May 2020.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Ministers and officials at the Department for Transport meet regularly with the Mayor's office to discuss a range of matters relating to transport in London. The Government considers active travel to be key in allowing people to return to work in safety and I look forward to seeing the Mayor's plans develop in this area.

**■ Driving Instruction: Coronavirus****Sarah Olney:**[\[45360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Government's policy is during the covid-19 outbreak on approved driving instructors who cannot work from home but cannot follow social distancing rules while working.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) recommends that, currently, approved driving instructors (ADI) should only provide lessons to candidates who have an essential need. ADIs should ask pupils to bring appropriate identification to demonstrate the need for the lesson: a payslip, letter or identification badge should suffice.

When providing driving lessons, all ADIs should put in place appropriate measures, in line with the latest Public Health England and Cabinet Office guidance, to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

It is the responsibility of the ADI and the pupil to consider the risks to their health and to decide if the driving lesson is essential.

ADIs whose registration lapses in the next three months, and who are observing government guidelines not to work, can delay renewing their registration until restrictions are lifted. Legislation provides that ADIs have one year in which to apply to re-register without having to take the qualification tests again.

**Jessica Morden:**[\[46008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his plans are for the provision of driving lessons for those not classed as critical workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Using the latest Government guidance, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is working closely with the Approved Driving Instructors National Association Strategic Partnership (NASP) to develop appropriate plans and control measures that will enable the resumption of non-essential driving lessons. The DVSA will keep the situation under review and provide advice as soon as it can.

Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs) can continue to provide tuition to pupils if the lesson is considered essential. It is the responsibility of the ADI, and the pupil, to decide if the driving lesson is critical. ADIs should ask pupils to bring appropriate identification to demonstrate the need for the lesson, such as a payslip, letter or identification badge.

All ADIs should put in place appropriate health and safety measures, in line with the latest Public Health England and Cabinet Office guidance, to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

### ■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[46711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the validity period of theory test certificates for people who cannot undertake their practical driving test as a result of the coronavirus public health measures.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The two-year validity period of the theory test certificate is set in legislation. This is so the candidate's theoretical knowledge remains current. To extend the validity period would require legislative change. To do this, the relevant parliamentary process would need to take place. This situation is being given urgent attention.

### ■ Electric Scooters and Motorcycles: Coronavirus

**Chris Law:**

[\[46091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to support the (a) increased, (b) easier and (c) safe use of (i) motorcycles, (ii) e-scooters and (iii) other two-wheeled commuter transport as the covid-19 lockdown is eased.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The recent update of the Department's Road Safety Statement, which was published on 19 July 2019, provides steps to improve motorcycle safety.

In response to COVID-19, the Department is accelerating and expanding planned trials of rental e-scooters, allowing all areas that want to host trials to do so. We will introduce legislation in June to allow trials to begin.

### ■ Ferries: Freight

**Hywel Williams:**

[\[45966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the eligibility criteria for future funding packages to protect ferry freight routes; what assessment he has made of the potential merits of basing that eligibility on (a) projections of profitability, (b) financial losses and (c) planned redundancies.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

As well as safeguarding vital lifeline services to the Isle of Wight and the Isles of Scilly, we announced a package for critical Roll On, Roll Off (RoRo) freight routes between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and mainland Europe, on 24 April. We will shortly publish information about which of the eligible 31 routes will receive funding.

### ■ **Flybe: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

**Gavin Newlands:**

[\[45282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with Ernst & Young in their role as administrators of Flybe Limited on arrangements to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Where a company, such as Flybe, is being taken under the management of an administrator, it would be a matter for the administrator if employees are able to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. However, we would expect an administrator would only access the scheme if there is a reasonable likelihood of rehiring the workers.

### ■ **Large Goods Vehicles: Coronavirus**

**Gavin Newlands:**

[\[45284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with representatives of the road haulage industry on (a) the operation of road haulage during the covid-19 pandemic and (b) the financial position of that industry.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Ministers and officials at the Department are in regular contact with representatives of the road haulage industry, including the Road Haulage Association and the Freight Transport Association, to understand the issues the industry is experiencing as a result of COVID-19, including operational and financial matters. The Department is working with the industry to ensure that the appropriate measures are in place to allow for the continued operation of the road freight sector during the pandemic, and to identify barriers to accessing the available Government support measures.

### ■ **Large Goods Vehicles: Testing**

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[45962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of outsourcing HGV annual testing; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

There are no plans to outsource heavy goods vehicle (HGV) testing.

Any future considerations made to the testing delivery model would need to provide assurance that testing is conducted free from the commercial pressures of vehicle maintenance and operation, and provide assurance that vehicle maintenance is done correctly.

**■ Motorcycles: Coronavirus****Chris Law:****[46090]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will include commuter motorcycling within his transport policy response to covid-19 announced on 9 May 2020; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

We recognise the social distancing benefits of using motorcycles at this time. However, the Department is keen to encourage cycling and walking as healthy and environmentally friendly forms of travel that support social distancing as well. More people have been cycling and walking during lockdown and it is the right time to encourage people to continue with this travel behaviour.

**■ Motorcycles: Training****Sarah Olney:****[45361]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to direct the Driver and Vehicles Standards Agency to reopen motorcycle training schools for CBT certification to enable (a) businesses to get back to work and (b) people to travel with out the need to use public transport.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has suspended most motorcycle tests to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. But it is continuing to provide emergency tests for those whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response.

Motorcycle approved training bodies (ATB) can continue to provide compulsory basic training (CBT) for critical workers.

Trainers should ask their pupils to bring appropriate ID with them to demonstrate the need for the training – for example, an ID badge, payslip or letter from their employer.

It is the responsibility of the trainer, and the pupil, to consider the risks to their health before deciding if the training is essential.

All ATBs should put in place appropriate measures, in line with the latest Public Health England and Cabinet Office guidance, to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Motorcycle manoeuvring areas will be available for any essential training. The DVSA will contact ATBs who have a module 1 motorcycle test booked.

CBT, direct access scheme (DAS) or DVSA enhanced rider scheme instructor registration certificates that are due to expire before the end of June 2020, will automatically be renewed.

## ■ Public Transport: Coronavirus

**Kate Osborne:**

[\[46171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Government's policy is on the implementation of social distancing measures on public transport; and if he will provide funding to transport providers for the implementation of those measures.

**Rachel Maclean:**

On the 12 May, the Government published safer travel guidance for passengers, which states that people should consider all other forms of transport before using public transport.

On 12 May, the Government also published guidance for transport operators to help them keep their staff and passengers safe, including how social distancing rules should be interpreted to do this. Each transport provider will need to translate the principles and examples in this guidance into specific actions. This guidance will be kept up-to-date as restrictions on travel change.

The Department will announce shortly the further funding it will provide to bus and light rail operators to support the restoration of their services.

With regards to rail services, under the Emergency Measures Agreements agreed with franchised train operators, existing franchise agreements financial mechanisms have been suspended and all revenue and cost risk has been temporarily transferred to the Government. The Department will continue to manage rail services with close scrutiny of costs to ensure that any additional expenditure incurred, such as measures for social distancing, provides good value for taxpayers.

**Peter Kyle:**

[\[46749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the introduction of flexible season tickets as part of his Department's covid-19 recovery plan for passengers.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Government recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a fundamental change in working patterns and that this could have long-term effects on commuter behaviour. As we move from lockdown to recovery, it is important that we get the balance right in the short and medium term between managing demand and ensuring that we provide better value for money for passengers going forward. The Department is working with industry to explore flexible options already available for commuters, such as carnets, and what steps could be taken quickly to make these as useful and convenient for passengers as possible.

## ■ Taxis: Greater London

**Karl McCartney:**

[\[46041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) face-to-face and (b) virtual meetings Ministers of his Department have had with representatives of London (i) taxi, (ii) minivan

and (iii) private vehicle hire firms or organisations since the 2019 General Election; and what the outcomes of those meetings were.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Baroness Vere met with Addison Lee on 25 February 2020 and discussed the new structure of their business, licensing issues facing the private hire vehicle sector and the role the sector could play in adopting electric vehicles.

■ **Tourism and Travel: Coronavirus**

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[46604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to follow the guidance published by the EU Commission on 13 May 2020 on lifting travel restrictions and allowing tourism businesses to reopen.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is advising against all but essential international travel due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The Government keeps travel advice constantly under review, so that it reflects our latest assessment of risks to British people.

■ **Tourism: Coronavirus**

**Gavin Newlands:**

[\[46705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with representatives of the tourism industry on consumer protection and industry obligations to refund journeys cancelled as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The Government recognises the challenges consumers and businesses are experiencing regarding refunds for cancelled holidays and flights. In particular, we appreciate the frustration consumers may be experiencing. The government's position is clear - if a customer asks for a refund, that refund needs to be paid. The Department for Transport is in regular conversation with UK airlines and is working with the wider sector, the regulator and consumer groups to help ensure airlines deliver on their commitments.

■ **Transport: Coronavirus**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[46055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department had to provide personal protective equipment to transport workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Keeping transport workers and passengers safe is of paramount importance. The new guidance for transport operators and passengers that we published on 12 May is designed precisely to help achieve this.

The guidance is clear that when managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what workers usually wear is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks they normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, good hand hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE. We are working closely with transport operators across the sector on the implementation of the guidance.

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[46056]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether families of transport workers who die from covid-19 are eligible for death in service benefits.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced on 27th April a scheme where families of eligible NHS and care workers, who die from coronavirus in the course of their frontline work, will receive a £60,000 payment.

The Government is also looking at other professions that work on the frontline against coronavirus, who may not have access to death in service schemes, to see where this may be required. These discussions are ongoing as the situation evolves and will be considered carefully across government.

**Ian Mearns:**

**[R] [46615]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many workers have died of covid-19 in (a) the rail industry, (b) London Underground, (c) the bus industry outside of London, (d) the maritime industry and (e) the taxi and private vehicle hire sector.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

It is of great sadness that transport workers have died as a result of this virus and our thoughts are with their friends and families at this difficult time.

We are working to understand precisely how many transport workers have died as a result of the virus, but we are not currently able to definitively provide this data across the transport sector. While we have data for many areas and operators, achieving a sector-wide consistent level of data is more complex given the vast numbers of operators. We are continuing to work to obtain this data across the sector.

Transport workers and members of their households, have been able to access testing and we are working closely with operators to ensure their staff are able to take up these tests wherever necessary. Guidance has been published regarding those who should be at work, including particular advice for those who are most vulnerable.

**Gavin Newlands:**

**[46704]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on ensuring the financial viability of the UK transport industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

DfT has been engaging with a range of transport industry sectors to understand and monitor the impact of Covid-19. The Chancellor has set out an unprecedented range

of support measures for businesses across the economy that the transport industry can access. This includes schemes to raise capital, flexibilities with tax bills, and financial support for employees.

We have discussed and agreed with HMT appropriate support to ensure continuation of key services. This includes services to support key workers and essential freight capacity. We have suspended normal rail franchise agreements and transferred all revenue and cost risk to the government for a limited period to safeguard minimum rail services. On Maritime Freight Capacity, support for operators on key routes across the Irish Sea (up to 5 routes) and GB-mainland Europe (up to 26 routes, incl. Eurotunnel). We have committed to funding worth almost £400 million to protect bus services for people who need to make essential journeys.

Any business that continues to experience financial distress after taking advantage of the cross-economy schemes and implementing all possible self-help measure can apply for bespoke support. This additional bespoke support is treated as the last resort.

We are continuing to discuss the support that may be required as we enter the restart and recovery phase of the Covid outbreak.

## TREASURY

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Stephen Hammond:**

[\[902693\]](#)

What plans he has to extend the (a) Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund and (b) business rates holiday to businesses involved in the retail, hospitality and leisure supply chain during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The COVID-19 crisis has led to a steep decline in customer footfall on our high streets.

That is why the Government has provided funding for over £5 billion of grants for small retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, and over £9.5 billion of funding to provide a 12 month business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.

This business rates holiday along with the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund, are designed to support businesses which have been particularly hard hit by the crisis.

**Simon Jupp:**

[\[902695\]](#)

What fiscal steps he is taking to support the charity sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Alongside unprecedented support for individuals and businesses in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government has announced a £750 million support package for charities.

£360m of this will be allocated directly to charities providing essential services and supporting vulnerable people, including up to £200m for hospices across the next quarter.

**■ Aggregates Levy****Sammy Wilson:**[\[45082\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the request by the Mineral Products Association for quarry owners to have additional time to pay the Aggregates Levy.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government has announced unprecedented support for public services, business and workers to protect against the current economic emergency. Our economic response is one of the most generous and comprehensive globally.

HMRC are also delivering Time to Pay to fit the specific impacts of Covid-19. Time to Pay is a pre-existing scheme available to all firms and individuals who are in temporary financial distress as a result of Covid-19 with existing liabilities to HMRC and are unable to pay their tax on time. The government has ensured that businesses and self-employed individuals in financial distress and with outstanding tax liabilities can receive help and advice with their tax affairs. HMRC has set up a dedicated COVID-19 helpline to help those in need, and they may be able to agree a bespoke Time to Pay arrangement. A business or self-employed individual can contact HMRC's helpline for help and advice on 0800 024 1222.

In addition, the government is deferring Value Added Tax (VAT) payments so UK VAT registered businesses will not need to pay any VAT due alongside their normal VAT return from 20 March through to the end of June – a deferral worth over £30 billion or 1.5% of GDP. Businesses will have until the end of the financial year (March 31st 2021) to pay back any deferred VAT. This is to help support businesses with their cash flows, and support individuals' employment. The option to defer VAT is open to all £2.3 million UK VAT registered businesses.

**■ Airports: Non-domestic Rates****Andrew Gwynne:**[\[46576\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing business rate relief for airports.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has provided enhanced support to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors through business rates relief given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors.

A range of further measures to support all businesses, including airports, has also been made available. For example, the Government has launched the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help firms keep people in employment, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme offering loans of up to £5 million for SMEs through the British Business Bank backed by an 80% Government guarantee, and is deferring VAT payments for this quarter.

The Government will consider any further financial assistance necessary to help businesses get through this period.

## ■ Apprentices: Coronavirus

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[46199\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential economic merits of a temporary suspension of the apprenticeship levy during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The apprenticeship levy is an important part of our aim to raise apprenticeship quality, supporting employers to make a long-term, sustainable investment in training. Only the very largest businesses pay the Levy, which requires only those employers with an annual pay bill of £3 million or more to pay 0.5% on the part of their pay bill exceeding this threshold.

For employers operating in England, levy funds are available for them to invest in the training of their apprentices for 24 months. Given that Education and Skills Policy is devolved, the arrangements for apprenticeship funding elsewhere in the UK are the responsibility of the devolved administrations.

Where apprentices are furloughed, they can continue to train for their apprenticeship as long as it does not provide services to or generate revenue for their employer.

## ■ Border Delivery Group

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[46571\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the Border Delivery Group next plans to meet.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Border Delivery Group (BDG) is a function within HM Government. Officials in the BDG meet regularly with a wide range of stakeholders.

## ■ Business: Coronavirus

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[45475\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support businesses that had applications for covid-19 grant funding declined because (a) their business rates are included in their rent or (b) their offices are based from home.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government is aware that some small businesses have found themselves excluded from the existing business grants schemes because of the way they interact with the business rates system. That is why the Government has allocated up to an additional £617 million to Local Authorities to enable them to give discretionary grants to businesses in this situation. The Government's intention is for Local Authorities to prioritise the following types of business when making discretionary grants:

- Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible work spaces e.g. industrial parks, science parks, incubators etc, which do not have their own business rates assessment;
- Regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment;
- B&Bs which pay Council Tax instead of business rates; and
- Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

Local Authorities may choose to focus payments on those priority groups which are most relevant to their local areas. Local Authorities may also choose to pay grants to businesses outside of these priority groups, according to local economic need, so long as the business was trading on 11th March, and has not received any other cash grant funded by central Government.

Businesses which cannot receive a grant from any of the grants schemes should still be able to benefit from other elements of the Government's unprecedented package of economic support, including:

- An option to defer VAT payments by up to twelve months;
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme, which will ensure that small and micro businesses can quickly access loans of up to £50,000 which are 100% guaranteed by the Government;
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, now extended to cover all businesses including those which would be able to access commercial credit;
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, to support businesses with their wage bill; and
- The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, to provide support to the self-employed.

**■ Car Washes: Tax Evasion****Grahame Morris:**[\[46612\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps is he taking to tackle tax evasion in the hand car wash industry.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is committed to tackling tax evasion and avoidance in order to ensure that everyone pays the right tax at the right time. Tax evasion and avoidance damage the ability of the tax system to deliver its objectives, and impose additional costs on all taxpayers. HMRC are determined to keep up the pressure on the small minority of people who attempt to break or bend the rules.

HMRC have a robust strategy in place to tackle evasion and avoidance, and since 2010 HMRC have secured more than £220 billion in tax that would have otherwise gone unpaid.

**Grahame Morris:**[\[46613\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the revenue lost to the public purse through tax evasion in the hand car wash industry in each of the last three years.

**Jesse Norman:**

The information requested is not held.

**■ Cash Dispensing****David Mundell:**[\[45984\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on guaranteeing access to cash.

**John Glen:**

The Government recognises that cash plays a vital role in the daily lives of millions of people across the UK, including those who may be self-isolating due to Covid-19.

At the March 2020 Budget, the Chancellor announced that the Government will bring forward legislation to protect access to cash. The Government will continue to engage with regulators, industry and consumer groups whilst developing this legislation, to support those who rely on cash.

This will build upon existing initiatives from industry. LINK, the scheme that runs the UK's largest ATM network, has put in place specific arrangements to protect free-to-use ATMs that do not have another free-to-use ATM or Post Office within 1 kilometre. The Government-established Payment Systems Regulator regulates LINK and is holding them to account over their public commitments.

Further information on the timing and detail of the legislation will be announced in due course.

**■ Charities: Coronavirus****Neil Gray:**[\[45244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional steps his Department is planning to take to support charities affected financially by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Many charities and social enterprises will benefit from the existing measures announced to support employers and businesses. Under these measures, like other businesses, charities can defer their VAT bills and pay no business rates for their shops next year. All charities are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the right answer for many charities will be to furlough their employees with the Government paying 80% of wages. Charities are eligible for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS), and the Bounce Back Loans Scheme (BBL). Registered charities are now exempt from the requirement that 50% of the applicant's income must be derived from its Trading Activity.

The Government has also set out a £750 million package of support for charities providing key services and supporting vulnerable people during the COVID-19 crisis. This will enable such organisations to continue providing essential services to those most in need. Funding for charities is now starting to be disbursed and the most up to date information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector#government-financial-support-for-charities>. Our aim is to get funding to those in greatest need as soon as possible.

**■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme****Rachael Maskell:****[45325]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to provide financial support for workers who are ineligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme as a result of their start date.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is supporting people on low incomes who need to rely on the welfare system through a significant package of temporary measures. These include a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and an almost £1 billion increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants. These changes will benefit all new and existing claimants. Anyone can check their eligibility and apply for Universal Credit by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>.

Mortgage lenders are also offering a three-month mortgage holiday for borrowers who are unable to make their repayments as a result of COVID-19.

**Ben Lake:****[45396]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many new job starters have been excluded by the start date of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

As a result of incomplete information supplied in some PAYE full payment submissions, such as employee start dates, it is not possible to provide an answer to the question.

**Ronnie Cowan:**

**[46717]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with (a) businesses and (b) trade unions on (i) the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and (ii) reports of businesses re-hiring former employees and then placing those employees on furlough; and if he will make a statement.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Treasury has discussions with a range of stakeholders, including business groups, trade union representatives, and more widely.

The Government values the diversity of views that these groups provide in the policy development process, including that of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Rehired employees may be furloughed in certain circumstances. More information, including eligibility criteria, is available in the GOV.UK guidance.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

**[46751]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether employers can furlough staff who can't work because of childcare responsibilities during the covid-19 outbreak until the (a) end of July 2020 and (b) closure of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The eligibility criteria for the CJRS have not changed.

Employees who are unable to work because they have caring responsibilities resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) can be furloughed. For example, employees that need to look after children can be furloughed.

Employers should discuss with their staff and make any changes to the employment contract by agreement. Guidance for employers and employees can be found on GOV.UK.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

**[46752]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that businesses furlough rather than dismiss staff who (a) are not able to return to work or (b) have to reduce hours due to childcare responsibilities during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government would encourage all firms affected by coronavirus to treat their employees fairly and carefully. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is already helping firms keep millions of people in employment by covering most wage costs. While there is no obligation for employers to take up the scheme, the scheme is open to all UK employers provided they have a PAYE scheme registered on HMRC's real time information system for PAYE on 19 March 2020; enrolled for PAYE online; have a UK bank account; and that HMRC have received an RTI submission notifying payment in respect of that employee on or before 19 March 2020.

The Government has extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until October 2020. After July, the Government will introduce more flexibility to the furlough scheme

in a measured way that protects people's incomes and helps support furloughed employees as they return to work. From August through to the end of October, employers currently using the scheme will have more flexibility to bring their furloughed employees back to work part-time while still receiving support from the scheme. The Government is urgently working out the details to ensure there will be a system in place that is clear for firms and employees, while minimising the risk of fraud.

**Munira Wilson:**

**[46804]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether employers are entitled to claim 80 per cent of an employee's holiday pay when calculating their wage under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; and if he will update the guidance on the scheme to provide clarification in this area.

**Jesse Norman:**

Employers can continue to claim the 80% grant from the Government to cover most of the cost of holiday pay, although employers are required to pay additional amounts over the grant so that employees receive their full holiday pay, in accordance with the Working Time Regulations. Employers have the flexibility to restrict when leave can be taken if there is a business need.

BEIS have published detailed guidance on holiday entitlement during furlough, which is available on GOV.UK.

#### ■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Agency Workers**

**Stephanie Peacock:**

**[46770]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether an agency worker that was not a live assignment but was on the payroll of an agency on 19 March 2020 qualifies for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

An agency worker that was not on a live assignment but was on the payroll may qualify for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, provided other eligibility criteria are met; in particular, that the employee was included on an RTI submission on or before 19 March 2020 which relates to a payment of earnings in the 2019/20 tax year. It is for the agency to decide whether to offer to furlough a worker.

#### ■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Directors**

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[46813]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will he make an assessment of the potential merits of including income received through dividends in furlough calculations for directors of small limited companies.

**Jesse Norman:**

Income from dividends is a return on investment in the company rather than wages, and it is not possible for HMRC to distinguish between dividends derived from an individual's own company and dividends from other sources.

However, those who pay themselves a salary through their own company may be eligible for the CJRS. The CJRS is available to employers, including personal service companies, and individuals paying themselves a salary through a PAYE scheme are eligible.

More details about the scheme are available at <http://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

This scheme supplements the other significant support announced for UK businesses, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the deferral of tax payments. More information about the full range of business support measures is available at [www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/](http://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/).

**■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Glasgow Central**

**Alison Thewliss:** [46709]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses in Glasgow Central constituency have accessed the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Alison Thewliss:** [46710]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many companies have accessed the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, by constituency.

**Tulip Siddiq:** [46753]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) day nurseries and (b) other childcare businesses have applied to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in each week since applications for that scheme opened.

**Jesse Norman:**

Applications for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) opened on Monday 20 April. By close on 11 May, 935,000 employers had submitted claims to HMRC, representing 7.5m furloughed employments and £10.1bn.

This is a new scheme and HMRC are currently working through the analysis they will be able to provide based on the data available. HMRC will make the timescales for publication and the types of data available in due course.

## ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Hospitality Industry

**Ben Lake:** [\[45395\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for the hospitality sector beyond July 2020.

**Ben Lake:** [\[45397\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for the tourism sector beyond July 2020.

**Ben Lake:** [\[45398\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for the agriculture sector beyond July 2020.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until October 2020. Extending the scheme in its current form until July will provide workers, businesses and the economy with clarity on this vital support. After July, the Government will introduce more flexibility to the furlough scheme in a measured way that protects people's incomes and helps support furloughed employees as they return to work. From August through to the end of October, employers currently using the scheme will have more flexibility to bring their furloughed employees back to work part-time while still receiving support from the scheme. Employers using the scheme will start contributing some of the costs of their workers' salaries, substituting in part the contribution that the Government is currently making. The Government will outline more details of how this will work by the end of May.

**Fleur Anderson:** [\[46812\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to include (a) tips and (b) payments through a TRONC system in furlough calculations for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in relation to hospitality industry staff.

**Jesse Norman:**

The objective of the CJRS is to enable employers to keep people in employment. To achieve this, the grants compensate employers for the payments that they are contractually obliged to make, in order to avoid the need for redundancies. Covering discretionary payments would go beyond the objectives of the scheme. The following guidance explains how to work out employees' wages for the purpose of claiming through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/work-out-80-of-your-employees-wages-to-claim-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

The Government recognises that for some employees, the pay in scope for this emergency grant package will be less than the overall sum they usually receive. The Government is supporting people on low incomes who need to rely on the welfare system through a significant package of temporary measures. This includes a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax

Credit basic element, and a nearly £1bn increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants. These changes will benefit all new and existing claimants. Anyone can check their eligibility and apply for Universal Credit by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>.

## ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Tourism

**Rushanara Ali:** [45208]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many workers in the tourism industry have been furloughed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Rushanara Ali:** [45209]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many workers in the hospitality industry have been furloughed under the Job Retention Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

Applications for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) opened on Monday 20 April. By close of 11 May, HMRC had received 935,000 claims representing 7.5m furloughed employments and £10.1bn.

This is a new scheme and HMRC are currently working through the analysis they will be able to provide based on the data available. HMRC will make the timescales for publication and the types of data available in due course.

## ■ Debt Collection: Coronavirus

**Dan Carden:** [46140]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps is he taking to limit enforcement action by debt collection agencies during the covid-19 pandemic.

**John Glen:**

The Government's priority is to support as many people as possible who have had extreme disruption to their lives as a result of COVID-19. Debt collection firms are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

The FCA has announced a series of measures to provide consumers with temporary relief if they are facing payment difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes requiring firms to provide consumers with 0% interest on the first £500 of an arranged overdraft for three months and allowing consumers either a 3-month payment holiday or to make nominal payments towards credit cards, store cards, catalogue credit and certain personal loan agreements.

## ■ Debts: Developing Countries

**Sarah Champion:** [45236]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure money saved by countries as a result of the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative is not spent on repaying debts to private external creditors.

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[45237\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Debt Service Suspension Initiative agreed by the G20, what assessment he has made of the proportion of debt payments that are owed to private creditors governed by UK law.

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[45238\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to protect countries complying with the G20 request to suspend debt payments to private creditors from being sued in English courts.

**John Glen:**

HM Government is deeply concerned by the impacts of COVID-19 on low-income developing countries. The G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) is an important measure to provide rapid liquidity support to the most vulnerable countries.

The DSSI requires eligible countries to commit to use the created fiscal space to increase social, health or economic spending in response to the crisis. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group (WBG) will support monitoring of this. Countries are also required to commit to disclose all public external debt in line with the framework of the IMF and World Bank Group (WBG) multipronged approach for addressing debt vulnerabilities.

The Chancellor and his G20 counterparts called upon commercial creditors to participate in the DSSI on comparable terms to the official sector on a voluntary basis. In 2019 the IMF assessed that 45% of the total outstanding stock of international sovereign bonds by nominal principal amount are governed under English law.

HM Government is working closely with Institute of International Finance (IIF) and commercial creditors to support implementation of comparable debt service suspensions from the private sector. Following a recent meeting with the Paris Club of official creditors, of which the UK is a member, the IIF released a statement that its members have “expressed strong support for the DSSI and are committed to explore how best to advance this initiative on comparable terms”.

HM Government will continue to monitor implementation of the DSSI by private lenders under this voluntary framework closely, as it is important that all creditors work together to help enable countries especially vulnerable to the pandemic to protect their citizens and economies.

## ■ Digital Technology: Coronavirus

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[46063\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment has he made of potential effect of the covid-19 on revenue to the Exchequer from the digital economy.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses, and their direct and indirect contributions to UK tax revenues, remains highly uncertain. This includes the diverse set of businesses operating in the digital sector.

The Government continues to keep the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses and tax receipts under careful review.

**Economic Situation: Coronavirus****Chi Onwurah:**[\[46064\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the regional economic effect of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Government officials are working with local leaders and across Whitehall to understand the regional picture. The Government is committed to supporting all regions and nations of the UK. We have provided an unprecedented national package of support in recent weeks, supporting businesses, protecting jobs, and providing our public services with the resources they need to cope with the pressures of Covid-19 in the short term.

**English Language: Education****Munira Wilson:**[\[46168\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide financial support to English Language Teaching centres in the form of (a) a business rates holiday or (b) grants.

**Steve Barclay:**

The government is making sure that people and businesses have access to the support they need as quickly as possible. The English language teaching sector can apply for additional support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme where they meet the criteria for these schemes. The government has provided enhanced support to other sectors under exceptional circumstances through business rates relief and grants given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors.

**Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation****Jessica Morden:**[\[45065\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of compensation provided to Equitable Life policyholders by the Equitable Life Payment Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

**John Glen:**

There are no plans to reopen the Payment Scheme or review the £1.5 billion funding allocation previously made to it. The Equitable Life Payment Scheme closed to claims in 2015 and further guidance on the status of the Payment Scheme after closure is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equitable-life-payment-scheme#closure-of-the-scheme>.

**Financial Services: Coronavirus****Neil Gray:**[\[45241\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the guidance recently published by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) on customers in temporary financial difficulty during the covid-19 outbreak, what discussions (a) he and (b) officials in his Department have had with representatives of the FCA on the absence of specific guidance for vulnerable consumers in that publication.

**Neil Gray:**[\[45242\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing measures in the financial services sector to protect (a) people living with cancer and (b) other vulnerable consumers.

**Neil Gray:**[\[45243\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Financial Conduct Authority on the support and protection given to people living with cancer by the financial services sector.

**John Glen:**

The Government is committed to doing whatever it takes to get our nation through this crisis and that includes supporting the most vulnerable in our society. To this end, the Government continues to work closely with financial services regulators as part of the economic response.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has introduced measures supporting consumers in financial difficulty at this time, and require firms to prioritise vulnerable consumers, including those with poor health.

In response, firms across the financial services sector have announced a range of measures to support vulnerable customers and the Government is working with the FCA to ensure there is continued support. For example, many firms have methods for trusted third-parties to access cash for vulnerable/self-isolating people, as well as setting up dedicated phone lines to support them.

Since the COVID-19 crisis has developed, the Government has also worked closely with the FCA on the introduction of payment deferral periods to provide support to consumers who are facing temporary cash flow problems as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

**■ Insurance: Coronavirus****Tom Tugendhat:** [\[45306\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance his Department has issued to insurers on accepting claims in respect of business interruption cover during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[45474\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with the insurance industry on fulfilling their responsibilities to policy-holders who have paid enhanced premiums for policies that include enforced closure as a result of infectious disease.

**Scott Benton:** [\[45492\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he is having with representatives from the insurance industry to ensure that insurers pay claims from tourism and hospitality businesses for business interruption in the event of a pandemic.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[46164\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department had with the Financial Conduct Authority on enforcing the payment of insurance claims arising from the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector about its contribution to handling this unprecedented situation. The Government is also working closely with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to ensure that the rules are being upheld during this crisis.

For those businesses which have an appropriate policy that covers government ordered closure and unspecified notifiable diseases, the Government's social distancing instructions are sufficient to allow businesses to make a claim against their insurance, provided the other terms and conditions in their policy are met.

The FCA's rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly; provide reasonable guidance to help a policyholder make a claim, and appropriate information on its progress; not reject a claim unreasonably; and settle claims promptly once settlement terms are agreed. In addition, the FCA has said that, in light of COVID-19, insurers must consider very carefully the needs of their customers and show flexibility in their treatment of them.

Furthermore, on 15 April, FCA sent a letter to the insurance industry, setting out the FCA's expectation of firms regarding their handling of business interruption insurance claims, urging insurers to settle claims quickly in cases where there was a clear obligation to pay the claim in full or in part.

In addition, on 1 May, the FCA published a statement setting out their intention to seek legal clarity on the handling of business interruption insurance claims, in order to resolve any doubt for businesses facing uncertainty on their claims. In their

statement the FCA also noted that insurers should look at how they can help consumers who are experiencing financial distress as a result of COVID-19.

However, most businesses have not purchased insurance that covers losses from COVID-19. Insurance policies differ significantly, so businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their providers.

The Government recognises that businesses who do not have appropriate insurance cover will require support from elsewhere. As such, businesses should explore the full package of support set out by the Chancellor, which includes measures such as business rates holidays, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and wage support.

## ■ Life Insurance: Coronavirus

**James Murray:**

[\[46183\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the life assurance scheme provided by the Government to the families of health and care workers on the frontline during the covid-19 outbreak will be extended to cover (a) bus drivers and (b) other frontline workers.

**Steve Barclay:**

*The new life assurance scheme announced on 27<sup>th</sup> April covers frontline NHS and social care workers who die from coronavirus. This recognises the increased risks faced by these staff during the course of their essential and lifesaving work during the crisis, and the need to encourage retired doctors and nurses to fill staff shortages and boost service capacity.*

*It pays a £60k tax-free lump sum where staff die as a result of coronavirus and had been recently working in frontline roles and locations where personal care is provided to individuals who have contracted coronavirus.*

*The government will continue to review the support provided to key workers on the front-line.*

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Mr David Jones:**

[\[46575\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average substantive response time was for letters to his office from hon. Members in the latest period for which figures are available.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Information on average response times is not held.

However, in 2019, the Treasury replied to 90% of MPs' correspondence within 15 working days.

The Treasury has received unprecedented amounts of correspondence since the start of the coronavirus outbreak in the UK. All Member's correspondence is currently receiving attention and will be responded to as soon as possible.

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[46641\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many individual pieces of correspondence he has (a) received from MPs on behalf of constituents on matters relating to covid-19 on each date since the outbreak began and (b) provided in response to that correspondence in each category of response.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The information is not routinely collected by HM Treasury.

The Treasury has received unprecedented amounts of correspondence since the start of the coronavirus outbreak in the UK.

All Member's correspondence is currently receiving attention and will be responded to as soon as possible.

**Tommy Sheppard:**

[\[46716\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the letters dated (a) 30 March 2020, (b) 31 March 2020, (c) 1 April 2020, (d) 6 April 2020 and (e) 16 April 2020 from the hon. Member for Edinburgh East on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

HM Treasury has received unprecedented amounts of correspondence since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, and apologises for the delay in responding to the Honourable Member. The Honourable Member's correspondence is receiving attention and will be replied to as soon as possible.

## ■ Mortgages and Self-employment Income Support Scheme

**Stephen McPartland:**

[\[46642\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to extend (a) the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and (b) mortgage payment holidays to cover the same period as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK has one of the most generous self-employed COVID-19 support schemes in the world. The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) opened on 13 May, ahead of schedule, and it provides support worth up to £7,500 each to millions of individuals. Recipients will have the grants in their bank accounts within six working days of making an application.

The Chancellor indicated that the SEISS would be temporary when he announced it at the end of March, and that it could be extended if necessary. The Government is keeping this under review.

The Government will also continue to work closely with lenders and the Financial Conduct Authority to ensure that borrowers are supported during the present challenging times, especially if they are facing financial distress. Lenders are continuing to show forbearance as required, working together with borrowers to establish how they can best affordably and gradually get back on track. Borrowers concerned about their current financial situation should contact their lenders at the earliest possible opportunity.

## ■ Mortgages: Coronavirus

**Dr Julian Lewis:**

[\[45947\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 12 May to Question 43822 on endowment mortgage policies, if he will take steps to work closely with the financial sector to ensure that the providers of such policies offer an option to people dependent upon them to discharge mortgages, to extend the policies' maturation dates until after the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

The current size of the endowment linked mortgage market is small, with no new endowment linked mortgage products and few coming to maturity.

Banks and buildings societies stand ready to support all of their customers affected by Covid-19, including those with an endowment mortgage shortfall.

Firms will consider customer circumstances with endowment mortgages on a case-by-case basis and UK Finance have instructed lenders to treat all customers sympathetically at this time. Customers are also protected under the FCA's overarching Treating Customers Fairly principle.

Given this, we believe that existing lender forbearance and regulatory guidance is sufficient in supporting customers with endowment mortgages through Covid-19.

## ■ Museums and Galleries: Coronavirus

**Shabana Mahmood:**

[\[45083\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps the Government is taking to help ensure the long-term financial sustainability of museums and art galleries in Birmingham as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government has announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency including almost £300 billion of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of UK GDP. Museums, galleries and other entities in the arts and heritage sector, can benefit from a range of support measures including:

- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England
- The retail, hospitality and leisure grant fund (RHLGF)

- Small business grant funding (SBGF) of £10,000 for all business in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises
- VAT deferral for up to 12 months
- The Time To Pay scheme, through which businesses in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, can receive support with their tax affairs
- Protection for commercial leaseholders against automatic forfeiture for non-payment until June 30, 2020

The Business Support website provides further information about how businesses can access the support that has been made available, who is eligible, when the schemes open and how to apply - <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support>.

Separately, the Arts Council England has made £160 million of emergency funding available, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund £50million, with grants of between £3000 and £50,000 available through the latter.

#### ■ Non-domestic Rates: Valuation

**James Wild:** [45489]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what date case reference CHK100156838 will be determined by the Valuation Office Agency.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) completed case reference CHK100156838 on 4 March 2020.

#### ■ Probate: Coronavirus

**Olivia Blake:** [46200]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending probate for people who have experienced bereavement during the covid-19 lockdown and who therefore cannot meet the six month deadline for inheritance tax submission.

**Jesse Norman:**

While there is no statutory deadline for making probate applications, the Government is aware of concerns about the six-month deadline for paying inheritance tax and the twelve-month deadline for filing a return. Where a taxpayer is unable to file their return on time because of COVID-19, HMRC will consider that within the scope of a reasonable excuse and as grounds for appeal against late filing penalties. The Government continues to explore all avenues to help those affected.

## ■ Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund: Bus Services

**Anthony Browne:**

**[46186]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending eligibility for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund to coach operators.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises that this is a very challenging time for businesses in a wide variety of sectors. Small businesses occupying properties for retail, hospitality or leisure purposes are likely to be particularly affected by Covid-19 due to their reliance on customer footfall, and the fact that they are less likely than larger businesses to have sufficient cash reserves to meet their high fixed property-related costs. The Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund is intended to help small businesses in this situation.

On 1<sup>st</sup> May the Government that it would allocate up to an additional £617 million to Local authorities to enable them to make discretionary grants to businesses which have been excluded from the existing grants schemes because of the way they interact with the business rates system. Local Authorities can also choose to make discretionary grants to other kinds of businesses, such as coach operators, if they feel there is a particular local economic need. However, the priority of all the grants schemes continues to be to help the smallest businesses, and small businesses which are facing significant property-related costs and operate in sectors which have been particularly hard hit by the steep decline in customer footfall.

Businesses that are not eligible for grants should still be able to benefit from other measures in the Government's unprecedented package of economic support, including:

- An option to defer VAT payments by up to twelve months;
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme, which will ensure that small and micro businesses can quickly access loans of up to £50,000 which are 100% guaranteed by the Government;
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, now extended to cover all businesses including those which would be able to access commercial credit;
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, to support businesses with their wage bill; and
- The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, to provide support to the self-employed.

## ■ Revenue and Customs: Coronavirus

**Chris Stephens:**

**[R] [45308]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the timeline for HMRC regional centres to come into operation.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC recognise that COVID-19 is having an impact on construction and fit-out of their new regional centres, and that this poses a risk to scheduled delivery timescales.

HMRC's initial planning has been on the basis that construction activity will be delayed by about three months, with a further month to re-mobilise fully. However, delays will vary by location. HMRC are working with developers and contractors to monitor the impact on delivery timelines, and to assess any changes over the coming weeks and months.

**Dan Carden:**[\[46136\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to review HMRC's Building our Future programme in response to the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC remain committed to their strategy of moving into regional centres and are planning for delays to their Locations Programme caused by COVID-19, assessing the impacts on a site by site basis. Construction or fit-out work continues at most of HMRC's regional centre sites in line with UK Government guidelines and Safe Operating Procedures issued by industry construction bodies. HMRC are providing critical support to the country at this vital time, such as through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, as well as delivering their usual services.

**Dan Carden:**[\[46137\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of redundancies arising from HMRC's Building our Future programme on (a) the implementation of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and (b) wider operational capacity in HMRC.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC will continue to deliver the Job Retention Scheme for as long as needed, in addition to providing their other critical services. The Government is thankful for the dedication, effort and commitment HMRC's staff have shown during this challenging period.

HMRC remain committed to their Location Strategy and regularly review their workforce requirements in line with this strategy.

**■ Revenue and Customs: Ealing****Dan Carden:**[\[46138\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what impact assessment his Department has undertaken of the closure of the HMRC office at International House, Ealing on the implementation of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) opened on 20 April 2020 and is a temporary scheme available until the end of October 2020.

The HMRC office at International House in Ealing is currently scheduled to close in December 2020, and this closure will have no impact on the implementation of CJRS.

**Dan Carden:**[\[46139\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the new covid-19 public health guidelines to avoid using public transport while travelling to work on the definition of reasonable travelling distance for those HMRC staff without private means of transport who face relocation to the new regional centre in Stratford following the proposed closure of the office at International House, Ealing.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC have supported over 50,000 colleagues to work from home during the current COVID-19 crisis. For those who have to attend the workplace to fulfil their role by using public transport, HMRC have provided additional support to them through flexibility and support with additional travel costs, to allow them to ensure their journey meets government guidance.

HMRC recognise the challenges faced by their staff, particularly in locations where journeys are more difficult. HMRC have a range of policies and support in place, including remote working where possible.

**■ Revenue and Customs: Remote Working****Chris Stephens:**[\[R\] \[45307\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of permitting HMRC staff to continue working from home after the covid-19 lockdown to minimise (a) redundancies and (b) excessive travel times to Regional Centres.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC have been clear that, if staff can move to a regional centre, transitional site or specialist site, and have the skills HMRC need, there will be a role for them. HMRC have a range of policies and support in place, including remote working, to facilitate this. HMRC are providing critical support to the country at this time, and they will seek to sustain any changes to their ways of working that are proven to lead to better outcomes in the long term for the vital public services that they deliver.

**■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme****Stella Creasy:**[\[45171\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal support the Government has made available for those newly self-employed in the financial year 2019-20 who are not eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

**Munira Wilson:**[\[45476\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support from the public purse is available to people who have become self-employed in the last 12 months who are ineligible for the Self-employed Income Support Scheme.

**Kate Osborne:**[\[45487\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to extend the Self Employment Income Support Scheme to people that became self-employed in 2019.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has designed measures that can be implemented quickly and effectively, and it continues to work with stakeholders to make sure funding reaches those who need it most. Anyone ineligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme who requires support should have access to other measures appropriate to their individual circumstances. These include the relaxation of the earnings rules in Universal Credit and the raising of the Local Housing Allowance rate.

**Rushanara Ali:**[\[45210\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many self-employed workers have been successful with an application to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme went live on 13 May 2020.

By midnight on 14 May, about 1.1 million claims representing £3.1 billion had been made.

**Drew Hendry:**[\[45309\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on applicants of preventing tax (a) advisors and (b) agents from completing Self-Employment Income Support Scheme applications on behalf of their clients.

**Drew Hendry:**[\[45310\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of enabling tax (a) advisors and (b) agents to complete Self-Employment Income Support Scheme applications on behalf of their clients.

**Jesse Norman:**

The claims process for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme is easy and straightforward. HMRC are doing all of the calculations, and taxpayers will only need their National Insurance number, Unique Tax Reference (UTR) number, online log-in details, and bank account details to apply for the grant.

Accountants, tax agents or advisers cannot make claims on behalf of their clients. Designing a scheme that enabled agents to do this would have taken significantly longer to deliver, at a time when speed is a priority.

Accountants, tax agents and advisers can help their clients by ensuring clients are aware they may be eligible; helping clients to find the details they need; using the online eligibility checker on their clients' behalf (or supporting them to use the checker themselves); and explaining why they may or may not be eligible, and what other support is available to them.

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[45490]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the £50,000 of trading profits upper limit for eligibility to qualify for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, including the £50,000 threshold, is designed to target those who most need support, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income. The self-employed are a very diverse group. They have a wide mix of turnover and profits, with monthly and annual variations, even in normal times. Some may see their profits unaffected by the current situation, while others have substantial alternative forms of income: for example, those who had more than £50,000 from self-employment profits in 2017-18 had an average total income of more than £200,000. The self-employed can also offset losses against profits in other years and other forms of income.

Those with average profits above £50,000 could still benefit from other support. Individuals may have access to a range of grants and loans depending on their circumstances, and the SEISS supplements the significant support already announced for UK businesses, including the Bounce Back Loan Scheme for small businesses, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and the deferral of tax payments.

**Claire Hanna:**

**[46191]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the duration of the self-employed income support scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK has one of the most generous self-employed COVID-19 support schemes in the world.

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme opened on 13 May, ahead of schedule, and provides support worth up to £7,500 each to millions of individuals. Recipients will have the grants in their bank accounts by end of this month.

The Chancellor will keep the scheme under review.

**Ben Lake:**

**[46782]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people who are ineligible for a grant under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme as a result of their receiving a higher level of income through working tax credit and child tax credit than they earn through self-employment.

**Ben Lake:**[\[46783\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of excluding working tax credit and child tax credit from the calculation of income for the purposes of the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

No one will become ineligible for a grant under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme as a result of tax credit or child tax credit payments.

Tax credit payments are not taxable income and are not included in the calculation for the Self-Employment Income Support eligibility checker or grant amount.

### ■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Northern Ireland

**Claire Hanna:**[\[45502\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons the Self-employment Income Support Scheme online system does not accept a Northern Ireland driving licence or an Irish passport held by Northern Ireland citizens as a way of verifying their identity via government gateway; and what means of verifying their identity should people in Northern Ireland use to access that scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

Everyone in Northern Ireland who is eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will be able to claim their grant. People who have engaged with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) online in the past using an existing Government Gateway credential – for example, to file their Self-Assessment tax return – can reuse their existing online Government Gateway credentials to claim the grant. Most people who are eligible to claim have credentials already. Those dealing with HMRC online for the first time will be required to verify their identity. HMRC worked quickly with the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency to enable people to use a GB driving licence to verify their identity for SEISS. It has not been possible to add non-UK passports or non-GB driving licences to the Government Gateway authentication service to the same timeline. HMRC are currently exploring whether it is possible to connect to Northern Ireland Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) and Irish Passport Service data, as part of their continuing improvement of the Government Gateway. People who do not have a UK passport or GB driving licence can use the multiple-choice questions option to verify their identity. This uses a financial checking service that does not require a passport or driving licence. Anyone who is unable to verify their identity in this way can also make their claim by telephone.

### ■ Self-employment income support scheme: Northern Ireland

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[46570\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review the required identification documents for the Self Employed Income Support Scheme to allow people in Northern Ireland, whose only identification is a Northern Ireland Driving Licence, to use the scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

Everyone in Northern Ireland who is eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will be able to claim their grants.

People who have engaged with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) online in the past using an existing Government Gateway credential – for example, to file their Self-Assessment tax return – can reuse their existing online Government Gateway credentials to claim the grant. Most people who are eligible to claim have credentials already.

Those dealing with HMRC online for the first time will be required to verify their identity. HMRC worked quickly with the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency to enable people to use a GB driving licence to verify their identity for SEISS. It has not been possible to add non-UK passports or non-GB driving licences to the Government Gateway authentication service in the same timeline. HMRC are currently exploring whether it is possible to connect to Northern Ireland Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) and Irish Passport Service data, as part of their continuing improvement of the Government Gateway.

Those who do not have a UK passport or GB driving licence can use the multiple-choice questions option to verify their identity. This uses a financial checking service that does not require a passport or driving licence. Anyone who is unable to verify their identity in this way can also make their claim by telephone.

**■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Walthamstow****Stella Creasy:**[\[45169\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many claims have been made to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme in Walthamstow constituency.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme went live on 13 May 2020.

By midnight on 14 May, about 1.1 million claims representing £3.1 billion had been made in total

This is a new scheme and HMRC are currently working through the analysis they will be able to provide based on the data available. HMRC will make the timescales for publication and the types of data available in due course.

**■ Small Business Grants Fund****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[46579\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his timescale is for (a) allocating and (b) disbursing Small Business Grants Fund for businesses in Shared Spaces funding to (i) local authorities and (ii) Hull City Council; and what plans the Government has to provide guidance to local authorities on allocation of grants from that fund.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Discretionary Grants Fund, announced on 1<sup>st</sup> May, provides Local Authorities in England with up to £617m additional funding to provide grants to businesses which are ineligible for the existing Small Business Grant Fund, and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund due to the way that they interact with the business rates system.

It is the Government's intention that the following businesses should be considered as a priority for these funds:

- Businesses in shared offices;
- Regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment;
- B&Bs which pay Council Tax instead of business rates; and
- Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

Detailed guidance for Local Authorities on how to administer this Fund was published on 13<sup>th</sup> May, and is available on gov.uk

Local Authorities should first use expected underspends in their allocations from the existing grant funds to pay for these discretionary grants. However, where Local Authorities have insufficient underspends to pay for the Discretionary Grants Fund, they will receive additional funds by early June.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[46740\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reversing changes to eligibility thresholds for the Small Business Grant.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The eligibility threshold for the Small Business Grant Fund has not changed. Businesses are eligible for a grant of £10,000 per property, for each property in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rates Relief.

The eligibility thresholds for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund have also remained the same since the scheme was announced on 17<sup>th</sup> March. We have been working at pace to design grant schemes to support businesses and protect jobs throughout Covid-19. We apologise for a human error made on an early version of a Covid-19 support measures factsheet which stated that the rateable value cut-off for the £25,000 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Fund grant was £14,999. This has since been updated on 9<sup>th</sup> April. The guidance to Local Authorities has always been very clear that retail, hospitality and leisure properties with a rateable value of £15,000 or below would be eligible for a £10,000 grant under the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund.

**■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus****Stella Creasy:**[\[45170\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal support is available for owner-operated or small limited companies run from home in the event that directors of those

companies do not wish to furlough themselves as they want to continue to work to sustain their businesses.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The current grants schemes administered by local authorities have been designed to ensure that payments are made quickly and efficiently to small businesses facing particularly high fixed-property costs. Businesses which are not eligible for these grants – such as those run from home offices – may benefit from other measures in the Government's unprecedented package of support for business, including:

- The Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises, which provides loans from £2,000 to £50,000, for which lenders receive a 100 per cent government guarantee, and which the borrower does not have to repay for the first 12 months
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) for larger loans
- VAT deferral for up to 12 months
- The Time To Pay scheme, through which businesses and self-employed individuals in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, can receive support with their tax affairs
- A 3-month mortgage holiday

The Business Support website provides further information about how businesses can access the support that has been made available, who is eligible, when the schemes open and how to apply - <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support>. And details of the range of support for individuals affected by COVID-19 is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19>.

**Emma Hardy:**

**[46135]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 May 2020 to Question 43140 on Small Businesses: Coronavirus, what his timetable is for the allocation of that additional funding for local authorities to make discretionary payments to businesses excluded from Small Business Grants Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund; and on what basis the amount of funding allocated to each local authority will be calculated.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Local Authorities will be allocated 5% of the value of the existing grant funds in their areas to spend on new discretionary grants.

This will be calculated based on the data return from Local Authorities of Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020, which includes a projection of spend totals for the Small Business and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Funds.

In cases where it later becomes clear that this calculation was an underestimate, then the 5% allocation will be adjusted upwards.

Local Authorities can use expected underspends in their existing grant allocation to fund the Discretionary Grant Fund. If underspends do not prove sufficient, BEIS will allocate additional funding to Local Authorities. Local Authorities which need additional funding will receive confirmation of the amount of this funding by the end of May, and will receive this funding in early June.

In total, Local Authorities in England can receive up to an additional £617 million for discretionary grants.

#### ■ Treasury: ICT

**Alyn Smith:** [\[45448\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps have been taken to increase the server capacity for his Department during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

There has been no requirement for additional steps to increase server capacity during the covid-19 outbreak.

HM Treasury retains an elastic, demand-driven infrastructure that is pro-actively monitored to scale as circumstances change.

#### ■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

**Colum Eastwood:** [\[46822\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional financial support the Government plans to provide to the devolved Administrations to ensure that people on universal credit are supported when facing increasing food costs during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Steve Barclay:**

The UK Government's response to Covid-19 has been UK-wide, and that is why the UK Government has so far announced almost £7 billion of funding to the devolved administrations to support people, business and public services in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This means £3.5 billion for the Scottish Government, £2.1 billion for the Welsh Government and £1.2 billion for the Northern Ireland Executive. This is in addition to the package of temporary welfare measures we have announced to support those on low incomes, including a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element.

### WALES

#### ■ Coronavirus: Wales

**Mr David Jones:** [\[45980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with ministers in the Welsh Government on ensuring clarity for the public on the covid-19 restrictions applicable in (a) Wales and (b) England.

**Mr David Jones:**

**[45981]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with ministers in the Welsh Government on consistency in the covid-19 restrictions applicable in Wales and England.

**Simon Hart:**

There have been unprecedented levels of engagement between the UK Government and the devolved administrations in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, at present numbering over 100 such engagements. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I have regular discussions with the First Minister and his ministerial team including through COBR(M) and the Ministerial Implementation Groups. I have set out a schedule of the Ministerial engagement between my Office and the Welsh Government since the start of the crisis.

All four UK administrations are committed to the UK-wide approach to tackling Covid-19. The overall approach in responding to the pandemic remains aligned across the UK, with each government able to modify that approach to reflect the needs of each nations.

There are some limited differences in the restrictions that apply between Wales and England. These are mainly at the margins of our common approach. It is important that the rationale for any differences is founded on evidence and is clearly explained to people on both sides of the border.

**Attachments:**

1. Table - 45980 & 45981 [Table Written PQs 45980 & 45981.DOCX]

**Nia Griffith:**

**[46003]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he had with the First Minister of Wales on the content of the Prime Minister's statement of 10 May 2020 in advance of that statement being made.

**Nia Griffith:**

**[46004]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many times he has had discussions with the First Minister of Wales since 1 March 2020.

**Nia Griffith:**

**[46005]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many times he has had discussions with the First Minister of Wales since 1 March 2020.

**Simon Hart:**

My Rt Hon Friends the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and I are in regular discussions with the First Minister of Wales on our Governments' response to Covid-19. These discussions are part of on-going and regular dialogue between the governments at all levels as part of the UK-wide response to the pandemic. The overall approach in responding to the pandemic remains aligned across the UK, with each government able to modify that approach to reflect the needs of each constituent nation of the United Kingdom.

**■ Wales Office: Coronavirus****Nia Griffith:** [\[46006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps he is taking to ensure that his Department's London office complies with the Government's guidance on social distancing in the workplace.

**David T C Davies:**

All staff in the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales are currently working from home, in accordance with Government guidance. The Department has no current plans to return staff to the Office.

**Nia Griffith:** [\[46007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps he is taking to ensure that his Department's Cardiff office complies with the Welsh Government's guidance on social distancing in the workplace.

**David T C Davies:**

All staff in the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales are currently working from home, in accordance with Government guidance. The Department has no current plans to return staff to the Office.

**WOMEN AND EQUALITIES****■ Employment: Females****Stella Creasy:** [\[43632\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what plans she has to support women (a) returning to work and (b) accessing childcare after the covid-19 lockdown.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises that many women face barriers to returning to work due to caring responsibilities. We have delivered, and continue to deliver, return to work programmes which provide training, support and employment opportunities across a variety of levels, sectors, and regions.

For example, we have awarded around £1.5 million to sixteen organisations supporting returners in the private sector. This fund provides parents and carers with a training and skills package to enable them to return to the labour market.

We have also launched returner programmes that target key workforces in the public sector, including social workers, health professionals and police investigators. The Return to Practice programme has supported over 300 health professionals to update their skills and knowledge and gain professional registration, so that they can secure employment. The Return to Social Work programme is recruiting up to 200 previously certified social workers into critical roles within local councils to support the Covid-19 pandemic response, providing them with training and placements.

The Government also recognises the importance of childcare to working parents. The closure of schools, nurseries, childminders and other childcare settings were from Friday 20 March, except for children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response was an important step to reducing the number of social interactions and thus flatten the upward curve of the COVID-19 outbreak.

## ■ **Gay Conversion Therapy**

**Robert Largan:** [\[45510\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what plans the Government has to bring forward legislative proposals to ban gay conversion therapy.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

It is a fundamental principle of this Government that everyone should be free to live their lives as they wish. People must feel safe at home, out on the street and online.

Conversion therapy is a very complex issue. There are a wide range of practices which may fall within its scope and we want to ensure we have a thorough understanding of the situation in the UK to inform an effective approach. Before any decision is made on proposals for ending conversion therapy we must understand the problem, the range of options available and the impact they would have.

We will work to deepen our understanding and consider all options for ending the practice of conversion therapy.

## ■ **Gender Recognition**

**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[45296\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when she plans to publish the Government's response to its consultation on reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

We have listened closely to all those who engaged with our consultation and we plan to publish our response this summer, subject to the Government's COVID-19 response.

## ■ **Travellers: Coronavirus**

**Conor McGinn:** [\[46104\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on gypsy, roma and traveller communities.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

It is important to continue to develop our understanding of how this new virus affects different communities, and to use the insights gained from the latest available data and research. This is why we have asked Public Health England to review COVID-19 outcomes among different groups, and to explore potential reasons for disparities.

We have also asked all local authorities to consider how best to support communities, especially those potentially at risk such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller citizens, who

may need specific support, including access to basic services such as water, sanitation and waste disposal.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[45162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that UK travellers awaiting repatriation to the UK continue to receive the benefit payments they are entitled to beyond the usual four week period for payments under temporary absence rules.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

DWP continues to support existing benefit recipients in exceptional cases where their absence abroad goes over the period allowed under the temporary absence benefit rules and are awaiting repatriation due to covid-19 travel restrictions.

### ■ Children: Maintenance

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[44959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to resume chasing missed child maintenance payments.

**Mims Davies:**

Child Maintenance Service is currently offering a reduced service due to coronavirus pandemic, in agreement with ministers, and will focus on priority work. We will not take action to collect arrears during this current period but we will collect any unpaid amounts including any missed payments at a later date.

The DWP are currently formulating a recovery plan, which details our staged approach to move back to normal service. Based on current planning assumptions, Child Maintenance Service expects to provide further detail on the approach to missed payments in July 2020.

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

[\[45407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that parents paying towards child maintenance comply with payment timelines during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mims Davies:**

Paying Parents have a regular schedule of payments to make and all parents are expected to make payments according to the schedule during their claim. Child Maintenance payments are routinely made via an automated method direct from the Paying Parents bank account or wages.

Paying parents are still expected to pay child maintenance throughout this period. Our priority is to maintain the flow of maintenance by easing the financial pressure on

parents and ensuring that we transfer the payments as quickly as possible to receiving parents, and resources are focussed on ensuring payments are made where Child Maintenance Service has received them.

#### ■ **Employment and Support Allowance: Coronavirus**

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[46190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to (a) waive the six week penalty and (b) enable the backdating of claims in relation to new-style employment support allowance for people with a shortfall in contributions who have paid a lump sum during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

We have made a number of changes to working age benefits in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including increasing certain entitlements. The COVID-19 outbreak continues to be a rapidly evolving situation and we consider whether further action is appropriate on an ongoing basis.

#### ■ **Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus**

**Nick Smith:**

[\[45091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to enforce the adoption by employers of required health and safety measures to protect their employees during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mims Davies:**

Where it is found that employers are not complying with Covid-19 guidelines, then appropriate action will be taken by the relevant enforcing authority including the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Local Authorities. Action can range from specific advice through to serving enforcement notices so as to ensure that practicable measures are implemented to protect workers and others.

In addition, HSE has been given access to additional funding to support their advice and regulatory activity as businesses implement the new guidance on working safely. HSE's plans will develop as more businesses return to work and this will include checks that appropriate measures are in place to protect workers from Covid-19.

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[46077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 May 2020 to Question 42870, what steps the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has taken in response to suspected incidents of Covid-19 related to (a) dangerous occurrences and (b) cases of occupational disease and death, where such cases have been reported to the HSE.

**Mims Davies:**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has [published criteria](#) it uses to select which incidents of occupational disease and dangerous occurrences it will investigate. HSE

is working through the process of applying those criteria to the dangerous occurrence and occupational disease notifications it has received in relation to Covid-19.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus**

**Mr Stephen Morgan:** [\[45409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for people who require assistance in (a) question comprehension and (b) support from a nominated adult or carer in the assessment of people for personal independence payment during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The department is committed to providing a quality, sensitive and respectful service to everyone. Individuals are encouraged to alert their assessment provider of any additional requirements they may have and providers will endeavour to meet any such reasonable requests.

Individuals can access additional support at any point in the claim or assessment process, for example help filling in the form or questionnaire. Companions are also able to join the telephony assessment, as they would have done for the face-to-face assessment. This is confirmed to the individual in the initial invitation to assessment letter for all phone assessments. If choosing to request a companion, they will be added to the call by the Health Professional at the start of the assessment.

To further enhance the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) telephony service, PIP providers have begun implementing a video relay service for deaf / British Sign Language-user claimants with an interpreter to allow these individuals to participate in the assessment process.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations**

**Alan Brown:** [\[45312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether it is her Department's policy to automatically extend personal independence payment awards where medical assessments cannot be undertaken as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

From 17 March we suspended all face-to-face assessments for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to protect vulnerable people from unnecessary risk of exposure to the coronavirus. Where an assessment has been scheduled we will be making alternative arrangements, which could involve either telephone or paper-based assessments. We expect these arrangements to be in effect for a temporary period and will be regularly reviewing the position in line with Public Health advice.

From 24 March we have also temporarily suspended all PIP reviews and reassessment activity other than for those already in progress and existing awards due to expire will be automatically extended to ensure continuity of financial support.

## ■ Social Security Benefits

**Neil Coyle:** [\[45250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the High Court's decision of 7 May 2020 on the Government's policy on no recourse to public funds, what estimate she has made of the total amount of backdated benefit payments owed to families who have been found to have been wrongfully denied them under the no recourse to public funds policy.

**Neil Coyle:** [\[45251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the High Court's decision of 7 May 2020 on the no recourse to public funds policy, how her Department plans to administer backdated benefit payments owed to families who have been wrongfully denied them under the no recourse to public funds policy.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The department that takes the policy lead on determining whether people have access to public funds is the Home Office which has noted the court's decision and will provide submissions when the judgement and full reasons are handed down.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

**Jim Shannon:** [\[45198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking through the benefits system to support vulnerable claimants with cancer during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

- The Department is committed to ensuring people affected by cancer are supported in a sensitive, fair and appropriate way.
- In Employment and Support Allowance a light touch evidence gathering process exists, to help determine eligibility. Claimants should not delay making a claim because of difficulties in providing supporting medical information. We will continue to process claims and work with customers to gather the best supporting evidence available.
- We've suspended award reviews and DLA to PIP reassessment activity and extended existing awards to ensure they don't go out of payment. We have also suspended all routine award reviews and re-assessments of disability additions in Universal Credit.
- Supporting people who are terminally ill remains an absolute priority for the Department and we will continue to fast track terminally ill claimants to higher rates of award.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Scotland

**John Lamont:**

**[45386]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress has been made on devolving social security benefits to the Scottish Government; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the progress of that devolution.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Scottish Government has replaced Sure Start Maternity Grants and Funeral Expenses Payments with Scottish provision. It has also introduced a Supplement to Carer's Allowance, and the Young Carer Grant which are completely new in Scotland. In addition, its contracted employment programme, Fair Start Scotland, has been in place since April 2018 and followed a year of transitional services, Work First Scotland and Work Able Scotland, in 2017. These measures have been introduced with the support of the UK Government, and the two Governments continue to work closely together on further new benefits such as the Scottish Child Payment and Winter Heating Assistance for the parents of disabled children, which have interdependencies with the reserved social security system.

On 1 April 2020, executive competence for extra-needs disability benefits and for industrial injuries provision transferred to the Scottish Government. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People made a statement to the Scottish Parliament on the same day, announcing that, due to the impact of coronavirus pandemic on capacity in the health and social care sectors in particular, the Scottish Government had decided to delay the introduction of replacement benefits for Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit and Personal Independence Payment. We continue to work closely with the Scottish Government on its revised timescales for replacing these benefits, and on its plans for the replacement of Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payments. The Scottish Government has asked DWP to maintain the existing caseload of claims to Severe Disablement Allowance on its behalf, and an Agency Agreement is in place for this which will be reviewed after five years.

Until the new Scottish benefits are introduced, DWP has agreed to continue to provide the existing benefits to people in Scotland under Agency Agreements on behalf of the Scottish Government, in the same way as they are provided to people in England and Wales. Both Governments' priority remains the safe and secure transfer to the new Scottish benefits.

## ■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

**Sarah Owen:**

**[45478]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of allowing UK travellers awaiting repatriation to the UK to apply for universal credit from abroad while they are unable to travel as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Income-related benefits, such as Universal Credit, are only payable to people who are in the UK and cannot be claimed by those outside the UK.

Stranded British nationals with a job in the UK are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on the same basis as other employees of the company.

Additionally, if applicable, stranded British nationals who are small business owners can apply to the Small Business Grants Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption loan scheme (CBILS).

The FCO continues to work around the clock with the airline industry and other governments across the world to help British nationals abroad return to the UK.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### HOME OFFICE

#### ■ Immigrants: Deportation

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[43018]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the ability of her Department to operate flights to remove people held in immigration detention during the covid-19 outbreak over the next (a) 28 days, (b) three months and (c) six months.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 18 May 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

**Chris Philp:**

~~The Home Office continues to monitor the on-going changes to international flight restrictions and entry requirements imposed by receiving countries caused by the global response to COVID-19. Enforced and voluntary returns continue on a case by case basis where we are able to do so. To some destinations, commercial scheduled routes are still open albeit limited. We will continue to work in this flexible manner over the next six months, being alert to softening of international restrictions, utilising a combination of scheduled commercial flights and specially arranged chartered flights with the support of receiving states to minimise detention time through the facilitation of returns.~~  
**The Home Office continues to monitor the on-going changes to international flight restrictions and entry requirements imposed by receiving countries caused by the global response to COVID-19. Enforced and voluntary returns continue on a case by case basis where we are able to do so. To some destinations, commercial scheduled routes are still open albeit limited. We will continue to work in this flexible manner over the coming weeks and months”being alert to softening of international restrictions, utilising a combination of scheduled commercial flights and specially arranged chartered flights with the support of receiving states to minimise detention time through the facilitation of returns.**

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### ■ Contingencies Fund Advance

**Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government (Mr Simon Clarke):**  
[\[HCWS239\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's intention to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund. The Department requires an advance of its cash requirement pending parliamentary approval of the Main Estimate 2020-21.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £1,415,000,000 will be sought in a Main Estimate for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £1,415,000,000 has been met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

#### ■ Negotiations on the UK's future trading relationship with the US: Update

**Secretary of State for Department for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss):**  
[\[HCWS238\]](#)

Around 200 negotiators from the UK and the US held the first round of negotiations for a UK-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between 5-15 May 2020.

More trade is essential if the UK is to overcome the unprecedented challenges posed by Covid-19. New FTAs will be an important factor in facing that economic challenge, providing new opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs who have faced significant challenges in this difficult period. An FTA with the US can help create opportunities for UK businesses, provide better jobs and boost the economy in every part of the country.

Both sides are hopeful that negotiations for a comprehensive trade agreement can proceed at an accelerated pace. Ambassador Lighthizer and I agreed that a second virtual round will take place in the weeks of 15 and 22 June, and that in advance of that negotiating teams will continue their work and meet virtually on a rolling basis, with meetings continuing throughout this week and beyond.

Negotiations over the past two weeks were conducted virtually but proceeded efficiently, with UK and US negotiators participating in extensive discussions in nearly 30 different negotiating groups covering all aspects of a comprehensive trade agreement. The discussions covered the following workstreams:

- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Legal Group – Disputes

- Trade Remedies
- Rules of Origin
- Investment
- Legal Group – Core Text
- Technical Barriers to Trade
- Competition
- Digital
- Telecoms
- Economics
- Customs
- Sectoral Annexes
- Cross cutting services
- Market Access for Goods, Overarching and Industrial Goods
- Good Regulatory Practice (GRP)
- Financial Services
- Sustainability, Environment and Labour
- General Coordination
- Market Access for Goods, Agriculture
- State Owned Enterprises
- Services Sectors
- Intellectual Property
- Procurement
- Sustainability, Anti-Corruption
- Market Access for Goods, Textiles
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS)
- Subsidies

The meetings were positive and constructive, reflecting the mutual commitment to secure an ambitious agreement that significantly boosts trade and investment between our economies, the first and fifth largest in the world.

Both sides recognised the unprecedented circumstances in which these negotiations took place, with significant emphasis placed on supporting the post-Covid economic recovery.

During the meetings, the teams discussed their respective objectives and agreed on ambitious next steps for coming talks. Our preparatory work makes it possible for the UK

and United States to quickly advance negotiations in a number of substantive areas that will shape our future bilateral trade relationship.

A number of areas showed particular progress, including where both teams identified positive alignment between respective negotiating positions. They identified a mutually high ambition for services, investment and digital trade, among other areas.

Both sides also set out a mutual commitment to creating new opportunities for businesses on both sides of the Atlantic and to delivering benefits for workers, consumers and farmers. This includes the confirmation that both sides will quickly pursue a standalone Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Chapter and will continue the UK-US SME Dialogue.

In the same manner as this negotiating round, discussions in the second round will cover all areas to be included in a Free Trade Agreement.

The Government is committed to negotiating a comprehensive agreement with the US and we look forward to making further progress at the next round of negotiations. The Government will make a further statement on progress following the second round of talks.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Transport for London Extraordinary Funding and Financing

**Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):**

[\[HCWS240\]](#)

It is vital that we take the necessary steps to protect the services which our critical workers, such as NHS staff, rely on - both in London and all across the country.

So far, we have invested billions into maintaining essential services across rail, buses, trams and ferries outside London, including £30m over 12 weeks for light rail services in Sheffield, Manchester, West Midlands, Tyne and Wear, and Nottingham; almost £400m to protect vital bus routes and temporarily suspended rail operators' franchise agreements to transfer all revenue and cost risk to government so that services continue to run.

This is alongside our wider agenda to level up transport networks across the whole country, including £5bn for buses and bikes announced back in February, £4.2bn for local transport settlements for eight Mayoral Combined Authorities subject to negotiations, a £1.7bn Transport Infrastructure Investment Fund to improve roads, repair bridges and fill millions of potholes; and the decision by government to take over the Northern network to protect services, drive up performance and rebuild passenger confidence.

We will continue to work with metro mayors, local authorities and transport operators all across the country to ensure that public transport is available for those who need it, including any ramp up in services required as people slowly start to return to work.

In order to keep vital public transport services running in London and further ramp up services to support social distancing, the Government agreed on Thursday 14 May a

package of support for Transport for London. It comprises £1.095bn of new grant and a further loan facility of £505m. The support can be increased by a further £300m of grant and loan if revenue loss is higher than forecast at this time.

The settlement for TfL was needed for two reasons. Most important is the significant fall in revenue caused by covid-19. However, an important secondary factor was the pre-existing poor condition of TfL's financial position as a result of decisions made over the last four years. Combined with significant cost increases and delays to Crossrail, this left TfL in serious financial difficulty even before the public health emergency.

It's important to note that around half of all bus and rail journeys in England are made on its services and that London is by far the most public transport-dependent place in the UK. Almost half of all Londoners, more in inner London, do not have access to cars. London's roads are the most congested in the UK; even with reduced passenger numbers and capacity, TfL's services are still essential to allow critical workers to travel and the city to operate.

Unlike local transport authorities in other towns and cities across England, TfL is responsible for London's bus network, principal road routes, various rail networks including the London Underground, London Overground, Docklands Light Railway and TfL Rail, as well as trams, cycling provision, and river services. To protect these services, it is important therefore that the rescue package takes steps to put TfL back on a sustainable footing while ensuring fairness for the wider British taxpayer. As a result, the Mayor intends to adhere to the proposal in TfL's own business plan that fares should increase by RPI plus 1 per cent on all modes in January.

We have also set a number of other conditions, including: restoring services to 100 per cent of pre-Covid levels as soon as possible; requiring TfL to collect fares on buses while ensuring driver safety, which it had stopped doing during the crisis; easing congestion by the temporary suspension of free travel for over-60s in the morning peak and temporarily suspending free travel for under-18s all day. Disabled people will still be able to make use of their concession passes all day, and Special arrangements will be made for those children who qualify for free travel to schools.

These conditions are needed to avoid crowding and reduce the exposure of vulnerable groups. The Mayor has subsequently announced that the Congestion Charge will increase to £15, with extended hours of operation and has withdrawn the residents' discount for new applications.

The Congestion Charge will continue to have exemptions for NHS and care workers and Blue badge holders. Local residents will continue to receive discounts.

To help avoid such drastic action in the future there will be an immediate and broad ranging Government-led review of TfL's future financial position and structure.

The decision to offer support was not taken lightly, but reflects the exceptional circumstances the country finds itself in. I consider it vital to keep services in London running to the maximum levels possible to allow safe transport of passengers. Our messaging remains that people should avoid using public transport and work from home

wherever possible, but as measures are slowly lifted it is vital that Londoners who need to use TfL services feel safe and secure .

This deal will encourage help protect those who need to use public transport and help us move towards greener and healthier walking and cycling options. Importantly, it will also provide certainty and stability for London's transport services in the future.