



Daily Report

Tuesday, 23 March 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 23 March 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:57 P.M., 23 March 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Slavery

Bill Esterson:

[\[171587\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, with reference to the oral contribution of the hon. Member for Sefton Central of 18 March 2021, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on concerns in respect of modern slavery in supply chains for the procurement of personal protective equipment.

Michael Ellis:

I regularly meet ministerial colleagues to discuss important issues of common interest. However, it is a fundamental and longstanding principle of our system of Government that the fact of whether the Law Officers have advised on a particular issue is, by convention, not disclosed outside Government, without their consent. The Convention provides the fullest guarantee that government business will be conducted at all times in light of thorough and candid legal advice in circumstances in which Ministers and Law Officers can be fully open with one another.

The Government is committed to tackling modern slavery in supply chains. On 26 March 2020, we became the first country to publish a Government Modern Slavery Statement setting out the steps we have taken to identify and prevent modern slavery in our own supply chains. From September 2021 onwards, Ministerial departments will publish their own annual statements setting out the steps they have taken in their priority risk areas.

The Home Office is working with DHSC, NHS and external experts to develop tailored training and guidance for HMG buyers and suppliers on best practice approaches to preventing modern slavery in PPE supply chains.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ ACAS: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[168960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many early conciliation requests the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service has received on (a) the calculation of wages under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, (b) grievances on covid-secure measures in the workplace and (c) requests to employees who are clinically extremely vulnerable to return to the workplace since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Since the start of the pandemic Acas received 28,925 notifications which include a wages act jurisdiction. Acas has not collected additional data on the precise issues in question.

Biofuels**Ben Lake:**[\[169005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department takes to ensure decisions taken on biomass are evidence-based.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In the Government's response to Climate Change Committee's (CCC) latest annual progress report to Parliament, we announced that we will publish a new Biomass Strategy in 2022. This will review what amount of sustainable biomass could be available to the UK, and how this resource could be best utilised across the economy to help achieve our net zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2050.

The Strategy will also assess the UK's current biomass sustainability standards, which are some of the most stringent in the world, to see where and how we can improve them even further.

As part of the strategy development, we will be launching a "Call for Evidence" on the role of biomass to help achieve Net Zero, enabling interested stakeholders to contribute their views on biomass. The final strategy will be based on evidence gathered during the call for evidence and other sources. Other decisions on biomass are also evidence based, drawing on a variety of sources and analysis which is rigorously quality assured as part of our policy making process.

Chemicals: Exports**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[171697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2021 to Question 164585 on Chemicals: Exports, if he will convene a similar meeting with environmental and public health NGOs to discuss the proposals put forward by industry stakeholders at the meeting of 15 February 2021 on reducing requirements for chemical safety data in UK REACH.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Chemicals EU Exit & Trade Group (CEEG) is a sector panel for discussion on EU Exit and future trade issues. Discussions on industry's UK REACH proposal were therefore part of this broader agenda.

UK REACH policy is led by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). As such, Defra has been engaging with all interested parties, including NGOs on the issues which industry has raised about the impacts of the new regulatory requirements associated with the implementation of UK REACH.

As previously stated, in discussing the issues which industry has raised, the Government will take account of the benefits and risks of making any changes to the arrangements that are in place now, including the impact it would have on the Government's commitment to maintaining high standards of protection for public health and the environment, as well as any impact on our international obligations.

■ Clothing: Manufacturing Industries

Claudia Webbe:

[\[169085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a Garment Trading Adjudicator, similar to the Groceries Code Adjudicator, to reduce exploitation in the UK's garment industry.

Paul Scully:

The Groceries Code Adjudicator has been successful in ensuring large grocery retailers treat their direct suppliers lawfully and fairly, through its effective enforcement of the Groceries Supply Code of Practice. There are significant differences between the groceries sector and the fashion industry in terms of scale and distribution of market share, so we need to understand whether this model would be as effective in driving the right sort of behaviour in garment factories. BEIS officials have met with Fiona Gooch from Traidcraft to further discuss the proposal and continue to consider this question.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[169086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a Fit-to-Trade licensing scheme so that no garment factory could operate unless it was approved by labour enforcement agencies.

Paul Scully:

BEIS officials, along with Home Office colleagues and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority have been engaging with the British Retail Consortium and the wider retail sector to understand the systemic issues that lead to non-compliance and what measures could be used to tackle them. Given the serious nature of the allegations in Leicester and the spectrum of issues and concerns, it is imperative that we have a strong evidence base to inform the options we are considering in order to protect vulnerable workers and drive-up standards.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[169089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of actively involving trade unions in workplace inspections in order to help tackle exploitation in the garment industry.

Paul Scully:

Trade unions have been involved in the Apparel and General Merchandise Public/Private Protocol, a partnership between enforcement bodies and industry partners aimed at tackling all forms of labour exploitation in the garment trade. Brands, sector bodies and trade unions are working with the enforcement agencies to bring a coordinated approach to improve working conditions in the UK supply chain. All partners are participating in the following workstreams: worker and community voice; intervention mechanisms; business accountability; and regulation, legislation and political engagement.

Claudia Webbe:[\[169091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a statutory mandatory human rights and due diligence responsibility for the textile and clothing industry.

Paul Scully:

The Modern Slavery Act specifically requires UK large businesses to publish transparency in supply chains statements in a prominent place on their website.

The Government expects all companies operating within the UK to put measures in place to protect their supply chains from labour exploitation. Following changes to the Modern Slavery Act – where timelines are to be confirmed - organisations will be required to include information about their organisation's structure and supply chains in their modern slavery statement or to explicitly state that their statement omits this information.

The Home Office announced a series of measures to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act, including introducing fines for businesses that do not comply with their transparency obligations. We will introduce the necessary legislation, setting out the level of those fines, as soon as parliamentary time allows.

The Government provides advice to businesses on human rights issues across their supply chains, including pressing them to undertake appropriate due diligence to satisfy themselves that their activities do not support, or risk being seen to support, any human rights violations or abuses. BEIS has reinforced this message through engagement with businesses, industry groups and other stakeholders.

UK listed companies are required to report on social and environmental impacts material to their business, including information about supply chains, where this is necessary for an understanding of the business as part of annual reports.

Claudia Webbe:[\[169092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to promote transparency and accountability within garment industry supply chains.

Paul Scully:

UK listed companies are required to report on social and environmental impacts material to their business, including information about supply chains, where this is necessary for an understanding of the business as part of annual reports.

The Government looks to businesses to be open and transparent in responding to consumers' interest in where and how the products they source have been manufactured, including the use of raw materials. Since being introduced, we have seen more businesses open up about their supply chains, identify high-risk areas and introduce tailored steps to support vulnerable workers.

The Government response to the Transparency in Supply Chains consultation, published on 22 September 2020, committed to taking forwards an ambitious package of changes to strengthen and future-proof the Modern Slavery Act's transparency legislation, including:

- Extending the reporting requirement to public bodies with a budget of £36 million or more.
- Mandating the specific reporting topics statements must cover.
- Requiring organisations to publish their statement on the new Government digital reporting service.
- Setting a single reporting deadline by which all modern slavery statements must be published.
- Considering enforcement options in line with the ongoing development of the Single Enforcement Body for Employment rights.

The Home Office announced a series of measures to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act, including introducing fines for businesses that do not comply with their transparency obligations. We will introduce the necessary legislation, setting out the level of those fines as soon as parliamentary time allows.

BEIS and the Home Office are also working in partnership with the industry through the Apparel and General Merchandise Public and Private Protocol, a partnership between enforcement bodies and industry partners, including, the British Retail Consortium, UK Fashion and the Textile Association. This is aimed at tackling all forms of labour exploitation in the garment industry.

Claudia Webbe:**[169093]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a compulsory requirement for garment industry companies to publish a full list of their suppliers.

Paul Scully:

The Government currently has no plans for introducing a compulsory requirement for garment industry companies to publish a full list of their suppliers.

The Government encourages businesses to be open and transparent to respond to consumers' legitimate interest in where and how the products they buy have been

manufactured. UK listed companies are required to report on impacts material to their business including information about supply chains where this is necessary for an understanding of the business as part of their annual reports.

Under section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the UK became the first country in the world to require businesses to report on how they prevent modern slavery in their operations. Following consultation, the Home Office has announced a series of measures to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act. Organisations will be required to include information about their organisation's structure and supply chains in their modern slavery statement or to explicitly state that their statement omits this information. These new measures will be introduced once parliamentary time allows.

A multi-faceted approach is required to address supply chain challenges. The Government recently hosted two Minister-led roundtables with garment industry leaders, civil-society and other key stakeholders, during which a range of different solutions were explored.

BEIS officials are also in the process of engaging with retailers, civil society and key organisations to explore the merits and challenges of different approaches.

Claudia Webbe:

[169094]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the finding by the British Retail Consortium that workers in Leicester's apparel manufacturing industry are underpaid by over £2.1 million a week, what steps his Department is taking to enforce UN guiding principles on business and human rights in respect of the duty of employers to remedy human rights violations in respect of underpaid wages in that industry in (a) Leicester and (b) the rest of the UK.

Paul Scully:

The UK supports the United Nations Guiding Principles on business and human rights, the authoritative voluntary international framework to steer practical action by Governments and businesses worldwide.

The UK was the first state to produce a national action plan to respond to the UN Guiding Principles. The Plan sets out how the UN Guiding Principles are applied in the UK and expectations of UK businesses' conduct, including that they comply with relevant laws and respect internationally recognised human rights.

In the UK, the right to just and favourable remuneration for work is protected by National Minimum Wage legislation, which is enforced by the HMRC National Minimum Wage team. All businesses, irrespective of size or business sector, are responsible for paying the correct minimum wage to their staff, and consequences for not complying with paying NMW can include fines of 200% of the arrears, public naming and, for the worst offences, criminal prosecution. HMRC follows up on every worker complaint it receives, even those which are anonymous.

HMRC are an active participant in the multiagency taskforce which is responding to allegations of non-compliance in the Leicester garment sector and has undertaken joint operations with partner agencies in Leicester for a number of years. They have

historically investigated more than 150 textile businesses, including multiple employers operating in Leicester; and have opened a significant number of investigations in Leicester since 1 July 2020.

HMRC continues to take proactive steps in this industry. They have written to over 18,000 workers in the textile sector flagging their entitlement to minimum wage, common causes of underpayment and encouraging confidential reporting of employers and have written to over 2500 employers in the sector highlighting the main risks which lead to NMW underpayment.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[169095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing maximum pay ratios between maximum and minimum earners for garment industry companies and their supply chains.

Paul Scully:

We have not made an assessment of the merits of this proposal. Levels of remuneration of staff above the National Minimum Wage is a matter for employers.

■ Committee on Climate Change

Paul Maynard:

[\[168870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his policy is on improving democratic participation in the Committee on Climate Change.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) is an independent, statutory body made up of highly esteemed academics and experts across a range of key sectors. The CCC provides expert analysis and advice to government on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Committee must have regard to the desirability of involving the public when carrying out its functions.

It will be vital for Government to engage the public on our net zero by 2050 target. We have invited the public to shape policies on climate change through consultations and deliberative dialogues (for example, on heat and transport decarbonisation, on the environment). As we develop our plans for reaching net zero emissions by 2050, we will continue to engage the public on the changes that are needed to develop our ambitions on net zero.

Ben Lake:

[\[169003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) staff and (b) board members at the Climate Change Committee do not have a conflict of interest.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS carries out thorough due diligence exercises on each new board member prior to approving their appointment to identify conflicts of interest so that they can be

managed appropriately on appointment. In some cases, it will not be appropriate to offer a role if the conflict is too great.

The Climate Change Committee has a formal policy process on conflicts of interest which is reviewed annually. All Committee Members and staff are required to recognise and disclose activities that might give rise to actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

The process for existing Committee members to raise conflicts of interest is managed by the Committee secretariat at the start of every Committee meeting. The secretariat will review the case to determine whether the individual needs to step down from the Committee to avoid an actual or perceived serious conflict of interest arising or to decide on how to manage whilst remaining in role.

Ben Lake:

[169004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will list the members and board members of the Committee on Climate Change that are (a) involved in academia, (b) former politicians, (c) involved in corporate affairs and (d) members of the not-for-profit sector, broken down by (i) charities and (ii) not-for-profit organisations.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The names of the members of the Climate Change Committee (CCC), with a description of their careers and interests, can be found here on the CCC's website: www.theccc.org.uk/about.

■ Conditions of Employment

Sarah Owen:

[913812]

What assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Supreme Court's ruling of February 2021 on the employment status of Uber drivers; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Supreme Court Judgment upheld Employment Status law as it stands. It is now for Uber and other gig economy businesses to ensure that they are fulfilling their legal responsibilities. The Government is considering options to further clarify the law.

■ Courier Services: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna:

[169072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of OFCOM on ensuring that (a) Royal Mail Group plc and (b) Parcelforce Worldwide are adapting to recent changes implemented in line with the requirements of the Northern Ireland Protocol and new rules brought into operation after the end of the transition period.

Paul Scully:

The Department has discussions with Ofcom on a regular basis on issues relevant to Royal Mail Group and its operations. The Government is continuing to support Royal Mail Group to adapt to the new trading arrangements with the European Union and the requirements of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Honours**Fleur Anderson:**[\[171737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish a list of businesses and organisations that have been contacted by his Department with the opportunity to attend training courses on how to submit an honours nomination.

Fleur Anderson:[\[171738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what criteria were used to select the businesses and organisations that were contacted with the opportunity to attend training courses on submitting an honours nomination.

Fleur Anderson:[\[171739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will set out the content of the training courses advising businesses and organisations on how to submit an honours nomination.

Fleur Anderson:[\[171740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who will deliver the planned training courses advising business and organisations on how to submit an honours nomination.

Amanda Solloway:

The Department wants to raise awareness of the honours process to encourage the nomination of individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to public life and to our economic future. We do not provide a training course on how to submit an honours nomination.

Prior to the publication of an honours list the Department will write to stakeholders known to BEIS inviting them to consider nominating individuals who they think are worthy of recognition and, where appropriate, to encourage their members to consider nominations.

Several hundred stakeholders are contacted including businesses, business representatives, employee representatives, academics, science and technology representatives and charities. Our aim is to ensure that the honours system reflects our diverse society and is a source of inspiration to others. The stakeholders who receive a letter are representative of a wide range of sectors, fields, and communities from across the UK.

In order to support our awareness raising effort, Cabinet Office and BEIS officials will host three webinars on 29th and 31st March. The webinars will provide a brief overview of the honours system, provide an opportunity to hear from recipients of honours and cover the guidance about how to write a nomination that can be found at: www.gov.uk/honours.

The webinars are open to anyone and people wanting to attend can register on the Eventbrite internet page by searching 'honours'. The same material will be covered at each webinar.

■ Free Zones

Margaret Ferrier: [\[913816\]](#)

What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the effect on the UK manufacturing industry of proposed freeports.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Freeports will play a significant role in boosting trade and driving productivity across the UK. Private sector involvement – including from the manufacturing sector - was a key consideration in assessing the bids, and we are committed to supporting the industry more generally.

■ Iron and Steel

Mark Jenkinson: [\[171727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of (a) UK steel requirements per annum to 2050 and (b) the expected country of origin of that steel expressed as a percentage in each year to 2050.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department commissioned the 'Future capacities and capabilities of the UK steel industry' study [2017] which provided an estimated UK steel demand in 2030 of around 11 million tonnes.

■ Iron and Steel: Carbon Emissions

Mark Jenkinson: [\[171725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the (a) level of abatement of emissions from UK steelmaking by 2050, and (b) proportion of expected abatement mechanisms from (i) the use of hydrogen, (ii) fuel switching, (iii) alternative sources of carbon and (iv) carbon capture and storage.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy use emission projections[1] for different sectors of the economy including for Iron and Steel out to 2040 (see Annex C: Carbon dioxide emissions by IPCC). The emission projections show the Iron and Steel sector has carbon emissions of 9 Mt CO₂e by 2040.

The Department has published an Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy[2] which presents two options for decarbonisation of the Iron and Steel Industry by 2050:

- i) The first option shows the abatement potential of carbon capture utilisation and storage (abatement of 6.7 Mt CO₂e);
- ii) A second option of fuel switching to hydrogen and electric arc furnace. The second solution suggests hydrogen fuel switching of 3.9 MtCO₂e and 3.5 MtCO₂e of electric fuel switching by 2050.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/energy-and-emissions-projections>

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-decarbonisation-strategy>

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Paul Maynard:

[168871]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase Government-backed research into the domestic manufacture of decarbonised steel.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government recognises the importance of research and development in helping to transform the steel sector so that it can play a vital role in developing a cleaner, greener economy in the UK. We have taken a number of steps to facilitate the decarbonisation of steel making in the UK, including;

Firstly, a £315 million Industrial Energy Transformation Fund which aims to support businesses with high energy use to cut their bills and reduce carbon emissions.

Secondly, providing up to £66m through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to help steel and other foundation industries develop radical new technologies and establish innovation centres of excellence in these sectors.

Thirdly, establishing a £250m Clean Steel Fund that will support the decarbonisation of the steel sector, supporting its transition to new low carbon technologies and processes. The Government also plans to establish a Net Zero Hydrogen Fund (previously Low Carbon Hydrogen Production Fund): with £240m of capital co-investment out to 2024/25. This will support at-scale production from both Carbon Capture Usage and Storage (CCUS) enabled ('blue') hydrogen and electrolytic ('green') hydrogen projects.

Finally, as part of the Spring 2020 Budget, the Chancellor announced £22m (subject to a business case) for the Materials Processing Institute in Teesside to deliver a R&D programme of transformation manufacturing - to help UK steel and metals sector improve efficiencies, slash emissions and ultimately boost global competitive edge.

Mark Jenkinson:

[171726]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of UK steel production, per annum until 2050.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Some assumptions about future steel production are embedded in the department's energy and emissions projections. However, these do not take future world and domestic market conditions facing UK steel producers into account.

■ Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry**Lisa Nandy:**[\[171591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent progress has been made on the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry; and what his planned timeframe is for the publication of the findings of that Inquiry.

Paul Scully:

The Inquiry has made swift progress already, including running a call for evidence to invite views about and gather evidence relating to the IT system, and holding its first group evidence session with sub-postmasters who were adversely affected by Horizon. The Inquiry will aim to submit its findings to my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy by Summer 2021. The final report will be published by the Secretary of State and the Government will respond in due course.

■ Post Office: Miscarriages of Justice**Lisa Nandy:**[\[171590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to compensate sub-postmasters affected by the Horizon post office scandal.

Paul Scully:

It is vital that postmasters affected by Horizon get the compensation they deserve. The Post Office reached a full and final settlement with claimants in the group litigation in December 2019 and committed to right the wrongs of the past. A key commitment from this settlement was for the Post Office to set up the Historical Shortfall Scheme for postmasters who were not part of the Group Litigation to have historical shortfalls investigated and addressed. The Scheme received over 2,400 claims and Post Office are now assessing these claims. In this case it is right that the Government provides sufficient financial support to the Post Office to ensure the Scheme can proceed and to protect the vital services provided by the post office network.

The Government also welcomes Post Office's aspiration to ensure that all postmasters entitled to claim civil compensation as a result of their convictions being overturned are recompensed as quickly as possible. The Government will continue to closely monitor the Post Office's work on addressing the issues identified by Justice Fraser.

■ Post Offices

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[168978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the increase in (a) temporary closures and (b) part-time opening of post offices on communities and community access to essential services across the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

While the Post Office is publicly owned, it is a commercial business that operates independently of the Government. With a network of over 11,500 branches across the UK, it is inevitable there will be variations in the number of branches open at any one time. Where branches do temporarily close, the Post Office strives to find solutions, like mobile vans and other types of outreach services, before reinstating a bricks-and-mortar service offer.

I am committed to ensuring that everyone in the country can access essential services via the Post Office conveniently and locally. That is why Post Office Limited must ensure Network Access Criteria are met. These ensure that 99% of the population are within three miles of their nearest post office and 90% are within one mile, with additional requirements set for rural, urban and deprived urban customers.

■ Railways: Coal

Paul Maynard:

[\[168872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his policy is on maintaining domestic coal supplies for the heritage rail sector.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In line with our Net Zero target, the Government is committed to phasing out unabated coal-fired electricity generation by 2025, and recently consulted on moving this date forward to 2024. This policy applies to coal-fired power stations only – it does not apply to other coal consumers such as heritage railways.

Although coal will soon no longer be part of our electricity system, it will continue to be used as a fuel by a wide range of other industries such as the iron, steel and cement industries. We are confident that heritage railways will continue to have the option to tap into this significant domestic market. The decision on where to source coal for use in heritage railways and other industries is a private matter for the companies involved

■ Renewable Energy

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[913810\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to increase renewable energy production.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government aims to deliver up to double the renewable electricity capacity at the next Contracts for Difference round at end of this year compared to AR3, while

spending an estimated £1billion in 2020/21 to encourage the deployment of low carbon heating in homes and businesses through the Renewable Heat Incentive. We have also announced the Clean Heat Grant, the Green Heat Network Fund and will launch the Green Gas Support Scheme later this year.

■ Research

Chris Skidmore: [\[913806\]](#)

What progress he is making on developing the proposals in the Research and Development Roadmap.

Amanda Solloway:

We continue to make excellent progress on implementing the R&D Roadmap. Most recently, I am thrilled that the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill has been introduced to this House, seeking to establish a new funding body focused on high-risk, high-reward research.

Julian Sturdy: [\[913813\]](#)

What steps his department is taking to support UK research and development.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We have announced an investment of £14.6 billion in R&D for 2021/22, and we are taking forward the ambitious commitments in our R&D Roadmap.

As announced in the Plan for Growth at Budget 2021 we will publish a new Innovation Strategy in the summer to unleash innovation across the UK to complement this investment.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans: [\[913809\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to help facilitate the smooth opening of high street businesses under Step Two of the Government's roadmap for the easing of covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Paul Scully:

We have established a weekly 'Reopening Retail Working Group' to bring together businesses, Local Authorities, PHE, the police and relevant Departments to discuss the operational challenges of reopening and to agree practical steps that can be taken to support this.

■ STEP Programme

David Morris: [\[913808\]](#)

What progress the UK Atomic Energy Authority is making in the delivery of the STEP programme.

Amanda Solloway:

The STEP programme aims to develop and build a prototype fusion power plant in the UK by 2040. The UKAEA has made great progress and are on track to deliver a concept design by 2024, as planned.

The process to select a site for STEP is underway and there have been high levels of engagement from potential sites across the UK, including one in the constituency of my hon Friend.

■ UK Research and Innovation: Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[171687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department informed the UKRI of their Official Development Assistance budget for the financial year 2021-22.

Amanda Solloway:

The 21/22 Official Development Assistance allocation for my Department was confirmed on 27th January through the settlement letter issued by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. BEIS communicated proposed 21/22 ODA allocations to our Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund Delivery Partners – including UKRI – within two weeks of receiving this confirmation. These proposed allocations remain subject to final confirmation, as part of the Departmental allocations process for R&D (ODA and non-ODA). We aim to update our partners on final allocations for 2021/22 as soon as possible.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[171688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his officials in his Department instructed representatives of UKRI to discuss planned budget reductions with stakeholders and recipients of Official Development Assistance funded projects after the Spending Review in November 2020 and the 10 March 2021.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[171690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether (a) he or (b) Ministers in his Department met with the UKRI's advisory groups prior to the announcement that his Department's allocation of Official Development Assistance in 2021-22 would leave a £120 million gap between allocations and commitments to grant holders.

Amanda Solloway:

All Government Departments with responsibility for spending Official Development Assistance took part in a cross-government process, led by my Rt. Hon. Friend the First Secretary of State, to review in detail how ODA is allocated between key priorities - recognising the difficult economic circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ministers across multiple departments engaged in these discussions as part of the process. BEIS ministers regularly meet with UKRI on allocations and other issues.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[171689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the reductions in ODA to the UKRI on the UK's relationships with international partners.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[171691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect on the level of employment in (a) the UK and (b) overseas of the reduced Official Development Assistance allocations to UK Research and Innovation.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the importance of supporting international research partnerships, and supporting the UK research sector. Our commitment to research and innovation has been clearly demonstrated by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget announcement of increasing investment in R&D across government to £14.6bn in 2021/22, and as has been set out in our Integrated Review ambitions, international collaboration is central to a healthy and productive R&D sector.

We are working with UKRI and all our Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund Delivery Partners to manage next year's ODA allocation.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Blood: Contamination

Ian Lavery:

[\[168931\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to ensure individuals and families affected by the contaminated blood scandal are adequately compensated.

Ian Lavery:

[\[168932\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to ensure victims and their families involved in the contaminated blood scandal are able to access the necessary legal support required.

Ian Lavery:

[\[168934\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Government will introduce a full bereavement pension for people affected by the contaminated blood scandal in England.

Penny Mordaunt:

Work is currently underway across the government on a number of infected blood issues. I will update the House shortly on progress.

The (then) Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster wrote to the Chair of the Infected Blood Inquiry on 2 July 2018, approving legal support funding for people infected, and their families. Details of how to apply for funding are on the Inquiry's website - [Statement of Approach: Legal Representation at Public Expense](#).

■ Cabinet Office: Written Questions

Mr Mark Harper:

[R] [\[171546\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason it was not possible to respond to Question 167836 tabled by the hon. Member for Forest of Dean by the named day deadline.

Penny Mordaunt:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the issues raised by the Rt Hon. Member. I refer him to the [answer](#) given to PQ 167836 on 23 March 2021.

■ Census: Forms

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[168848\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what support his Department is providing to people without access to a computer to ensure that they can access the paper forms for the 2021 census.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAS response to PQ168848 [UKSA's final response to PQ168848 v2.pdf]

■ Census: Telephone Services

John Penrose:

[\[168858\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what information his Department holds on the average waiting times for calls to the Census support phone helpline; and what proportion of the calls to that helpline have been dropped or terminated.

John Penrose:

[\[168859\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether calls to the Census support phone helpline are cut off by the helpline if not answered within a certain time.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to 168858, 168859 [UKSA's final response to PQ168858_168859.pdf]

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Sir Greg Knight:****[171522]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to publish full details of his review of the potential role and scope of a UK covid-19 vaccine certification scheme; what organisations will be involved in that review; and if he will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

As set out in the COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021, published on 22 February, the Government will review whether COVID-status certification could play a role in reopening our economy, reducing restrictions on social contact and improving safety. The Government will set out its conclusions ahead of Step 4 of the roadmap, which will happen no earlier than 21 June.

The Government has published the Terms of Reference for the review:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/969427/TORs - Certification Review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/969427/TORs_-_Certification_Review.pdf)

■ Elections: Proof of Identity**Cat Smith:****[171642]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total (a) financial and (b) administrative costs were of his Department's support for running the 2019 Voter ID pilots for each participating local authority.

Chloe Smith:

Details of Government contracts, and Cabinet Office spend data are published on gov.uk.

Local authorities are required to publish annual accounts outlining their income and expenditure.

■ Immigration: Climate Change**Paul Blomfield:****[168891]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what data his Department holds on potential climate-related migration to the UK as a result of global climate change.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ168891 [UKSA's final response to PQ168891 (1).pdf]

■ National Democracy Week

Cat Smith: [\[171643\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much funding his Department allocated to improving voter registration in the UK in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Cat Smith: [\[171644\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much funding has been allocated to improve voter registration levels among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people since 2018.

Cat Smith: [\[171645\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much funding has been allocated to improving voter registration levels among Gypsy, Traveller and Roma people over the last 10 years.

Cat Smith: [\[171646\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government plans to run National Democracy Week in 2021.

Cat Smith: [\[171647\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the Government's National Democracy Week 2019; how many events the Government held during that week; and how many people attended each of those events.

Chloe Smith:

Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) have the statutory responsibility for compiling and maintaining complete and accurate registers for their local areas. The Electoral Commission (EC) is responsible for providing guidance and resources to help EROs and their staff in running electoral registration, for setting standards, and for monitoring the performance of EROs. The Commission runs campaigns to raise awareness of how people can register to vote, and how to cast their vote.

The Government ensures that EROs have the tools that they need to do their job efficiently. For example, changes to the annual canvass in Great Britain has provided EROs with greater flexibility to target their resources where they are needed, rather than on the majority of properties, where nothing has changed.

The Government is committed to encouraging democratic engagement amongst all electors, including underrepresented groups. Since 2013, the Government has provided more than £27m to fund activities to promote electoral registration and democratic engagement more widely.

Third-party organisations delivered events and activities during National Democracy Week (NDW), and the Government facilitated workshops with Democratic Engagement Champions in preparation for the week. The Government has no plans

to run NDW in 2021. Instead, the Government will focus on its unique responsibilities as legislator, funder and promoter of good practice.

■ **Weddings: Coronavirus**

Stephen Morgan: [\[162681\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if his Department will take steps to clarify that weddings with six guests can take place from 8 March 2021 in public-facing communications.

Mr Mark Harper: [\[R\] \[167836\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to paragraph 118 of the Government's Covid-19 Response - Spring 2021 Command Paper CP398, published in February 2021, what premises are able to be used to hold (a) weddings, (b) wedding receptions and (c) commemorative events including wakes.

Sir Alan Campbell: [\[169799\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will issue further guidance on holding weddings during the period of easing the covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[170531\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether wedding ceremonies will be unrestricted after the end of the Government roadmap from 21 June 2021; what restrictions will apply to wedding ceremonies during the phased return from 17 May to 21 June 2021; and what restrictions will be applied to sporting events from 17 May to 21 June 2021.

Peter Dowd: [\[170682\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what equalities impact assessment he has undertaken on the effect of restricting wedding ceremonies to places of worship and some public buildings from 12 April 2021 on people who are unable to marry in those settings.

Peter Dowd: [\[170683\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reasons holding wedding ceremonies will be restricted to (a) places of places of worship and (b) some public buildings from 12 April 2021 when all wedding venues can be made equally covid-secure.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[170692\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the scientific basis is for the Government's decision to restrict marriage ceremonies to places of worship or public buildings.

Penny Mordaunt:

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

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

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

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

DEFENCE**■ BOWMAN Combat Radio System****Stephen Morgan:****[169017]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's policy is on the retirement of the Bowman communications system.

Jeremy Quin:

Our intention is to retire Bowman once a new and enhanced capability is delivered into service. The Ministry of Defence contracted with General Dynamics Mission Systems UK to design and develop the next-generation tactical communication and information system.

■ Chinook Helicopters**Dave Doogan:****[171722]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the UK's fleet of 60 Chinooks Helicopters, how many are there of each mark; and what is the average airframe hours of each mark.

Jeremy Quin:

The following table provides details of the numbers of each mark of the Chinook Helicopter fleet and their average airframe hours:

MARK	Mk6A	Mk5	Mk6
Total aircraft:	38	8	14
Average hours:	10,111	3,086	1,472

■ **Defence: Procurement****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[168847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the names and contact details of senior responsible owners of major defence programmes.

Jeremy Quin:

The names of all Senior Responsible Officers for Programme on the Defence element of the Government Major Projects Portfolio are published on the gov.uk website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-defence-appointment-letters-for-government-major-projects-portfolio-gmpp-senior-responsible-owners-sros>

■ **Helicopters****Dave Doogan:**[\[171720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Gazelle helicopters his Department has; what their role is; and when their out of service date is scheduled for.

Jeremy Quin:

The Gazelle helicopter fleet consists of 23 aircraft in a multi-purpose, lightweight utility role and operates in both the UK and Canada. The scheduled out of service date is 31 March 2025.

■ **LE TacCIS Programme****Stephen Morgan:**[\[169018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress has been made on the LE TacCIS tactical communications project.

Jeremy Quin:

The Land Environment Tactical Communication Information Systems (LE TacCIS) programme consists of multiple sub-programmes and projects, with the aim to deliver the next generation of tactical military communications in the land environment.

Within the last six months the Bowman Combat, Infrastructure and Platform Battlefield Information System Application (PBISA) (BCIP 5.6) has reached full operational capability; the Ministry of Defence has awarded a logistics support

contract to Babcock, providing support to the entire LE TacCIS portfolio, specifically inventory management and modelling, information management and technical services; and has launched a competition for the design and integration partner for the Army's Dismounted Situational Awareness (DSA) programme.

Other projects within the programme are at differing states of maturity, as expected in an enduring programme of this nature.

■ **Military Aircraft: Helicopters**

Dave Doogan:

[\[171721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Airbus H135 helicopters operate within the Armed Forces.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence currently operates 29 Airbus H135 helicopters (in service as the Juno HT Mk1) for Rotary Wing training.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Research**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[170559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what was his Department's planned R&D spend for the next four years (a) before the November 2020 uplift, and (a) now, by year.

Jeremy Quin:

The 2020 Spending Review (SR) Settlement sets out a new ringfence for defence R&D amounting to at least £6.6 billion over four years from 2021-22. This funding will support next generation capabilities from satellites and automation to AI and novel weapons. Detailed investment plans for the SR period are currently being agreed in advance of next financial year so annual breakdown are not available. However, R&D investment is expected to uplift the Ministry of Defence's planned spend in R&D by over £1.5 billion in the four year SR period.

■ **NATO Enlargement**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[171524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress NATO is making on expanding its membership since the joining of North Macedonia.

James Heappey:

NATO membership is open to any European country that is able to undertake the commitments and obligations of membership of the Alliance, and contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area. This "open door policy" is based upon Article 10 of the Washington Treaty.

Since the accession to NATO of the Republic of North Macedonia in March 2020, three NATO partner countries have continued to undertake domestic reforms which will help them to pursue their Euro-Atlantic aspirations: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia and Ukraine. NATO's engagement with each of these continues through bespoke

means: with Georgia through the NATO-Georgia Council; with Ukraine through the NATO-Ukraine Council; and with Bosnia-Herzegovina through the Membership Action Plan, which has been in place since 2010. As a means of improving their interoperability with NATO, Georgia and Ukraine also enjoy "Enhanced Opportunities Partner" status with the Alliance.

■ **RAF Lossiemouth**

Dave Doogan:

[\[171723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the nature is of Boeing's operations at RAF Lossiemouth in support of the Poseidon P8 aircraft; what the mix of civilian and military personnel employed at the Boeing facility is; and how much the funding the Government provided to support the creation of that Boeing facility.

Jeremy Quin:

Boeing provides aircraft maintenance and support services for the Royal Air Force P-8A Poseidon fleet under an Interim Aircraft Support contract. The P-8A Strategic Facility at RAF Lossiemouth is owned and operated by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and currently there are some 385 staff working from the building, of which around 80% are military personnel. While the final cost for the construction of the facility is still to be determined, the cost to the MOD is likely to be in the region of £100 million (ex-VAT).

■ **Submarines: Coronavirus**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[169082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that staff in the Royal Navy Submarine Service will be able to receive a covid-19 vaccination as soon as they are eligible for that vaccination.

James Heapey:

Service personnel will not be disadvantaged by Service overseas. If they cannot safely be vaccinated in line with their age cohort whilst deployed, they will be vaccinated before leaving the UK.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **4G: Scotland**

Jamie Stone:

[\[171695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish details of the proposed site locations for the 124 mobile masts that will be erected under the Shared Rural Network Programme; what the timeframe is for confirming those site locations, and what support the Infralink programme will provide to securing those locations.

Jamie Stone:

[\[171696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish specific details of locations to be used for the Shared Rural Network rollout; and what the timescale is for the deployment of that programme.

Matt Warman:

The Shared Rural Network programme will be delivered in two parts. The first phase will see the four Mobile Network Operators collectively invest over £530 million in a shared network of new and existing phone masts. This will help tackle partial not spots - areas where there is currently coverage from at least one, but not all operators. The second will see the government invest over £500 million to go even further to significantly reduce total not-spots - those hard-to-reach areas where there is currently no coverage from any operator.

The mobile operators have already commenced work on the first element of the programme which is funded by the industry and includes the 124 Scottish sites mentioned in your Parliamentary Question, and are on track to eliminate the majority of those partial not-spots by mid-2024.

Now that funding has been released for the total not-spot element of the programme, the government and the operators remain confident that combined coverage will be delivered to 95% of the UK by the end of 2025, with areas around the UK starting to see improvements to 4G coverage long before completion.

The exact site deployment plans will be managed by the operators themselves in order for them to best deliver the agreed coverage outcomes. Therefore, I am unable to provide any details on the precise location or number of new or upgraded masts that may be delivered as a result of the programme. However, I have personally encouraged operators to be transparent about their plans.

The programme is working closely with all three Devolved Administrations to ensure that infrastructure is shared wherever possible.

■ Big Society Capital

Gareth Davies:

[\[169104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Big Society Capital at mobilising private capital for investments in the social enterprise sector.

Gareth Davies:

[\[169105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the value for money of Big Society Capital since its inception.

Matt Warman:

In July 2020, The Oversight Trust published an independent review of Big Society Capital (BSC) as part of its role in overseeing the organisation. This report outlined the progress BSC has made towards its objectives as a social investment wholesaler and market-builder, including in mobilising private capital for social investment. Since

2011, BSC has signed £680m of investments to support social enterprises and charities, and has leveraged £1.4bn of investments from private investors alongside this. This has contributed to 97 fund level investments and provided capital to over 1,200 charities and social enterprises, with 73% of these organisations located in the 50% most deprived places in the UK.

■ **Broadband**

Chi Onwurah:

[171598]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that gigabit broadband access is affordable for all.

Matt Warman:

To ensure consumers and businesses can take-up gigabit broadband services, the government has asked Which?, CBI and the FSB to convene a Gigabit Take-up Advisory Group (GigaTAG). The group issued a call for evidence in Autumn 2020, and has published an interim report outlining its findings in relation to barriers to take-up, and potential solutions in December 2020. A final report is due to be published by Spring 2021.

At a retail level, BT, Virgin, Hyperoptic and KCOM all offer competitive social tariff packages for those on certain means-tested benefits which offer low cost landline and broadband services. In light of the pandemic, the government is encouraging providers who do not currently offer a social tariff product to also do so.

Furthermore, to ensure that consumers can access the best deals available to them, the government and Ofcom have taken action to improve consumer engagement and to remove barriers. These include, for instance, Ofcom's rules requiring providers to send their customers a notification when nearing the end of their contract; and steps taken to implement a data portability initiative in telecoms that will help improve the information available to consumers and businesses via third party services, such as price comparison websites.

Jamie Stone:

[171692]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to announce which further areas of the UK will be prioritised to benefit from Project Gigabit.

Matt Warman:

Information on our approach to bringing forward projects under Project Gigabit can be found in our publication of 19 March 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-new-5bn-project-gigabit>.

We will publish a further update on the proposed sequence of projects in June 2021 and will provide an updated procurement pipeline every three months from then on with further detail on the dates and expected contract values for these procurements. Potential procurements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be added into the pipeline as they become confirmed.

■ Broadband: Prices

Chi Onwurah:

[\[171597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether Openreach will be able to cross subsidise its fibre rollout by raising prices on its copper network.

Matt Warman:

This is primarily a matter for Ofcom as the UK's independent telecoms regulator. On 18 March, Ofcom published its Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review (WFTMR), which sets broadband regulation for the 2021 to 2026 period. In this period, Ofcom is proposing a flat, inflation adjusted, regulated price for Openreach's entry level superfast broadband service. To further help the case for investing in gigabit capable broadband across the whole of the market, Openreach will be able to charge more (£1.70 per month extra) for its superfast broadband service if it is delivered over full fibre. This reflects the additional customer benefits of a broadband service on a gigabit capable network like full fibre.

■ Broadband: Rural Areas

Esther McVey:

[\[168900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the practicability of rolling out fibre broadband in rural and hard-to-reach areas.

Matt Warman:

The government remains committed to delivering nationwide gigabit connectivity as soon as possible and is investing £5bn to deliver gigabit-capable broadband in the hardest to reach parts of the UK.

To achieve this, the government has published the first phase of its gigabit procurements, as part of Project Gigabit. These initial procurements will deliver gigabit capable networks to an estimated one million homes and businesses in areas that are harder to reach.

In addition, the government has implemented a number of other measures to help people in rural and hard to reach areas upgrade their broadband connection including Gigabit Broadband Vouchers and the broadband Universal Service Obligation.

For the most remote premises, the government has also published a call for evidence to explore all possible options for improving broadband connectivity. The evidence provided will allow us to develop our understanding of these areas and seek more information on demand, benefits, barriers and future technology approaches.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[171593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether Ofcom's Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review 2021-26 Statement will enable (a) BT and (b) Openreach to charge differential pricing for (i) copper-based services and (ii) fibre-based services in rural areas; and what assessment he has made on the overall effect on rural broadband pricing.

Chi Onwurah:

[171594]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his policy is on the pricing of broadband for rural residents and businesses compared to those in urban areas.

Matt Warman:

The pricing of broadband is primarily a matter for Ofcom as the UK's independent regulator. Its regulation of the broadband market has delivered competitive broadband prices for consumers in both rural and urban areas.

On 18 March, Ofcom published its Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review, which sets broadband regulations for the 2021 to 2026 period. In this period, Ofcom is proposing to vary some of its regulations according to the likely level of network competition in an area. However, in terms of pricing, Ofcom is proposing a flat, inflation adjusted, regulated price for Openreach's entry level superfast broadband service, regardless of the level of competition in an area. To further help the case for investing in gigabit capable broadband across the whole of the market, Openreach will be able to charge more (£1.70 per month extra) for the entry level superfast service if it is delivered over full fibre.

The government's view is that Ofcom's proposed regulations will allow those deploying networks to make a fair return on their investment whilst ensuring that customers across the country can continue to access world-class broadband at affordable prices.

Chi Onwurah:

[171595]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2021 to Question 166424 on Broadband: Finance, whether he plans to directly subsidise the cost of gigabit broadband in rural areas for (a) consumers and (b) businesses.

Matt Warman:

The government is proposing to directly subsidise the cost of deploying gigabit capable broadband networks in harder to reach areas, including rural areas, through its £5 billion Project Gigabit programme.

At a retail level, BT, Virgin, Hyperoptic and KCOM all offer competitive social tariff packages for those on certain means-tested benefits which offer low cost landline and broadband services. In light of the pandemic, the government is encouraging providers who do not currently offer a social tariff product to also do so.

Jamie Stone:

[171693]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme will be extended or replaced at end of March 2021.

Matt Warman:

The government's Project Gigabit announcement of 19 March 2021 confirmed that up to £210m will be made available for gigabit vouchers and up to £110m to support

connections to public sector hubs from April 2021. This builds on the previous successful delivery under the Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme.

Jamie Stone:

[171694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to Ofcom's announcement, Ramping up the rollout of full-fibre broadband, published on 18 March 2021, how he plans to allocate the £1.5 billion put aside for investment in rural fibre coverage by 2025.

Matt Warman:

The government has set out its approach to ensuring delivery of fibre broadband in its publication of 19 March 2021: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-new-5bn-project-gigabit>. Further information on the proposed sequence of projects and funding allocations will be published in June 2021 and subsequent updates will be provided at three monthly intervals. The government has also confirmed that up to £210 million will be provided for broadband vouchers to help those with slow speeds and up to £110 million to provide connections to up to 7,000 rural GP surgeries, libraries and schools.

■ **Broadband: Voucher Schemes**

Jonathan Edwards:

[168878]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the merits of increasing the voucher support in successor schemes to the Broadband Upgrade Fund for small communities under 100 dwellings.

Matt Warman:

The Broadband Upgrade Fund was a pilot conducted in the three areas of the UK from June 2020 to January 2021, running in parallel with the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme. It was set up to test whether we could collate demand for broadband in an area that suppliers could observe in order to see if this would attract new suppliers to build in rural areas.

The final stage of the Broadband Upgrade Fund only recently completed, in January 2021. A full assessment of the effectiveness of the Broadband Upgrade Fund Pilot will be undertaken once there has been sufficient opportunity for proposals to turn into gigabit capable connections. Following this assessment the Department will determine whether this approach is incorporated into the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme has existed since March 2018, and has provided eligible areas across the UK with vouchers to cover the installation of costs of bringing gigabit connectivity to people's homes and businesses. So far more than 66,000 vouchers worth up to £127 million have been issued to premises across the UK.

Following the government's announcement on 19 March 2021, rural homes and businesses across the UK currently struggling with slow broadband speeds will

continue to be able to benefit from this unique form of funding without needing to wait for coverage under the new Project Gigabit procurement contracts. The government is investing up to £210 million to build on the success of its Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme and the new scheme is due to go live on 8 April 2021.

The new vouchers will be worth up to £1,500 for residents and up to £3,500 for businesses. There will be an online postcode checker available so people can check if their home or business is eligible. They can then search for and select a supplier that they wish to work with to set up a group project for their community. Suppliers registered to the scheme will guide each beneficiary through the process of application, and then, if eligible, through to connection. Group projects can be for as few as two premises only so are ideal for groups of less than 100 dwellings. If communities can group together to aggregate the value of their vouchers they can often accumulate enough funding to cover most or all of the costs for installation.

■ BT Group: Profits

Chi Onwurah:

[\[171596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether (a) his department or (b) Ofcom will monitor BT for excess profits on its fibre rollout in the absence of price controls.

Matt Warman:

In its Statement of Strategic Priorities to Ofcom, the government set out its view that companies making large investments in gigabit capable broadband networks should be able to make a fair return. However, the responsibility for regulating the telecoms market, including monitoring BT's returns on its investment into full fibre networks is a matter for Ofcom, as the independent regulator.

The government's view is that Ofcom's proposed regulations for the 2021-2026 period will allow those deploying networks to make a fair return, whilst ensuring that customers across the country can continue to access world-class broadband at affordable prices.

■ Coronavirus: Disinformation

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[170757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much his Department (a) has spent to date and (b) plans to spend in total on tackling covid-19 disinformation online.

Caroline Dinenage:

Addressing the challenges of COVID-19 disinformation is a whole of Government effort. That is why we stood up the Counter Disinformation Unit in March 2020, drawing on resources from a number of existing cross-government teams, giving it the flexibility to respond to a range of different issues as needed.

We have reallocated staff from within the Department to boost the size of the team at DCMS. We continually review the requirement and work flexibly across government

to ensure the unit is sufficiently resourced, allowing us to surge capacity where it's needed.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Social Media**

Darren Jones:

[\[167276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many officials in (a) his private office and (b) the wider Department have been allocated to the production and promotion of online content for use on social media in (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

Caroline Dinenage:

Britain is fast becoming a digital-first nation. Roughly 96% of the UK households now have internet access with 66% of the population in the UK using social media.

With this monumental shift in media consumption habits, it is essential for a responsible government to pivot its communications strategy to be more digital-first, to inform and engage the general public on important policies.

Government communication runs across all channels including TV and radio advertising, out of home, digital and social media, print, direct channels such as letters, SMS and webinars, virtual and in-person activity, where needed and in full compliance with social distancing restrictions.

The DCMS News and Communications team leads on managing the department's social media content as part of its day to day work, which includes a digital team of six that leads on creative content production across all of our corporate channels including online (for social media) and also offline, out of home and internal comms channels. This grew from a team of five people during 2018 to 2019. There are also two members of staff within Private Office who support on digital comms, as part of their wider roles.

■ **Events Industry: Coronavirus**

Alex Norris:

[\[171708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many test events will take place as part of the Government's Events Research Programme.

Alex Norris:

[\[171709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many people will take part in each test event as part of the Government's Events Research Programme.

Alex Norris:

[\[171710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what criteria the Government will use to determine the outcome of the Events Research Programme.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Events Research Programme will run around a dozen pilot events using enhanced testing approaches and other measures to run events with larger crowd

sizes and reduced social distancing to evaluate the outcomes. The evidence will then be shared across the event economy so that venues can prepare to accommodate fuller audiences.

Settings will include small indoor venues that have a capacity of circa 200 people, where a gig or comedy night would take place, to large outdoor venues such as Wembley stadium. Decisions on the number of spectators allowed into the pilot events are yet to be taken and will be subject to discussions with event organisers and local authorities.

The programme will include looking at risk factors in indoor and outdoor settings; small and large venues; seated and standing events and different forms of audience participation. The pilots will also test a range of non-pharmaceutical mitigating interventions during non-socially distanced events such as layout of the venue, face coverings and ventilation.

■ Internet: Safety

Elliot Colburn:

[\[169059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of differentiating the regulatory response of illegal and legal but harmful content in the up-coming Online Harms Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinenage:

The government is clear that the new regulatory framework must be targeted where the potential for impact is greatest. As announced in the full government response to the Online Harms White Paper, published in December, the Online Safety Bill will require all companies in scope to tackle illegal material on their services. All companies will also be required to assess the likelihood of children accessing their services and provide additional protections for them.

Only companies who provide services with the largest audiences and high-risk features will have a legal responsibility to take action with respect to content or activity on their services which is legal but harmful to adults.

We know that online behaviour or content which may not be illegal can still cause serious harm, but we are clear that requirements must be proportionate and reflect the importance of free expression online. An overly broad scope risks imposing disproportionate regulatory burdens and could dilute efforts to tackle the most serious illegal activity including CSEA and terrorist content.

■ Seasonal Workers

Hywel Williams:

[\[170552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the merits of facilitating the mutual recognition of qualifications for temporary seasonal tourism workers between the UK and EU member states.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government continues to engage with stakeholders in the tourism sector to hear their priorities for the UK's future relationship with the EU.

The Withdrawal Agreement protects UK nationals who live or are a frontier worker in an EU Member State at the end of the Transition Period. Those who have had a professional qualification recognised under the EU legislation listed in the Withdrawal Agreement will keep the right to practise the profession in the Member State in which they live or work. This includes many professions in scope of the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive such as engineering and accounting.

As of 1 January 2021, UK-qualified professionals who wish to supply services in the EU should seek recognition for their qualifications using the national rules in EU Member States. Professionals should check the European Commission's Regulated Professions Database to find out if their profession is regulated in the state in which they are seeking to work. They should then contact the single point of contact for that country to find out how to get their professional qualification recognised. Alternatively, they can seek advice from the UK Centre for Professional Qualifications (UK NARIC) to find out which regulatory or professional body they should contact.

The UK-EU TCA provides a framework under which the UK and the EU may agree Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) on the recognition of professional qualification covering the UK and all 27 EU Member States. Once an arrangement is adopted under the TCA, UK professionals will be able to use the terms outlined in the arrangement to secure recognition for their professional qualifications within EU Member States.

Arrangements are implemented on a profession-by-profession basis and depend upon reciprocal cooperation from both the UK and EU Member States. The framework enables UK and EU professional bodies or authorities to make recommendations on MRAs to the Partnership Council. Once an arrangement has been adopted, a professional qualified in the UK (e.g. an engineer) will be able to use the terms outlined in the arrangement to secure recognition of their qualifications within an EU Member State.

■ Social Media: Harassment**Dr Rupa Huq:****[171671]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) making online abuse a specific criminal offence and (b) making verified identification a requirement for opening a social media account.

Caroline Dineneage:

Being anonymous online does not give anyone the right to abuse others. Under the new Online Safety framework, which will be introduced in the Online Safety Bill later this year, companies in scope will need to limit the spread of illegal abuse on their services, including illegal anonymous abuse. Major platforms will also need to set out clearly what legal content is acceptable on their platform, and stick to it. The major

online services and social media platforms will also need to take action with regard to legal but harmful content

The Government has sponsored a Law Commission review of harmful online communications, which is considering whether current law needs updating to help tackle online abuses. The Law Commission has consulted on provisional reforms and will issue final recommendations later this year, which we will carefully consider.

There are many legitimate reasons why an individual would not wish to identify themselves online. Whistleblowers, victims of modern slavery and survivors of domestic abuse may wish to stay anonymous, to protect their identity online. Our proposals strike the right balance between protecting users' rights online, while preserving freedom of expression.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[170755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take to encourage people to participate in indoor group sports after covid-19 restrictions have been eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. That's why we have made sure that people can exercise throughout the national and local tiered restrictions. We will continue to promote sport and physical activity and encourage the usage of indoor sports facilities such as gyms as part of Step 2 of the Roadmap.

Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. On top of wider economic support, the Government has announced a £100m support fund for local authority leisure centres to ensure these important facilities remain available once public health restrictions are lifted. This is on top of the £270m which Sport England have committed to providing to the Grassroots sports sector.

We know how important sport is for young people's physical and mental wellbeing. That is why the Culture Secretary and Education Secretary are working closely with our national sports and Sport England on an extensive offer of activities in schools over the summer.

■ Video on Demand: Children

Laura Trott:

[170747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is able to take to ensure that streaming services aimed at children broadcast content that is appropriately age-rated in line with UK standards.

Caroline Dineneage:

The British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) age ratings are currently used by a number of video on demand providers and, although adoption is voluntary, we welcome their use. We were particularly pleased to see Netflix announce on 1 December 2020 that they have become the first platform to achieve complete coverage of their content under the BBFC's ratings. We will continue to engage with industry to encourage platforms to use age ratings, and will keep the evidence for legislation in this area under review.

Regulation of video sharing platforms (VSPs), for which Ofcom is the regulator, came into force on 1 November 2020. UK-established VSPs must now take appropriate measures to protect the public, including minors, from illegal and harmful material. In order to comply with the VSP regime, age assurance measures may be adopted by VSPs along with other measures such as age ratings and parental controls. The video sharing platform regime does not, however, mandate the use of age ratings. Platforms must take into account freedom of expression and should consider what measures are most appropriate and proportionate when introducing them.

Protecting children is at the heart of our online harms agenda. Sites that host user-generated content or facilitate online user interaction, such as sites with video sharing capabilities, will be subject to the new duty of care we will introduce under online safety legislation. Under our proposals, companies likely to be accessed by children will be required to assess the risks that material on their service poses to children of different ages, and to put in place age-appropriate protective measures. The government is working at pace to prepare online safety legislation, which will be ready this year.

■ Video Recordings: Internet**Laura Trott:****[170748]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of age ratings linked to parental filters as a means of preventing children's exposure to inappropriate user-generated content on (a) YouTube and (b) other such sites.

Caroline Dineneage:

Protecting children is at the heart of our online harms agenda, and wider government priorities. Where sites host user-generated content or facilitate online user interaction such as video and image sharing, commenting and live streaming, then that content will be subject to the new duty of care. Under our online harms proposals, companies likely to be accessed by children will be required to assess the risks that material on their service poses to children of different ages and put in place age-appropriate protective measures. Ofcom will set out the steps companies can take to protect children so there will be a consistent approach across platforms

The video sharing platform regime, for which Ofcom is the regulator, came into force on 1 November 2020. UK-established video sharing platforms must now take

appropriate measures to protect the public, including minors, from illegal and harmful material. In order to comply with the video sharing platform regime, age assurance measures may be adopted by video sharing platforms along with other measures such as age ratings and parental controls. Platforms must take into account freedom of expression and should consider what measures are most appropriate and proportionate when introducing them.

We will continue to engage with industry to encourage platforms to use age ratings, and will keep the evidence for legislation in this area under review.

■ Voluntary Work

Stuart Anderson:

[\[170740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to enhance local networks through which people are signposted to positive social action and volunteering opportunities.

Matt Warman:

Volunteers have been critical to the ability of local communities to respond to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Local networks between councils, community groups, the voluntary sector and individual citizens have enabled an army of volunteers to step up and help during a time of national crisis.

Through the Covid-19 response, the government has funded the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership to help charities - large and small - to work together to identify and reach communities most in need, signposting volunteering needs and opportunities across a network of more than 200 organisations. Over £6million of funding for the Partnership has so far been committed up to 30th June 2021 with an option to extend should the need continue.

The government will continue to draw upon the lessons of volunteering, both from the Covid-19 period and more broadly, to develop current and future policy.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption

Zarah Sultana:

[\[171736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to allow the adoption of adults.

Vicky Ford:

The government currently has no plans to introduce legislation to allow adult adoption.

■ Assessments: Fees and Charges

Marco Longhi:

[169066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate provision is made for private students to sit exams or be graded at a minimum cost to families.

Nick Gibb:

The Department and Ofqual have ensured there is a clear and accessible route for private candidates to receive a grade this year, at the same time as other candidates.

Private candidates can work with a centre to be assessed on a range of evidence, which could include evidence from an established educational provider and the board-provided assessment materials. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) has issued guidance for centres about assessing private candidates, taking into account their different circumstances. These candidates should have the same opportunity as other candidates to be assessed on what they were taught, and centres can conduct assessments remotely if needed. Further guidance on assessing all candidates (including private candidates) will be published before the end of March 2021.

The Department is working with the sector to ensure there are enough centres available to support private candidates, and JCQ will publish a list of available centres by the end of March, giving private candidates the opportunity to find a centre at a similar cost to a normal year. The exam boards have committed that private candidates will not be charged late fees if entries are received by 26th April 2021. To support centres with the particular additional requirements of assessing private candidates this year, especially given they will not have been taught alongside a wider cohort, and avoid the cost being passed on to candidates, we are providing additional funding for centres. Centres can claim £200 per private candidate entry. We encourage all available exams centres to help these candidates achieve their qualifications in this exceptional year.

■ Children in Care

Tulip Siddiq:

[168988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that children in residential care are offered the same rights to stay put as children in foster care.

Vicky Ford:

The government has provided £9.2 million over 4 years to pilot 'Staying Close' in 8 local areas, and to address the 'cliff edge' faced by young people leaving residential care. Staying Close provides an enhanced support package that is comparable to the option to Stay Put that exists for young people leaving foster care.

It includes an offer of move-on accommodation (close to their former children's home), alongside a package of practical and emotional support (an average of 5-10

hours a week), provided by a member of staff from their former children's home, who they know and trust.

An independent evaluation of the Staying Close pilots was published in November 2020 and reported that it is helping to provide young people with smoother transitions from residential care to adulthood, in particular:

- Young people have access to improved housing options, and reduced eviction rates
- The proportion of young people in education, employment or training has increased
- Young people have improved emotional health and well-being and relationship management skills

The government remains committed to rolling-out Staying Close nationally in the next multi-year Spending Review period.

■ Children: Disability

Rosie Cooper:

[171553]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the recommendations made by the Disabled Children Partnership in their report, *The Longest Lockdown*, published February 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of implementing additional short breaks for families with disabled children who are currently experiencing high levels of family exhaustion.

Vicky Ford:

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

We have published 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for children's social care services', making clear that parents or carers of disabled children and young people may continue to access respite care. This guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care>. We have communicated best practice to Directors of Children's Services and encouraged local authorities to ensure that as many disabled children and young people as possible can continue to access these respite services during the COVID-19 outbreak. We have encouraged local authorities to prioritise respite support for disabled children, and to consider flexible and pragmatic options to deliver that support, including using direct payments and carrying out activities virtually.

We are providing £40.8 million for the Family Fund in the 2020-21 financial year to support over 80,000 families on low incomes raising children with disabilities or serious illnesses. This includes £13.5 million to specifically respond to needs arising from the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Environment Protection: Further Education

Zarah Sultana:

[\[171734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a new network of national centres of excellence in low carbon skills at further education colleges.

Gillian Keegan:

The Skills for Jobs white paper sets out several reforms that will support people to get the skills our economy needs throughout their lives, wherever they live in the country. This will include emerging skills needed for future productivity, such as in green jobs and zero carbon skills.

Our reforms include the introduction of employer-led Local Skills Improvement Plans, which will identify local priorities for change. Further education (FE) colleges will have a key part to play in ensuring employers have the skills they need to build jobs and industries of the future. We expect local plans to be informed by national priorities such as a green industrial revolution.

We are also investing up to £290 million to establish a comprehensive network of Institutes of Technology (IOTs), with every area of the country having access to one once the network is complete. IOTs will be the pinnacle of technical training, with unique collaborations between FE colleges, universities and businesses offering higher technical education and training (mainly at levels 4 and 5) and helping to develop low carbon skills in key sectors such as construction and engineering. IOTs, with their funding to invest in state of the art equipment and facilities, and employers in the driving seat, will give businesses the skilled workforce they need to drive growth and get more people into rewarding jobs.

The Green Jobs Taskforce, launched last November, has aims to help the UK build back greener and deliver the skilled workforce needed to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This is a joint initiative between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Education. With help from the taskforce, we will ensure that our existing skills programmes can be directed to support the net zero agenda and help to identify where the evidence tells us we might need to go further or faster.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has convened a Green Apprenticeships Advisory Panel to guide the continued alignment of apprenticeships with net zero and wider sustainability objectives. It aims to help identify which apprenticeships directly support the green agenda and which may need to be refocused. The panel will also crucially identify where there are potential opportunities to create new green apprenticeships and identify employers to help take this work forward.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Paul Blomfield:

[\[168889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what advice he is giving to schools and colleges on taking account of caring responsibilities of their students when determining GCSE and A Level grades in summer 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The Department will do whatever it can to make sure no child, whatever their background or location, falls behind as a result of COVID-19. We know that young carers may be particularly vulnerable during this time and ensuring that vulnerable children and young people remain protected is our top priority.

Given the ongoing disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, we announced in January 2021 that GCSE, AS and A level exams will not go ahead as planned this summer. The interests of pupils are at the core of our recommendations. Our priority is to ensure all those due to take exams in 2021 have the best possible chance to show what they know and can do, enabling them to progress to the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Teachers have the flexibility to use a range of evidence, including the use of optional questions provided by exam boards, mock exams, non-examined assessment coursework, or in-class tests set by the school which align closely with the awarding organisation's specification for the qualification. Teachers can draw from a range of evidence from across the duration of the pupil's course, to determine their grade and work produced outside of the school or college environment, for example at home, can be included as evidence to support a teacher's judgement.

We know there has been differential education loss, as some pupils have suffered more disruption to their education than others. Because of this, pupils will only be assessed on the content they have been taught.

We have also been clear that mitigating circumstances and pupils who are entitled to reasonable adjustments should be taken into account by teachers when deciding which evidence to use, with flexibility to substitute or discount evidence.

■ Languages: GCE A-level and GCSE

Gareth Thomas:

[\[168825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many entries there were for exams in foreign languages at (a) GCSE and (b) A-level by each language in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The number of pupils, in England[1][2], at the end of Key Stage 4, who entered into GCSE by each language between 2015/16 – 2019/20[3] are provided in the table attachment.

We know that employers value languages and they are increasingly important in realising the ambitions of Global Britain. We recently launched a consultation on

reforming the GCSE in French, German, and Spanish to make it more accessible. Our £4.8 million pilot led by the National Centre for Excellence in Language Pedagogy at the University of York aims to improve uptake and attainment in languages at Key Stages 3 and 4, and to share best practice in pedagogy.

For A level results of all students aged 16-18 by foreign language subject please see table attachment. Note, the number of A level entries is influenced by the overall population of students at the end of 16 to 18 study, which was around 16,000 fewer in 2019/20 than 2018/19, or a decrease of 2.6%.

In addition, some of the decline in language entries in 2019/20 is due to private candidates, who make up a disproportionate number of entries in these subjects, not being able to get a Centre Assessment Grade.

[1] All schools include state-funded schools, independent schools, independent special schools, non-maintained special schools, hospital schools, pupil referral units and alternative provision.

[2] Includes entries and achievements by these pupils in previous academic years.

[3] Total number of entries include pupils who were absent, whose results are pending and results which are ungraded or unclassified.

Attachments:

1. 168825_table [168825_table_showing_GCSE_foreign_languages.pdf]

■ **Music: Education**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[171489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding his Department is providing for music education hubs in England in the 2021-22 financial year; and what discussions his Department has had with the Arts Council on the administration of the grants which will be paid; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

Music Education Hubs have a vital role to play not only in core school music but also ensuring children have access to all the benefits of a wider musical education through instrumental lessons and ensembles. They have acted swiftly and innovatively to support schools through the COVID-19 outbreak, including the continuation of continuing professional development to classroom teachers.

Following the one-year Spending Review settlement, the Department will continue to fund Music Education Hubs for the financial year 2021-22. Funding has been confirmed with Arts Council England, our delivery partner for this area of work, and they have already confirmed this with Music Education Hubs organisations. An announcement on the national funding will be made shortly, followed by further details on specific funding allocations issued to individual hubs.

■ Pupil Premium: Disability

Neil Coyle: [171620]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many disabled children will not receive pupil premium funding as a result of moving eligibility that premium back from January 2021 to October 2020.

Neil Coyle: [171621]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children whose parents have become unemployed during the covid-19 outbreak will not receive pupil premium funding as a result of the eligibility dates changing from January 2021 to October 2020.

Neil Coyle: [171626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with (a) academy, (b) faith and (c) maintained school leaders on reducing pupil premium funding allocations in 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The January 2021 census will be used to determine pupil premium eligibility for alternative provision and pupil referral units for the 2021-22 financial year. Pupil premium eligibility for mainstream and special schools will be based on the October 2020 census.

Per pupil funding rates will be the same as in the 2020-21 financial year, which is expected to increase pupil premium funding from £2.4 billion in 2020-21 to more than £2.5 billion in 2021-22 as more children have become eligible for free school meals. In addition to this, the Government announced a further £300 million for a one-off recovery premium which will be allocated to schools based on the same methodology as the pupil premium. As a result, schools with more disadvantaged pupils will receive larger amounts.

The Department will confirm pupil premium allocations for the 2021-22 financial year in June 2021. This will provide information on the specific amounts that regions, local authorities, and individual schools are receiving through the pupil premium for the 2021-22 financial year.

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

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

The pupil premium targets children who are, or have been, eligible for free school meals in the last six years. It does not specifically target children with disabilities. All pupils with disabilities should receive appropriate additional support from their schools, drawing on the schools' core budgets and, for pupils whose special needs or

disabilities will lead to additional costs of £6000 or more a year, drawing on top up funding from the local authority. The Department anticipates that special schools will typically attract more pupil premium funding in 2021-22 compared to the 2020-21 financial year, as a larger number of their pupils will be eligible for the pupil premium based on the October 2020 census than the January 2021 census.

Using the October census will also allow special schools to get certainty around their future funding levels earlier in the year by receiving their funding allocations earlier.

As part of the Department's regular programme of engagement, we have had discussions on the change to the October 2020 census for pupil premium funding with stakeholders, including head teacher representatives.

■ Remote Education: Broadband

Esther McVey:

[\[168896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of slow broadband speeds on the education of children living in rural areas.

Nick Gibb:

Access to gigabit capable broadband for communities and schools is being addressed through programmes rolled out in partnership between the Department for Education and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. We are investing an unprecedented £5 billion of subsidy to support the deployment of gigabit broadband in the hardest to reach areas of the country. This coverage will also include even more rural schools that would otherwise not be reached without the Government taking action.

To support children and young people to connect with remote education, the Get Help with Technology programme has partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help over 30,000 disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering over 70,000 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home.

Where pupils continue to experience barriers to digital remote education, we expect schools and further education institutions to work to overcome these barriers. This could include distributing school or further education institution-owned laptops or supplementing digital provision with different forms of remote education such as printed resources or textbooks. This should be supplemented with other forms of communication to keep pupils on track or answer questions about work.

■ Remote Education: ICT

Chi Onwurah:

[\[168912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what ongoing support will be provided to schools and colleges by his Department to tackle the digital exclusion of their pupils after the completion of the roll-out of the Get Help with Technology Scheme.

Nick Gibb:

The Department for Education is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care. The Department is making available 1.3 million laptops and tablets and have already delivered over 1.2 million of these to schools, colleges, trusts, and local authorities, supporting disadvantaged children and young people who would not otherwise have access to a digital device.

All devices provided to schools and colleges by the Get Help with Technology scheme are the property of these institutions. The devices are intended to give schools the flexibility to provide remote education support and can continue to be used in the longer term either in the classroom or from home.

Those placing orders for devices through the Get Help with Technology service were given the option to select laptops and tablets with or without the Department for Education safeguarding and security settings applied. For those who required Department for Education settings, we are providing support and guidance to ensure they are prepared so devices can continue to be used to support educational activities in advance of the licence expiry date of the end of September 2021.

Schools can apply to gain access to and training on a free digital education platform. They can choose to apply to use either Google G Suite for Education or Office 365 Education. They can find out more and submit their application through the Get Help with Technology programme. The Key for School Leaders website also provides feature comparison and case studies on how schools are making the most of these platforms to help schools make the most appropriate choice.

Online education support is available for schools through the EdTech Demonstrator Programme, a peer support network offering training and advice to schools and colleges on ways technology can be used to strengthen remote education and catch-up arrangements. It provides access to a network of schools and colleges who are already using remote education technology resources and can help those new to online education platforms to develop effective practice. This will help schools understand how to best use technology to promote pupil engagement and achievement and consider how best to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

The Digital Platforms Programme, within the Get Help with Technology Scheme, has been extended for a further 12 months. The extension will give other schools the opportunity to apply to the programme and claim their grant by the end of March 2022.

■ Schools: Coronavirus**Emma Hardy:****[169012]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential benefits of extending the summer school term into the summer holiday period in response to the disruption to education caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is committed to helping all children and young people make up education lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department has appointed Sir Kevan Collins as Education Recovery Commissioner to oversee a long-term plan for education recovery. Sir Kevan will engage with parents, pupils, and teachers in the development of this broader approach and review how evidence-based interventions can be used to address the impact the COVID-19 outbreak has had on education. We will share further details in due course.

Schools are of course free to offer summer activities to pupils should they so wish. We are making £200 million available to secondary schools to fund a short summer school, offering a blend of academic education and enrichment activities. We are recommending a focus on incoming Year 7 pupils, but schools are free to target those most in need of support.

■ Secondary Education: Admissions**Darren Jones:**[\[169002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans for summer-born children to be given automatic admission to secondary school for children who currently have a delayed start.

Nick Gibb:

The Department remains committed to legislating to change the School Admissions Code to allow summer born children to be automatically admitted to Reception at the age of five, where that is what their parents' wish, and to remain with that cohort throughout their compulsory education.

In September 2020, we published updated guidance for admission authorities and advice for parents on the current arrangements for requesting admission outside a child's normal age group. The guidance states that where children have delayed their start in Reception and are applying for transition to junior, middle or secondary school, unless there are sound educational reasons to do otherwise, the assumption should be that they remain outside their normal year group and in the year in which they have been educated so far. The guidance will help ensure that decisions are taken in the best interests of the child concerned.

■ Students: Coronavirus**Stuart Anderson:**[\[169042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the length of time students spend in general education to ensure that (a) students with learning disabilities and (b) other students are not disadvantaged by the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on their development and progression.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is committed to helping all children and young people make up education lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department has appointed Sir Kevan Collins as Education Recovery Commissioner to oversee a long-term plan. Sir Kevan will engage with parents, pupils, and teachers in the development of this broader approach and review how evidence-based interventions can be used to address the impact the COVID-19 outbreak has had on education. We will share further details in due course.

■ Summer Schools: Coronavirus**Alberto Costa:**[\[168968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing schools with the flexibility to decide on how to manage their summer school programmes in order to ensure that programmes take into account the specific needs of their pupils in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

£200 million will be made available to secondary schools to deliver face-to-face summer schools. Schools will have the flexibility to plan a summer programme that best meets the needs of the school and its pupils. The Department will be publishing guidance for schools shortly.

Although schools are free to involve other pupils where the school has identified a particular need, the Department expects that most will want to focus summer schools on pupils making the transition into Year 7.

The aim of the programme, drawing on the evidence of good practice, is to deliver a summer school that offers a blend of academic education and enrichment activities, but the specific design will be for schools to decide.

■ Teachers: Coronavirus**Tom Tugendhat:**[\[168972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department plans to provide to schools for additional costs incurred when teaching staff are absent to receive covid-19 vaccines during school term time.

Nick Gibb:

Matters relating to any absences by school staff, whether related to COVID-19 or not, are a matter for the individual's employer.

To manage their staffing requirements, schools may need to alter the way in which they deploy their staff and use existing staff more flexibly, as set out in our guidance. These include making best use of teaching assistants, hosting initial teacher training, using volunteers, engaging supply staff using in-year allocated budget, and seeking support from the local authority or trust.

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 2021/22 financial year (April 2021 to March 2022 for maintained schools and until August 2022 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.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agricultural Products: UK Trade with EU

Dave Doogan:

[\[169039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in (a) France, (b) the Netherlands and (c) the EU to develop mutual understanding on the checks required on agri-food goods moving between the UK and the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

There is a constant engagement between Defra officials and our counterparts in the EU to discuss issues regarding agri-food goods at the borders as they are reported. Through these channels, and through our regular meetings with industry representatives, we're closely monitoring live issues and working to resolve them. Officials also hold regular technical meetings with experts from the UK and Member States to ensure that border issues are quickly resolved, including multiple engagements between the UK's Chief Veterinary Officer and their counterparts in EU Member States to further develop mutual understanding on controls and checks that are necessary at borders. The Secretary of State will also continue to engage directly with his counterparts in the EU and beyond.

■ Agriculture: 4G

Esther McVey:

[\[168897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the findings of the National Farmers Union's Digital Technology Survey, published in January 2021, if he will take steps to improve access for farmers to the 4G mobile network.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises that businesses and communities in rural areas need improved access to 4G mobile connectivity. The Shared Rural Network programme, launched in March 2020, is targeted at improving mobile coverage in rural areas. The Government and industry will jointly invest over £1 billion to increase 4G mobile coverage throughout the UK to 95% geographic coverage by the end of the programme, underpinned by legally binding coverage commitments. With funding now available, the Government and the operators remain confident that combined

coverage will be delivered to 95% of the UK by the end of 2025, with areas around the UK starting to see improvements to 4G coverage long before completion. There have already been over 700 sites announced by the operators so far this year to help close not-spots across the UK. This will benefit consumers and businesses, including farm businesses.

■ Agriculture: Broadband

Esther McVey:

[\[168894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to work with broadband providers to ensure that farmers have access to adequate broadband to support the planning, monitoring and delivery of their farming operations.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is working with industry to target a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage by 2025 but will seek to accelerate rollout further to get as close to 100% as possible. We are committed to investing £5 billion in bringing gigabit coverage to the hardest to reach areas, including areas with farm businesses, and will continue to work with suppliers to accelerate this investment.

On 19 March we announced the launch of the new gigabit broadband voucher scheme which forms part of the £5 billion programme and will go live on 8 April 2021. We will work closely with agricultural organisations, including the National Farmers Union, to promote the scheme with their members. The voucher will help to improve access to broadband in rural areas for all types of businesses, including farm businesses.

On 19 March, we also published a call for evidence on improving connectivity for very hard to reach premises. The call for evidence will help the Government explore all possible options for improving broadband connectivity in remote and very hard to reach areas of the UK, including farm businesses in these areas.

Esther McVey:

[\[168895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of poor broadband speeds and connectivity on the agriculture and horticulture industry.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has delivered superfast broadband to over five million premises, mainly in rural areas, which means that 97% of UK premises have access to superfast speeds and the UK has one of the highest rates of rural superfast coverage in Europe.

However, the Government recognises that further investment in rural broadband is needed. That is why the Government is investing an unprecedented £5 billion to further subsidise deployment of gigabit broadband in the hardest to reach 20% of the country. The majority of this funding will be deployed in rural areas, and this approach

will help to directly connect farms in these areas, or bring connectivity much closer to them, opening the possibilities of other technical solutions. The £5 billion investment will prioritise deployment to premises without access to superfast broadband, where possible.

The Government also recognises more information is needed on how to reach the remotest areas and published a call for evidence on improving connectivity for very hard to reach premises on 19 March. We are exploring effective approaches to how the Government and broadband providers can deliver improved broadband connectivity to businesses in remote and very hard to reach areas of the UK, including farm businesses in these areas.

For mobile broadband coverage, the Shared Rural Network programme, launched in March 2020, will also help to improve coverage in rural areas. The Government and industry will jointly invest over £1 billion to increase 4G mobile coverage throughout the UK to 95% geographic coverage by the end of the programme.

Esther McVey:

[168899]

To the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Government's target that at least 85 per cent of UK premises will have access to gigabit-capable broadband by 2025, what steps his Department is taking to help support farmers and growers who do not have access to gigabit-capable broadband; and if he will take steps with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that that access is made available to all farmers and growers in advance of that 2025 deadline.

Victoria Prentis:

Under the £5 billion Project Gigabit Programme we are working with industry to target a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage by 2025 but will seek to accelerate rollout further to get as close to 100% as possible. We remain committed to investing £5 billion in bringing gigabit coverage to the hardest to reach areas and will continue to work with suppliers to accelerate this investment.

On 19 March we announced the launch of the new gigabit broadband voucher scheme which will go live on 8 April 2021. We will work closely with agricultural organisations, including the National Farmers Union, to promote the scheme with their members.

The call for evidence on improving connectivity for very hard to reach premises, also launched on 19 March, will help government explore all possible options for improving broadband connectivity in remote and very hard to reach areas of the UK. In particular, it references the need for, benefits of, and barriers to, improved broadband for agricultural businesses including both farming and horticulture.

■ Agriculture: Digital Technology

Esther McVey:

[168898]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) incentivise and (b) encourage farmers and growers to use digital technology to boost productivity in the agriculture and horticulture sectors.

Victoria Prentis:

We want to encourage a thriving and competitive farming sector where farms can be profitable and economically sustainable without subsidy.

Digital technology has a significant role to play. For farmers and growers, a reliable mobile and broadband connection can unlock a range of benefits, such as increased farm productivity through improved planning, monitoring and delivery of farming operations and aiding the diversification of their businesses.

We are helping farmers and growers through a number of schemes designed to incentivise and encourage the use of digital technology.

In autumn 2021, we will launch the Farming Investment Fund, formed of two strands.

The Farming Equipment and Technology Fund will support smaller investments from a prescribed list of items which we are developing. This will provide farmers and growers with the opportunity to invest in the equipment, technology and infrastructure that will help their businesses to prosper, while improving their productivity and enhancing the environment.

The Farming Transformation Fund will support more substantial investments in equipment, technology or infrastructure. Eligible investments could include precision slurry application equipment, efficient irrigation systems, and robotic systems for example.

In 2022, we will launch an ambitious innovation programme, putting farming businesses at the centre of R&D for new technologies and practices - including digital capabilities - to transform the productivity, profitability and sustainability of agriculture.

■ Agriculture: Northern Ireland

Simon Hoare:

[171661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Northern Ireland Agriculture Minister's decision to halt the construction of border control posts on 27 February 2021, what information he holds on the (a) outcome of legal advice sought by the Permanent Secretary to the Northern Ireland Agriculture department on his ability to comply with that decision and (b) steps that have been taken to progress work on the development of border control posts since that decision.

Victoria Prentis:

Decisions on the construction of Border Control Posts are a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive.

Defra officials continue to work closely with the Northern Ireland Executive to comply with international obligations and give effect to the Protocol in a pragmatic and proportionate way, minimising impacts on the everyday lives of people in Northern Ireland, in line with its fundamental purpose.

The agri-food processes required under the Protocol continue to be discharged using the interim facilities that have been in place since 1 January.

■ Air Pollution: Greater London

Munira Wilson:

[\[171731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many air pollution monitors in London have been upgraded since 2016.

Rebecca Pow:

As part of the national network of monitoring sites that the Environment Agency manages on Defra's behalf, 15 new or upgraded instruments have been brought into service across 12 air quality monitoring sites across London since 2016.

There are currently 19 air quality monitoring sites which are part of Defra's national monitoring networks located in London. In addition to the national UK Air Quality monitoring networks, Local Authorities, businesses and academics carry out monitoring and modelling of air quality.

Munira Wilson:

[\[171732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of air quality monitoring stations in use in London.

Rebecca Pow:

As part of the national network of monitoring sites that the Environment Agency manages on Defra's behalf, 15 new or upgraded instruments have been brought into service across 12 air quality monitoring sites across London since 2016.

There are currently 19 air quality monitoring sites which are part of Defra's national monitoring networks located in London. In addition to the national UK Air Quality monitoring networks, Local Authorities, businesses and academics carry out monitoring and modelling of air quality.

■ Clothing: Manufacturing Industries

Claudia Webbe:

[\[169090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to promote environmental sustainability among fast fashion garment producers.

Rebecca Pow:

Since 2012, Defra has worked with the clothing industry through the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP), co-ordinated by WRAP, to reduce the environmental impact of the sector. During this time SCAP signatories have reduced their water and carbon footprints per tonne of clothing by 19.5% and 15.9% respectively. Building on

this, we have worked closely with the industry through WRAP, to develop a new voluntary agreement 'Textiles 2030', scheduled for launch in April. This has ambitious targets, aligned with global goals on carbon and water and aims to drive the shift to a more resource efficient textiles sector in the UK.

Textiles is also one of seven key sectors included in our new draft Waste Prevention Programme for England, which was published for consultation on 18 March. This builds on the Resources and Waste Strategy (2018) and sets out government's approach to improve resource efficiency and reduce waste. It announces that we will develop a proposal for an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for textiles, supported by measures to encourage better design and information, and will consult with stakeholders on this by the end of 2022. This could help to boost reuse and recycling of textiles and reduce the environmental footprint of the sector. Our landmark Environment Bill will also give us the powers to take action to ensure better design and provision of consumer information to promote sustainability.

■ Coastal Areas and Rivers: Sewage

Stephen Morgan:

[\[169019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made on reducing the harm caused by sewage spilling into rivers and offshore water bodies; and on how many occasions he has met with the Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee to progress that work since 22 January 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

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

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

During periods of significant rainfall untreated sewage diluted by rainwater will discharge through storm overflows to avoid streets, premises and sewage treatment plants from being flooded. Water companies are committed in the 5-year business planning period (2020-2025) to a significant programme of improvements to the monitoring and management of storm overflows at a cost of around £1.1 billion. This investment includes undertaking 800 investigations and 798 improvement schemes to provide environmental improvements by reducing spills from frequently spilling overflows.

There is more to do to manage sewage pollution. To achieve this, we have set up a new Taskforce - bringing together Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs - which has agreed to set a long-term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows. The Taskforce is now working on plans to start making progress towards that goal, and they have commissioned research to gather evidence on the costs, benefits and feasibility of different options.

Water companies are currently producing comprehensive Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans to assess the capacity of their wastewater networks. We are also

taking steps through the Environment Bill to require water companies to produce such Plans on a statutory basis. These plans will be another tool to help address the risks that storm overflows pose to the environment.

I met the Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee on the date of the latest Storm Overflows Taskforce announcement on 22 January 2021 and have had subsequent conversations with him on this issue. Officials are working with the Chair on how we can accelerate progress in reducing the frequency and harm caused by sewage discharges from storm overflows.

■ **Export Health Certificates: Northern Ireland**

Holly Lynch:

[171656]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps have been taken to end the requirement for people with guide dogs to produce an animal health certificate when travelling to Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:

The health and documentary requirements for pet travel to the EU are set out under the EU Pet Travel Regulations. Under the Northern Ireland Protocol, EU rules also apply to the non-commercial movements of pets into Northern Ireland from Great Britain. There are no derogations for assistance dogs under the legal framework of the EU Pet Travel Regulations.

We will continue to press the European Commission in relation to securing Part 1 listed status, recognising that achieving this would alleviate some of the new requirements for pet owners and assistance dog users travelling to the EU and to Northern Ireland. We are clear that we meet all the animal health requirements for this, and we have one of the most rigorous pet checking regimes in Europe to protect our biosecurity.

The Government is engaging with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to explore means to streamline pet travel between Great Britain and Northern Ireland recognising the high standards of animal health that we share. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has also written to the European Vice-President seeking to ensure that an agreement can be made to address the barriers imposed on pet travel between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

We are proactively engaging with the assistance dog community and relevant stakeholders on the impacts on dog movements from Great Britain to the EU and to Northern Ireland. We will continue to work closely with assistance dog organisations to share the latest advice and guidance (in accessible formats) with their members on pet travel requirements.

■ Genetically Modified Organisms

Zarah Sultana:

[\[171735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to assess the negative effects of gene editing on (a) agricultural and food systems and (b) agroecological and organic farmers.

Victoria Prentis:

Gene Editing (GE) describes a range of technologies that can achieve genetic changes of the type that are selected for in traditional breeding, such as insertions, deletions and, occasionally, translocations of genetic material.

Defra's 10-week consultation of the regulation of genetic technologies sought views and evidence on GE including its application in a wide range of farming and agri-food systems, and the use of GE to produce genetic changes which could have been introduced by traditional breeding. The consultation included questions on the health and environmental impacts of these technologies and we have asked independent scientific experts for advice on any safety issues raised. The consultation ended on 17 March and a Government response will be published within three months of it closing.

■ Plastics: Packaging

Mary Glindon:

[\[168922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for reducing single-use plastics by allowing larger e-liquid bottles for e-cigarettes.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has made no specific assessment of the potential merits for reducing single-use plastics by allowing larger e-liquid bottles for e-cigarettes.

Regardless of size, e-liquid bottles can and should be recyclable. The Government's landmark Resources and Waste Strategy sets out our plans to eliminate avoidable plastic waste over the lifetime of the 25 Year Plan and drive up recycling rates. We will also be introducing a new world-leading tax on plastic packaging which will apply to businesses producing or importing plastic packaging which doesn't meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content, subject to further consultation, from April 2022. Together with the government's reform of the Packaging Producer Responsibility system, this will transform the economic incentives of producers by encouraging more use of recycled plastic and driving up recycling rates.

The Department of Health and Social Care is undertaking a post implementation review of the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 that provides the regulatory framework for e-cigarettes. This includes a public consultation, which closed on the 19 March, which allowed the opportunity for people to share their opinions on the regulations. The Government will publish its response later this year.

■ Public Footpaths: Christchurch

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[171491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2021 to Question 153108, when he the Planning Inspector appointed in 2017 will be requested to decide whether or not to hold a public inquiry into objections to the Kimmeridge Bay to Highcliffe coastal footpath; and whether new representations will be invited due to changed circumstances since 2017.

Rebecca Pow:

As stated in the ministerial response of the 11th February 2021, the Planning Inspectorate plays an independent role in the determination of objections on stretches of the England Coast Path. How to take this forward is a decision for the inspector appointed to investigate the objections, and it would not be appropriate for the Secretary of State to comment on this process.

■ Public Footpaths: Motor Vehicles

Gareth Davies:

[\[169106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is able to take steps to prevent off-road vehicles causing damage and disruption to footpaths in rural villages.

Rebecca Pow:

Driving a motorised vehicle on a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway without the landowner's consent is a criminal offence and enforcement is a matter for the police.

An offence under the Criminal Damage Act 1971 may have been committed if damage is caused.

The maintenance of public rights of way is a local issue. Local highway authorities have statutory duties to record and keep public rights of way open and it is the authority's responsibility to prevent the stopping-up or obstruction of public rights of way.

■ Supermarkets: Plastic Bags

Elliot Colburn:

[\[169056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the increase in supermarket deliveries since the start of the covid-19 outbreak on the use of single use plastic bags by supermarkets.

Rebecca Pow:

Since 5 October 2015, large retailers in England have been required by law to charge a minimum of 5p for single-use carrier bags (SUCBs) and to report on the amount they sell each year. The data for the year 2020-2021 will be published in the summer.

The full datasets for each reporting year are on Gov.UK and can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carrier-bag-charge-summary-of-data-in-england>.

The obligation for supermarkets to charge for SUCBs supplied with online deliveries (online grocery delivery bags) was temporarily removed in response to the first Covid-lockdown. These changes were only temporary, from 21 March 2020 to 21 September 2020. This exemption was made as a precautionary measure and in order to allow retailers time to adapt their delivery systems. As well as the charge exemption, the obligation to report during this time period was waived. The charge for these bags was reinstated in September 2020 along with the reporting requirement. Therefore the dataset for the year 2020-2021, will not include data from this period on bags used for online deliveries.

■ Waste Disposal: Finance

Dan Jarvis:

[171606]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2021 to Question 160671, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending eligibility for the Waste and Resources Action Programme grant scheme to (a) schools, (b) businesses and (c) other public bodies in the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

The Binrastructure grant scheme closed on the 10th March 2021. Local authorities were able to work in partnership with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) or other local partners when applying to the scheme, though grants could only be awarded to local authorities.

We believe that education, as well as getting businesses to take responsibility on litter, is important and this is reflected in our Litter Strategy, which is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-strategy-for-england>

We want every child to have the opportunity to learn about the impacts of litter. As well as the Eco-Schools programme run by Keep Britain Tidy, which 80% of schools in England participate in, there are many other resources available for schools to use should they wish to teach pupils about the impact of litter and the importance of not littering. Organisations such as Keep Britain Tidy, the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Marine Conservation Society have all produced excellent resources for schools about litter and the damage that it can do to the environment.

We believe that businesses should try to reduce the amount of litter their products generate. The Litter Strategy sets out how we intend to work with the relevant industries to tackle certain types of particularly problematic litter, including fast-food packaging, smoking-related litter and chewing gum.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Abdullah Öcalan****Lloyd Russell-Moyle:****[171700]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Council of Europe's call for access to lawyers in Turkey and recent reports that lawyers have been denied access to Abdullah Öcalan, if his Department will make assurances in respect of the welfare of that person.

Wendy Morton:

We are clear in our expectation that Turkey, like all countries, should live up to its human rights obligations towards all its citizens, including the welfare of detainees such as the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan. We continue to encourage the authorities to ensure that all detainees are treated in accordance with relevant international human rights standards, such as access to legal representation and medical care. I raised human rights issues in December 2020 with my Turkish counterpart. Working with our international partners, we will continue to encourage Turkey, including at Ministerial level, to act in line with the conventions of the Council of Europe and to make greater progress on wider human rights reforms. We therefore welcome the Turkish government's recently published human rights action plan and hope it will be swiftly and comprehensively implemented.

■ Bolivia: Elections**Catherine West:****[171682]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Bolivian counterpart on the need for reconciliation following the recent election in that country.

Wendy Morton:

Our Ambassador and Embassy Team in La Paz are in regular contact with representatives of the Government of Bolivia at all levels, including to discuss the issue of political reconciliation.

We also continue to work with international partners in Bolivia to raise shared concerns about political developments with the Government.

■ British Overseas Territories: Coronavirus**Imran Ahmad Khan:****[169078]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 126163, how many covid-19 vaccines have been distributed to each British Overseas Territory to date.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[169986]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding his Department has allocated to the distribution of covid-19 vaccines to British Overseas Territories.

Nigel Adams:

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all of the UK's Overseas Territories, with confirmed outbreaks in all but two of the inhabited Territories. The UK Government has been directly supplying the UK's Overseas Territories with COVID-19 vaccines as part of the UK's enduring commitment to the Territories. The UK Government's policy is to publish data on vaccinations administered. By 19 March, each Overseas Territory had administered approximately the following number of doses:

	<i>APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF DOSES ADMINISTERED BY 18 MARCH 2021</i>
<i>Anguilla</i>	<i>5,500</i>
<i>Ascension</i>	<i>816</i>
<i>Bermuda</i>	<i>30,000</i>
<i>British Virgin Islands</i>	<i>6,500</i>
<i>Cayman Islands</i>	<i>38,300</i>
<i>Falkland Islands</i>	<i>1,787</i>
<i>Gibraltar</i>	<i>53,171</i>
<i>Montserrat</i>	<i>1140</i>
<i>Pitcairn</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>St Helena</i>	<i>3,400</i>
<i>Tristan da Cunha</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Turks & Caicos Islands</i>	<i>11,283</i>

The FCDO are arranging and funding the delivery of vaccines to the Territories, which began on 5 January and are aiming to deliver enough doses to offer vaccines to every adult across the Territories. So far, there have been 27 deliveries, reaching all of the permanently inhabited Overseas Territories with airports. Further deliveries are scheduled and planning is underway to deliver vaccines to the two remaining permanently inhabited Overseas Territories without airports: Pitcairn and Tristan da Cunha. In line with the UK Government's commitment to supply the Overseas Territories with a population proportionate share of vaccines, our programme aims to

provide vaccines for the entire adult populations of the Territories and is expected to be complete in a similar timescale to the UK domestic rollout.

■ Chen Quanguo

Alyn Smith:

[\[167949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the US Administration's imposition of global Magnitsky sanctions and visa restrictions against Chen Quanguo in response to his role in perpetrating human rights violations against Muslim minorities in Xinjiang; and what plans he has to impose Magnitsky sanctions on Chen Quanguo.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 22 March 2021]: The situation in Xinjiang is one of the worst human rights crises of our time. On 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK has imposed, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, asset freezes and travel bans against four Chinese government officials, as well the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the organisation responsible for enforcing the repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang.

These measures were taken alongside the US, Canada and the EU. By acting with our partners we are sending the clearest message to the Chinese Government that the international community will not turn a blind eye to such serious and systematic violations of basic human rights. We continue to keep all evidence and potential listings under the Global Human Rights regime under close review.

■ Climate Change

Paul Blomfield:

[\[168890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with international partners to assess the risk and reduce the effect of climate change (a) globally and (b) on the UK.

James Duddridge:

The Integrated Review which was launched on 16 March by the Prime Minister, states that in 2021 and beyond, Her Majesty's Government will make tackling climate change and biodiversity loss its number one international priority and the Foreign Secretary will take the necessary steps to deliver on this. The UK is working closely with international partners to assess and reduce the risk of climate change both globally and in the UK. The Foreign Secretary and FCDO ministers regularly raise the subject in engagements with international partners. In December the UK co-hosted the Climate Ambition Summit where 75 leaders, as well as businesses pledged new and more ambitious commitments to tackle climate change. On 31 March, COP President-Designate Alok Sharma and the Foreign Secretary will host the Climate Development Ministerial which will bring together countries and partners to identify practical solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing vulnerable countries.

Domestically the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan accelerates the UK's transition to Net-Zero. On 4 December 2020 we announced an ambitious new Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. This target commits the UK to the fastest rate of emissions reductions of any major economy. In 2019, we legislated for net zero emissions by 2050 - the first of the major economies to set such a legally binding target.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[169987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding allocated to the BBC World Service has been used to promote covid-19 vaccine uptake overseas.

Nigel Adams:

We have made it clear that the UK strongly supports COVID-19 vaccine uptake worldwide. The BBC World Service is an internationally trusted broadcaster, and is editorially and operationally independent of government. It would not be appropriate for the FCDO to direct programming.

■ **Ecuador: Elections**

Catherine West:

[\[171681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Ecuador on ongoing elections in that country.

Wendy Morton:

Our Embassy in Quito has had discussions with the candidates and remains in close contact on this issue with other Embassies and International Organisations in country.

The first round of the Ecuadorean Presidential elections took place on 7 February. Staff from our Embassy in Quito participated in observation on the day, alongside international partners. We observed nothing of concern in terms of the conduct of the poll. The second round will be held on 11 April, and the UK fully supports the Government of Ecuador in running a peaceful, open and inclusive electoral process.

■ **Human Rights**

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[168953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish an updated strategy of UK support for human rights defenders.

Nigel Adams:

The UK strongly supports Human Rights Defenders worldwide to enable them to carry out their work safely and without fear. We are considering carefully the request

from Amnesty International and other NGOs for a UK Government strategy on Human Rights Defenders. In 2019, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon launched the document 'UK support for Human Rights Defenders' which was drawn up with significant and important input from relevant stakeholders, including Amnesty International, and which sets out how the UK Government engages with Human Rights Defenders to advance the human rights agenda globally.

■ India: Agriculture

Daisy Cooper:

[\[169965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to engage with grassroots farmers organisations and related civil society groups in India to review the UK-India Infrastructure Technical Co-Operation Facility aid project and the Conceptual Framework on Agriculture to find ways in which it can be improved to support small and subsistent local farmers.

Nigel Adams:

The UK-India Infrastructure Technical Co-Operation Facility is a programme which has focused on infrastructure for transportation, telecommunication, water supply and sanitation, urban infrastructure and emerging areas like renewable energy. There have been no projects relating to agriculture or agri-infrastructure under this programme. Through the FCDO's Conceptual Framework on Agriculture, we support small-scale farmers to grow sustainably by improving market access and finance, using approaches specific to local context.

■ Mauritius: Dogs

Elliot Colburn:

[\[169055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to recent reports of the inhumane treatment of dogs in a government-run facility in Mauritius, if he or officials of his Department will make representations to the Government of Mauritius on taking steps to ensure the humane treatment of dogs held in that facility.

James Duddridge:

The mistreatment of any animal is to be deplored. The UK Government is committed to raising standards of animal welfare at home and abroad, and we believe that it is necessary to work with governments around the world to gain agreement to animal welfare standards. Our High Commissioner in Port Louis raised the issue of the treatment of stray and abandoned dogs recently with the Mauritian authorities. The High Commission regularly meets representatives of the Mauritian Government to discuss values championed by the UK and will continue to do so.

■ Mozambique: Homicide**Jim Shannon:**[\[168925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Government in Mozambique on the reported murder of civilians by a private mercenary army.

James Duddridge:

We are deeply concerned by reports of civilians being killed by a private military company in Mozambique, as documented in Amnesty International's report of 2 March. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon spoke to Foreign Minister Macamo on 11 March when he stressed that human rights must be respected during counterterrorism efforts. I [Minister Duddridge] also spoke to Foreign Minister Macamo on 4 February. I raised the need for Mozambique to follow through on investigations of human rights abuses by all sides to the conflict in northeast Mozambique.

■ Myanmar: Arms Trade**Jeremy Corbyn:**[\[171483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the UK is taking to co-ordinate with other international powers for a global arms embargo on the Tatmadaw.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is a longstanding supporter of an arms embargo on Myanmar. We are clear that no international power should sell arms to the Myanmar military. The UK autonomous Myanmar sanctions regulations prohibit the provision of military related services, including the provision of technical assistance, to or for the benefit of the Tatmadaw. We will work closely with partners to pressure those who sell arms to the military.

■ Myanmar: Politics and Government**Jeremy Corbyn:**[\[171482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the legitimacy of the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

The Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), which is composed of many individuals who were elected in November 2020, are an important voice for many in Myanmar. We coordinated with them to read out excerpts from their statements at the Special Session of the Human Rights Council on 12 February, and at the UN General Assembly meeting on 26 February.

Jeremy Corbyn:

[\[171487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the UK government plans to take in relation to the needs of the 322 Myanmar university students who were arrested and imprisoned in Tamwe, Yangon.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is clear that people's rights to freedom of expression and to protest must be respected. We have called on the military regime to release all those who have been detained arbitrarily and to respect the right to freedom of assembly. It is unacceptable that so many people have been detained, injured or killed in the struggle for democracy. The UK has already imposed sanctions on nine individuals for their role in serious human rights violations, including violating the right to liberty and security. We are determined to impose a cost on the Myanmar military and we are working with partners to ensure a strong and coordinated response, using all tools at our disposal.

■ Myanmar: Sanctions

Jeremy Corbyn:

[\[171484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to extend the existing UK sanctions on 25 individuals to others within the command structure of the Tatmadaw.

Nigel Adams:

The UK, in conjunction with partners including the US and Canada, have announced targeted sanctions against nine high-ranking military officials for their role in serious human rights violations during the coup. We are actively consulting with partners on further measures, including additional sanctions. We are determined to impose a cost on the Myanmar military and we will consider all tools at our disposal. These sanctions follow the 16 individuals from the Myanmar military who were previously listed by the UK for human rights violations.

Jeremy Corbyn:

[\[171485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with countries that have not imposed sanctions on Myanmar on imposing sanctions on that country.

Nigel Adams:

We believe sanctions are an important tool to increase pressure on the Myanmar military and we are working closely with partners to coordinate on further sanctions.

The UK, in conjunction with partners including the US and Canada, has announced targeted sanctions against nine high-ranking military officials and we continue to work in concert with our partners and allies on additional measures, including further sanctions.

■ Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Catherine West:

[169933]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much the UK spent on its financial contribution to the OSCE Unified Budget in the financial years (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19 and (c) 2019-20; and what the estimated contribution will be for the financial years (i) 2020-21 and (ii) 2021-22.

James Cleverly:

The UK's assessed contributions to the OSCE Unified Budget for the years 2017-2020 are published in the OSCE Annual Reports, available at:

<https://www.osce.org/annual-reports>. As the 2021 Unified Budget is still under negotiation and the 2022 Unified Budget will not be negotiated until the end of this year, we are not yet able to confirm the UK contributions for 2021 and 2022.

■ Overseas Aid

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[171477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, by what proportion his Department's work on governance, democracy and anti-corruption will change as a result of reductions to Overseas Development Assistance in 2021.

Nigel Adams:

As announced last year, the impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce how much we spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA) to a target of spending 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA, rather than 0.7%. As we have set out in the Integrated Review, this is a temporary measure and we will return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows. No decisions on individual country or sectoral budget allocations have yet been made.

The recently-published Integrated Review is clear about the UK's commitment to being a Force for Good, supporting open societies. We will use our aid budget and British expertise to strengthen democratic institutions, human rights, free media, protect the civic space, and promote effective governance, including combatting corruption and illicit financial flows. Championing this agenda is not only essential for future development progress, but also to protect our values and interests in a world where open societies are under threat.

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[171478]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will provide a breakdown of the reduction in the amount of Overseas Development Assistance to (a) governance, (b) democracy, and (c) anti-corruption programmes for each country in receipt of that funding.

Nigel Adams:

As announced last year, the impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce how much

we spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA) to a target of spending 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA, rather than 0.7%. As we have set out in the Integrated Review, this is a temporary measure and we will return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows.

We are now working through the implications of these changes for individual programmes. No decisions on individual country or sectoral budget allocations have yet been made. The UK remains a world-leader in international development and, based on current GNI forecasts, we will spend over £10 billion of ODA in 2021.

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[\[171479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether the reduction in spending on governance, democracy, and anti-corruption work through Overseas Development Assistance will affect the budgets of (a) the National Crime Agency and (b) other UK law enforcement agencies.

Nigel Adams:

As announced last year, the impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce how much we spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA). The UK will remain a world leading donor, spending over £10 billion in 21/22. No decisions on sectoral budgets have been made yet.

The Foreign Secretary has set out seven core priorities for the UK's aid budget this year, including defending open societies. The recently published Integrated Review sets out the UK Government's commitment to fight corruption and illicit finance as threats to democratic values and open societies around the world. The UK will ensure effective governance and resilience at home and cooperate with other countries on the basis of transparency and good governance.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[171555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the planned country-specific Official Development Assistance spend for 2021-22.

Nigel Adams:

FCDO Ministers are currently working with department officials to finalise ODA budget allocations for the next financial year. No final decisions have been made. We are committed to improving transparency of aid globally and maintaining our high standards for overseas spending. We do that through publication of quality and accessible information on our aid programmes, available on Devtracker.

■ Palestinians: Farmers**Stephen Timms:** [\[169781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to Palestinian farmers in Area C of the West Bank to help them to remain on their land.

James Cleverly:

We regularly call on Israel to halt the expropriation of land in the West Bank, and to improve Palestinians' route to securing building permissions for homes and infrastructure, including agriculture and farming, in Area C. The UK continues to support Palestinians to stay on their land, including through the West Bank Protection Consortium which provides essential infrastructure for vulnerable Palestinians in Area C; and funding legal aid which helps Palestinian communities challenge eviction and demolitions decisions in the Israeli legal system. Officials from the British Consulate Jerusalem regularly visit communities in Area C to show UK support for those communities at risk of evictions and demolitions.

■ Poland: Press Freedom**Catherine West:** [\[171684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Polish counterpart on the importance of a free media.

Wendy Morton:

Media freedom is a priority for the UK. HMG believe that people must be able to discuss and debate issues freely, and have access to information provided by a strong, robust and independent media. We are following developments closely and will raise our concerns with the Polish Government if we judge that the plurality of the Polish media is threatened.

■ Sri Lanka: Human Rights**Ruth Jones:** [\[169037\]](#)

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

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government remains concerned about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, including the issues faced by the Muslim community. This includes the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment in the mainstream and digital media in Sri Lanka; a proposal to ban facial coverings and close some madrasas across the country; and the impact on Muslim and other religious communities of the policy of forced cremations of those deceased due to COVID-19, enforced from March 2020 until February 2021.

The Minister for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, set out the UK's concerns in a statement at the UNHRC on 25 February. Lord Ahmad has also raised the importance of minority rights with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister and Sri Lankan High Commissioner, most recently during calls in January and February respectively.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion

Nick Fletcher:

[\[169074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the appropriateness of the endorsement by Public Health England of the factsheet, Abortion and Abortion Care Factsheet which references IPAS as an authority on abortion care which advocates abortion without prescriptions and with or without the involvement of a health provider.

Helen Whately:

No such assessment has been made. The Abortion and Abortion Care Fact Sheet for schools was produced and published by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare. The contents of the factsheet were developed by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Public Health England co-badged the factsheet on the basis that the Royal College represents the United Kingdom medical experts on abortion.

■ Bereavement Counselling: Suicide

Sir John Hayes:

[\[169792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department provides to families affected by suicide.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, we plan to invest £57 million to support local suicide prevention plans and establish suicide bereavement support services in all areas of England by 2023/24. We have committed that all local systems will have suicide bereavement support services providing timely and appropriate support to families and staff by 2023/24 and have provided funding to 40% of local systems in 2020/21 for them to establish and deliver such services. This is in line with the planning and delivery expectations set out in the Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20-2023/24.

■ Blood: Contamination

Ian Lavery:

[\[168933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether additional mental health support is being made available to people affected by the contaminated blood scandal.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This Government is committed to providing mental health support for people affected by the contaminated blood tragedy. In England funding is available via the English Infected Blood Support Scheme for infected and affected individuals and their families to access counselling in addition to National Health Service-provided services. In May 2020 a significant change was made to the application process for this support so that beneficiaries can now receive funding for counselling without general practitioner approval or the need to access NHS waiting lists. The devolved administrations, who each run their own Infected Blood Support Schemes, also offer psychological support.

Breast Cancer: Mental Health Services**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[157166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mental health support resources he will make available to (a) patients suffering from secondary breast cancer and (b) patient groups advocating on their behalf.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan sets a clear ambition that where appropriate every person diagnosed with cancer, including those with secondary breast cancer, should have access to personalised care to ensure people's social, emotional, physical and practical needs are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity. Over the next five years, Cancer Alliances will be embedding personalised care interventions, which will identify and address the changing needs of cancer patients from diagnosis onwards.

Many Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services have strong links with a range of health and care settings and the patient groups within them. These IAPT services will share informational materials with patient groups to educate and signpost towards IAPT.

Breast Cancer: Screening**Elliot Colburn:**[\[169051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will direct NHS England to prioritise women with dense breast tissue when tackling the cancer screening backlog accrued as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

In addressing the cancer screening backlog resulting from COVID-19, NHS England and NHS Improvement have made prioritisation decisions based upon expert clinical advice and engagement with Public Health England (PHE). On the basis of a United Kingdom National Screening Committee evidence review, PHE has advised that breast density measurements are not yet accurate enough to be safely used in routine breast screening. There is also no readily available breast density

measurement for women currently in the programme. It is therefore not advisable or feasible to prioritise invitations for breast screening by breast tissue density.

Elliot Colburn:

[\[169052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential benefits of using breast density measurement software to identify women with dense breast tissue for the purpose of prioritising those women for breast cancer screening.

Jo Churchill:

In 2019, the United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) commissioned a systematic review to look at the issue of breast density. The review found that breast density is related to risk of breast cancer. However, breast density measurements are not yet robust or repeatable enough, there is no 'gold standard' test to validate breast density measurements. For these reasons that the UK NSC recommended that additional screening with ultrasound after a negative mammography screening in women with dense breasts should not be introduced. More robust evidence is needed before risk stratification can be considered within the breast screening programme.

Elliot Colburn:

[\[169053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing tomosynthesis to digital mammography to improve the accuracy of breast screening.

Jo Churchill:

Research is underway in the Prospective Trial of Digital Breast Tomosynthesis, carried out by Kings College Hospital NHS Trust in breast screening. This trial involves 100,000 women participating in screening to assess whether tomosynthesis is a useful addition to the routine breast screening programme. The United Kingdom National Screening Committee will review the results of the research expected to be published in 2024.

Tomosynthesis has been approved for use in the National Health Service breast screening programme as an optional extra tool in the assessment of screen detected soft tissue breast abnormalities, following the primary screen.

Elliot Colburn:

[\[169054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing AI-driven mammography to (a) support radiologists and (b) increase capacity in the breast cancer screening programme.

Jo Churchill:

There is currently no published evidence in large scale prospective trials that Artificial intelligence (AI) would be equivalent or better than the current model of having two independent human mammogram readers. AI continues to generate huge amounts of

interest for its potential role in the NHS. There is interest in AI for breast screening, where it could replace a human reader of mammograms.

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) and Public Health England have developed interim guidance for AI developers to help consider key metrics required that would assist the UK NSC to make a recommendation on the use of AI. Both are working with the NHS Accelerated Access Collaborative who are funding a large study in 2021 to understand whether AI can be a useful support to the programme. More information is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/aac/>

More information about AI and screening can be found at the following link;
<https://phescreening.blog.gov.uk/2021/02/02/advice-for-nhs-breast-screening-services-on-the-use-of-ai/>

■ Cancer: Health Services

Mr Clive Betts:

[164351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government next plans to publish details of a NHS multi-year funding plan for workforce and cancer diagnostic equipment.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: In order to prioritise the response to COVID-19, the Chancellor of the Exchequer conducted a one-year Spending Review. This provided an additional £260 million to continue to increase the National Health Service workforce. Full details on funding allocations towards NHS workforce budgets, including relating to the cancer workforce, in 2021-22 are subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and will be finalised in due course. The 2021-22 settlement included £325 million capital funding for NHS diagnostics, to replace over two thirds of imaging equipment that is over 10 years old.

Funding beyond 2021-22 will be decided at the next Spending Review, of which further information will be announced by HM Treasury in due course. This will be aligned with the development of a longer term plan for the NHS workforce. For diagnostics, this is in line with the Health Infrastructure Plan to improve hospitals and other health infrastructure.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Ms Harriet Harman:

[167829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to implement the guidance that every care home resident can nominate a single named visitor who will be able to enter the care home for regular visits.

Helen Whately:

New visiting arrangements started on 8 March. Every care home should ensure that each resident can nominate one named person who can have regular, indoor visits.

We are currently pursuing non-legislative routes for implementation, which allow us to

move more swiftly in changing circumstances and to accommodate all care homes. At step two of the roadmap, we will assess the data and take a decision on opening up further opportunities for visiting, setting out a plan for the next phase of visits for people in residential care.

■ **Community Care and Primary Health Care**

Philip Davies:

[\[168856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2021 to Question 157048, what investment he is making in primary care and community services to increase capacity to prepare for a potential increase in demand.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan guarantees that investment in primary medical and community services will grow faster than the overall National Health Service budget. The Plan commits to a record level of additional annual investment in primary medical and community care of an extra £4.5 billion in real terms by 2023/24. In 2020, committed to at least a further £1.5 billion in cash terms for general practice until 2023/24.

Recognising additional pressures on general practice as a result of the pandemic, NHS England has made available £150 million to help expand general practitioner capacity up to the end of March 2021. The potential need for further COVID-19 funding for the early part of 2021/22 is being kept under review.

■ **Coronavirus: Children**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[169992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of contributing to a covid-19 recovery plan for disabled children.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made. However, identifying and addressing the needs of disabled people, including disabled children, is a key part of the Government's recovery planning. We will publish a national strategy for disabled people later this spring, taking into account the impacts of the pandemic on disabled people.

National Health Service recovery guidance makes clear that community services must be prioritised for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities aged up to 25 years old and who have an Education Health and Care Plan in place or who are going through an assessment for one. These services fall under the category of 'continue essential services'.

■ Coronavirus: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[170666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people experiencing long covid symptoms in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry; and what steps his Department is taking to support those people experiencing long covid.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 March 2021]: The data requested is not centrally collected at a constituency level. This information is not currently available for Coventry. The Office for National Statistics has made estimates of the prevalence of 'long' COVID-19 symptoms in England. The latest data for week commencing 27 December 2020 indicated that 301,000 people in private households in England were living with COVID-19 symptoms that had persisted for between five and 12 weeks.

On 7 October 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement announced the establishment of 69 post COVID-19 assessment services across England. More of these services are due to open in England later in 2021. These services help medical experts assess, diagnose and treat people suffering with the long term effects of this virus. The National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation have invested £8.4 million in the Post-HOSPitalisation COVID-19 study and awarded an additional £18.5 million funding across four new research studies to help better understand the causes, symptoms and treatment options for long COVID-19 in non-hospitalised patients.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Ms Lyn Brown:

[133759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to (a) monitor the effect of the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown on NHS capacity and (b) include findings from that monitoring in decision-making on the (i) ending of and (ii) process of emergence from the lockdown.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[133760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to include an assessment of NHS staff capacity in decision-making on the ending of the covid-19 lockdown that began on 6 January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

National Health Service capacity is monitored by NHS England, while Public Health England publishes monitoring data on capacity at the following link:

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

The Government will take a cautious approach to easing lockdown and will be guided by the data. Of the four tests to facilitate decision-making around the easing of lockdown, two relate to NHS capacity; evidence showing vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated; and evidence

that infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[164472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 157103 on Coronavirus: Disease Control, whether the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation was consulted on the development of the QCovid risk assessment algorithm; and whether any other ethical guidelines specifically for algorithmic design were considered.

Jo Churchill:

Oxford University consulted their Clinical Trials and Research Governance Office on the development of QCovid. Oxford University did not directly consult the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, but applied many of their principles including fairness, transparency and engagement. They used established research techniques carefully applied by the expert researchers to minimise bias in the development of the model.

These included a priori specification and publication of a scientifically reviewed protocol, a thorough review of literature and broad clinical and patient engagement to ensure relevant factors were taken into account, including protected characteristics. The results were then peer reviewed and published in the British Medical Journal, to assure the overall approach and ensure full transparency, including setting out the limitations of the data and identification of circumstances where QCovid should not be used.

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[169989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase BAME uptake of the covid-19 vaccine in West Yorkshire.

Nadhim Zahawi:

On 13 February we published the 'UK COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake Plan', which aims to improve uptake across all communities. The approach set out in the plan is underpinned by four enablers at national, regional and local level. These are working in partnership; removing barriers to access; data and information; and conversations and engagement. The plan takes a local, community-led approach, with support provided from Government, NHS England and NHS Improvement and local authorities to coordinate and enable action.

The Department, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the National Health Service hold regular meetings with local authorities, faith leaders and black, Asian and minority ethnic organisations to provide advice and information about COVID-19 vaccines and how they will be made available. In West Yorkshire, we have been delivering 'pop up' clinics in local community areas in Bradford such as local mosques and providing regular updates and resources to faith and community leaders to share. Local NHS staff and council officials have attended online question and answer sessions facilitated by local community leaders and engagement workers

have been visiting areas of low vaccine uptake to provide information in spoken and written community languages.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Justin Madders:

[168963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 February 2021 to Question 147891 on Coronavirus: Screening, what evidence the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies based its assessment on when assessing the effect that discharging patients from hospital into the community without testing had on covid-19 community infection rates.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) considered the contribution of nosocomial infections to hospital COVID-19 cases and the overall epidemic from February to July 2020 at SAGE meeting 63 on 22 October 2020. The minutes of the meeting are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sage-63-minutes-coronavirus-covid-19-response-22-october-2020>

The related updated paper considering 'The contribution of nosocomial infections to the first wave, 28 January 2021', was published on 12 February 2021. The paper provides an estimate of hospitalised COVID-19 cases that could have been due to nosocomial transmission. A key conclusion of the paper is that nosocomial infections and onward community cases due to nosocomial infection may lead to a substantial number of subsequent COVID-19 hospital admissions. The paper is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phe-and-lshtm-the-contribution-of-nosocomial-infections-to-the-first-wave-28-january-2021>

■ Coronavirus: Travel

Munira Wilson:

[169062]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if will hold discussions with the Mayor for London on the potential merits of exempting NHS employees from the suspension of the use of the Freedom Pass for those employees during peak hours in London.

Helen Whately:

We have no current plans to hold specific discussions with the Mayor for London. NHS England and NHS Improvement indicate they have not received any feedback from trusts to suggest the suspension of the Freedom Pass has caused disruption for employees.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Ian Lavery:

[\[133845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to assure Haemophiliacs that the Coronavirus vaccination is safe following evidence given by Professor Ludlam to the Infected Blood Inquiry.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The COVID-19 vaccine is made from a non-human source material and so there is no risk of infection from the manufacturing process. There are no components of human or animal origin in any of the COVID-19 vaccines. The quality data for any COVID-19 vaccine is robustly and thoroughly reviewed with scientific rigour before approval of the vaccine to ensure safety for all, including those with haemophilia. In addition, each batch is tested to ensure the absence of contaminating viruses and other microorganisms. This orthogonal approach, which is applied to all medicinal products and vaccines including the COVID-19 vaccines ensures that no batch of product would ever be released for use if it were to contain any viral or microbiological contaminants.

Claire Hanna:

[\[149354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of each of the available vaccines in limiting the transmission and spread of covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The full impact of vaccination on infection and transmission is not yet clear, but Public Health England (PHE) have undertaken their first analysis of the early effects of COVID-19 vaccination using routine testing and vaccination data across England. This data, published on 1 March 2021, provides early evidence that both the Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines are having a significant effect on the reduction of COVID-19 infection, hospitalisations and deaths in those over 70 years old across England.

Ruth Jones:

[\[151846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what immediate plans he has to monitor the effectiveness of different covid-19 vaccines in different age groups.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: Public Health England (PHE) is monitoring the effectiveness of the vaccines, including in different age groups.

Public Health England have undertaken their first analysis of the early effects of COVID-19 vaccination on older adults using routine testing and vaccination data across England. This data, published in a preprint on 1 March 2021, provides early evidence that both the Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines are having a significant effect on the reduction of COVID-19 infection, hospitalisations and deaths in those over 70 years old across England. The analysis is available at the following link:

<https://khub.net/documents/135939561/430986542/Early+effectiveness+of+COVID+vaccines.pdf/ffd7161c-b255-8e88-c2dc-88979fc2cc1b?t=1614617945615>

Charlotte Nichols:

[155437]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason an estimated one third of social care staff had not received their first covid-19 vaccination as of 15 February 2021; and what steps he is taking to increase the rate of vaccination of social care staff.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government met its target to offer a vaccine to everyone within the top four priority groups, including social care workers by 15 February 2021.

We continue to ensure that as many social care workers as possible receive their first and second doses when offered. We are conducting second visits to care homes to offer vaccinations to staff who were unavailable on the day of the first visit.

Helen Hayes:

[158145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of joint covid-19 vaccination appointments for people with learning disabilities and their carers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

As part of the booking process, providers are advised to check whether eligible patients require any reasonable adjustments for having their vaccination and this might include having an appointment alongside their carer if the carer is also eligible.

Jim Shannon:

[160666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to monitor the effectiveness of existing covid-19 vaccines against new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England has published early estimates of vaccine effectiveness which includes the United Kingdom variant of concern VOC202012/01, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.03.01.21252652v1>

The 2021 Budget provided an extra £1.65 billion for the COVID-19 vaccination programme. This included £28 million to increase the UK's capacity for vaccine testing, support for clinical trials and improve the ability to rapidly acquire samples of new variants of COVID-19 and £22 million for a world-leading study to test the effectiveness of combinations of different vaccines. This will also fund the world's first study assessing the effectiveness of a third dose of vaccine to improve the response against current and future variants of COVID-19. A further £5 million investment in clinical-scale mRNA manufacturing has been allocated to create a 'library' of vaccines that will work against COVID-19 variants for possible rapid response deployment.

Jim Shannon:

[160667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to monitor the effectiveness of different covid-19 vaccines in different age groups.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England (PHE) is monitoring vaccine effectiveness in all eligible groups.

PHE has published an assessment on vaccine effectiveness in adults aged 70 years and older and in healthcare workers, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.03.01.21252652v1>

As the COVID-19 vaccination programme continues in younger age groups, vaccine effectiveness estimates in these age groups will be published.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[161818]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made on the adequacy of the international provision of the covid-19 vaccine access to British Nationals abroad, who are unable to return to the UK due to national or International travel restrictions or being unable to afford the associated costs of hotel quarantine in the UK, due to being ineligible to access deferred repayment plans when returning from a red list country.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 March 2021]: As a residence-based system, the National Health Service does not provide healthcare, including vaccinations, outside the United Kingdom. The normal rules on access to the NHS will continue to apply.

Wherever possible, British nationals should aim to be vaccinated in the country where they live. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office are closely monitoring other countries' vaccination plans and will share information on local vaccine programmes on their travel advice pages as they are announced. Anyone choosing to travel should consider the public health advice and travel restrictions in the country they are visiting and factor costs associated with the requirement to quarantine on arrival to the UK.

Tom Tugendhat:

[168971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial support will be provided to venues currently operating as covid-19 vaccination sites to compensate such venues for loss of income when their normal bookings would be able to be resumed under the Government's roadmap for easing covid-19 restrictions.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Non-National Health Service vaccination sites have been secured under formal lease or licence where required. As payment of rental and other costs for the use of these sites has been agreed in each case, there is no expectation of payment for loss of income.

Andrew Rosindell:

[169802]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the study of covid-19 vaccine responses in cancer patients conducted by King's College and the Francis Crick Institute with preliminary findings reported in March 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing the interval between covid-19 vaccine doses for cancer patients.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The findings of the study, which has not yet been published or peer-reviewed, should be used cautiously as they are indicative and do not provide suitable data to infer directly the level of clinical protection. It should be noted that antibody expression following vaccination may only be part of the protection afforded by the vaccine. For example, the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine induces a weak antibody response after first dose in the elderly, but recent Public Health England data shows strong clinical protection against hospitalisation and mortality in the same age group.

Afzal Khan:

[171717]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish a breakdown of the covid-19 vaccination data by gender.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England publishes the weekly national influenza and COVID-19 surveillance report which includes vaccine uptake by gender in England. The weekly reports are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports>

NHS England publishes weekly data on vaccinations given to people in England who are eligible for vaccination as of the latest reporting period. This includes data on vaccinations by gender and is available at the following link:

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

■ Dental Services

Rosie Cooper:

[153168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to ensure prompt access to dental care for people who need it as a precursor for (a) bisphosphonate injections for some cancers and (b) other urgent treatments.

Jo Churchill:

National Health Service dental practices remain open, supported by over 600 Urgent Dental Care Centres and clinicians are prioritising care for patients, in line with guidance from NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer. Therefore, patients who are considered at highest risk of oral disease, including people who require dental care prior to receiving bisphosphonate injections or other urgent treatments will continue to be prioritised for dental care.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[171558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to address the potential shortages of dentists.

Jo Churchill:

The interim NHS People Plan commits to addressing shortages within the dental workforce. Through the Advancing Dental Care Education and Training Review programme, Health Education England is considering how dental and oral health needs can be best met through changes to the workforce. This includes exploring opportunities for flexible training pathways to improve retention. NHS England and NHS Improvement are also working with the profession and the British Dental Association to assess how the whole dental team may be better utilised to enable dentists to free up capacity and increase access.

■ **Dental Services: Coronavirus**

James Grundy:

[\[154616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on health of missed dental appointments as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made.

Dental practices have been able to open for face to face care from 8 June, with urgent provision backed up by over 600 urgent dental care centres across the country. The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have set out guidance that dentists should focus on care that is urgent, care to vulnerable groups and then overdue routine appointments. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through a National Health Service dental practice, they should contact NHS 111 for assistance.

■ **Dental Services: Hampshire and Isle of Wight**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[152620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the proportion of patients accessing NHS dental services in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight area.

Jo Churchill:

The proportion of patients seen by a National Health Service dentist to 31 December 2020, in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is shown in the following table:

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ADULTS	CHILDREN
Hampshire County Council	478,602(43.6%)	89,171 (31.4%)
Isle of Wight Council	52,276 (44.7%)	6,399 (25.9%)

The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through a NHS dental practice, they should contact NHS 111 for assistance. Over 600 urgent dental care centres remain open to help patients access care.

■ Detention Centres: Durham

Holly Lynch: [\[168977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the procurement process for the provision of healthcare services for the new Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre has been completed.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The procurement process has not yet been completed.

■ Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma

Munira Wilson: [\[169968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the timeline for NICE guidance on the use of MTX110 for untreated diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG) will be published.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) plans to develop technology appraisal guidance for MTX110 but it is unable to advise on timescales. MTX110 does not currently have a United Kingdom marketing authorisation or licence for the treatment of diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma and is still undergoing phase one clinical trials. NICE can only appraise drugs that have a marketing authorisation for the treatment of a particular condition or are expected to receive one during the appraisal process and can only issue final guidance on drugs that have a marketing authorisation.

■ Disability: Children

Elliot Colburn: [\[169050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings published by the Disabled Children's Partnership in February 2021 that 70 per cent of disabled children have been unable to get therapies for their development during the

covid-19 lockdown, what plans his Department has to ensure that disabled children receive the therapies they need for their development.

Helen Whately:

NHS England and NHS Improvement published guidance entitled 'COVID-19 restoration of community health services for children and young people: second phase of NHS response in the community health restoration' on 3 June 2020 and updated this on 31 July 2020. This makes clear that community services, including therapies such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, must be prioritised for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities aged up to 25 years old and who have an Education Health and Care Plan in place or who are going through an assessment for one. These services fall under the category of 'continue essential services'.

■ **Educational Institutions: Infectious Diseases**

Jon Trickett:

[148698]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases of (a) covid-19, (b) influenza and (b) other respiratory pathogens were reported by each education setting among (i) pupils and (ii) staff in the 2020-21 academic year to date.

Jo Churchill:

Data on the number of cases of COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory disease are not available in the format requested.

■ **England Infected Blood Support Scheme: Equality**

Ian Lavery:

[168930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that the contaminated blood support scheme is compatible with the Equalities Act 2010.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Under the general equality duty set out in the Equality Act 2010, the Department has assessed the effect of the English Infected Blood Support Scheme on groups protected under the Act, as well as the impact on families. We published our assessment of changes to the scheme in 2017 and keep this equality analysis under review. The assessment is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/648221/Infected_blood_consultation_response_eqia.pdf

■ **Eyesight: Diseases**

Sir Charles Walker:

[168851]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department makes available to fund research into (a) Stargardt disease and (b) other inherited retinal diseases; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 18 March 2021]: The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) supports research in response to proposals from the research community and welcomes high-quality applications for support into any aspect of human health, including Stargardt's disease and other inherited retinal diseases.

In the last five years the NIHR directly funded three studies related to Stargardt's disease for a total of £1.87 million. Six further studies on Stargardt's disease were additionally supported by the NIHR through Central Commissioning Facility-managed and Clinical Research Network Coordinating Centre infrastructure.

Food: Advertising**Ben Bradley:****[169026]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what provisions will be made in the NHS Reform Bill to ensure that the effect on businesses is considered in the restriction on advertising of foods high in fat, sugar and salt; and if he will make a statement.

Ben Bradley:**[169027]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on (a) investment in the UK food manufacturing sector and (b) employment in that sector of the restrictions proposed on promotions, placement and advertising to reduce the rates of obesity in the UK in the policy paper Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives, and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

'Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all', published on 11 February 2021, confirmed the Government's intention to introduce further advertising restrictions to prohibit advertisements for products high in fat, sugar or salt (HFSS) being shown on TV before 9pm. In November and December 2020, we consulted on how to go further and implement an online restriction for HFSS advertisements. Depending on the outcome of this consultation, it is our intention to take forward further online advertising restrictions simultaneously in this legislation.

We carefully consider all views and potential impacts of our measures to reduce obesity. This includes feedback from a wide range of experts and stakeholders on specific policy proposals and in response to our public consultations. The final impact assessments on the proposals to restrict the promotion of foods HFSS by location and by volume is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/restricting-promotions-of-food-and-drink-that-is-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt>

The developmental impact assessment on further advertising restrictions on TV and online was published alongside the 2019 consultation on this policy. This is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786554/advertising-consultation-impact-assessment.pdf

An evidence note was published alongside the consultation on the proposal to introduce a total restriction of online advertising for HFSS products. This builds on the impact assessment that accompanied the 2019 consultation. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/total-restriction-of-online-advertising-for-products-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt-hfss/evidence-note>

We will publish the final impact assessment on further advertising restrictions on TV and online alongside the full response to the consultation shortly and this will feed into the wider impact assessment for the Health and Care Bill.

■ Food: Labelling

Paul Maynard:

[168869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to regulate the provision of allergen information by home-based food businesses.

Jo Churchill:

The provision of allergen information by home-based food businesses is regulated by local authority food officers. During an inspection, officers will assess a food business' level of compliance with allergen information requirements and provide advice or take corrective action where non-compliances are identified. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) issued guidance to local authorities in November 2020 to support the consistent regulation of the provision of allergen information. To help and support home-based food businesses, the FSA has published guidance specifically targeted at starting a business at home during COVID-19. The FSA's 'Here to help food businesses' provides detailed information on allergen management.

■ Food: Marketing

Esther McVey:

[168892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's Tackling Obesity strategy, published in July 2020, whether it is his Department's policy to restrict the promotion or sale of lunchtime meal deals; and if he will make a statement.

Esther McVey:

[168893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's Tackling Obesity strategy, published in July 2020, whether it is his Department's policy to restrict the promotion or sale of Easter eggs; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

In December 2020 we published our response to the 2019 consultation on restricting promotions of products that are high fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) by location and price.

The response confirmed the categories in scope of the restrictions and that the 2004/05 Nutrient Profiling Model will be used to define whether a product in these categories is HFSS.

Meal deals are generally targeted as lunch options for adults to consume on the go that day rather than being stockpiled at home and they aim to reduce the cost of a single meal. Therefore, it was decided that these types of price promotion will not be in scope of the volume price promotion restrictions. However, HFSS products that come under a category in scope of the policy would still be subject to the location restrictions, regardless of whether it is part of a meal deal.

Easter eggs can be found on the shelves and in key prominent locations in stores, such as end of aisle, checkouts and store entrances, up to three months before Easter and consumers typically buy these products as soon as they are available in shops and offered on promotion. Therefore, these products are in scope of the promotion restrictions.

Ben Bradley:

[\[169025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure that there will be appropriate opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny of the proposed restrictions on the promotion and placement of foods high in fat, sugar and salt.

Jo Churchill:

The Government intends to use powers in the Food Safety Act 1990 to lay secondary legislation before Parliament by mid-2021. Subject to progress in Parliament, we will then allow at least a six-month implementation period before the restrictions come into force in April 2022.

■ **Fractures: Health Services**

Jim Shannon:

[\[149765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of people treated by the NHS for a hip fracture who live alone in each of the last three years.

Edward Argar:

This data is not held centrally.

■ **General Practitioners: Long Lartin Prison**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[169819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to HM Chief Inspector of Prisons report on a scrutiny visit to HMP Long Lartin, published on 16 March 2021, what steps he will take to prevent waits to see a GP of (a) more than 12 months and (b) other long periods.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Following the HM Inspector of Prisons' report, we understand that a number of changes have been made to processes to ensure patients in the prison are able to

see a general practitioner in a timely way, including clinical triage of patients placed on waiting lists based on need and a single point of administrative contact who will report when any patient has exceeded an appropriate wait time. Patients will also be able to refer themselves to healthcare services appropriately, in a timely manner and with any necessary support to enable them to communicate their needs. Officers will receive an introduction to the healthcare service as part of their induction and patients will receive this as part of their reception/transfer in.

■ Genito-urinary Medicine

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[171698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is take to consult trans and non-binary communities in the development of the Government's Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan.

Jo Churchill:

As part of the development of the Government's Sexual and Reproductive Strategy and the HIV Action Plan, we will be engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including organisations that represent trans and non-binary communities.

■ Health Services: Coronavirus

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[167175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing grants to pharmacies to help cover additional costs accrued during the covid-19 outbreak; and how much and what proportion of the £370m emergency cashflow loans has been allocated to (a) pharmacies and (b) other NHS services.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 March 2021]: Discussions are ongoing with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee about additional funding for costs incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its ongoing assessment of COVID-19 costs incurred by the sector the Government will take account of the £370 million increased advance payments paid to community pharmacies.

The support package for community pharmacy also included general COVID-19 business support, funding for Bank Holiday openings, social distancing measures and the medicine delivery service to shielded patients, free personal protective equipment and non-monetary support including the removal of some administrative tasks, flexibility in opening hours and the delayed introduction of new services.

■ Health Services: Ventilation

Nadia Whittome:

[\[160898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure hospitals and other healthcare facilities are adequately ventilated to ensure the safety of staff.

Theresa Villiers:

[161699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to make an (a) assessment of and (b) certify ventilation systems which reduce the risk of transmission of covid-19.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 March 2021]: The Health Technical Memoranda (HTM) 03-01 provides guidance on the design and management of heating and specialised ventilation in health sector buildings, including guidance regarding the adequate ventilation of healthcare facilities to ensure staff safety. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-specialised-ventilation-for-healthcare-premises-parts-a-and-b>

The HTM gives comprehensive advice and guidance on the legal requirements, design implications, maintenance and operation of specialised ventilation in all types of healthcare premises. It applies to new installations and major refurbishments of existing installations. Under the HTM all hospital trusts are required to have an Authorising Engineer (Ventilation) who provides independent auditing and advice on ventilation systems and who reviews and witnesses documentation on validation. The Care Quality Commission is responsible for compliance with the HTM under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (revised), and the Department has no current plans to change this approach

■ **HIV Infection: Drugs**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[171699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local health commissioners are allocating funding to public health (a) information on and (b) services for the provision of the HIV prevention drug PrEP that are accessible to the trans and non-binary community in 2021-22.

Jo Churchill:

The Public Health Grant in 2021/22 includes £23.4million to cover local authority costs of the routine commissioning of HIV prevention drug pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). The Department and Public Health England (PHE) will continue to work closely with local authorities across England to support the routine commissioning of PrEP in 2021/22.

PHE is currently developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the routine commissioning of PrEP, which will use established surveillance systems and include measures of PrEP need and use among key population groups to inform equitable delivery and access. We will also consider issues relating to equitable access to PrEP as part of the development of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan, which we plan to publish in 2021.

■ Learning Disability: Nurses

Neil Coyle:

[168952]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS learning disability nurses were employed (a) in total and (b) in each NHS trust in England for the most recent period in which that information is available.

Helen Whately:

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but not staff working in social care, primary care, local authorities or private sector providers commissioned by the National Health Service.

As at November 2020, there were 3,239 full-time equivalent nurses in learning disabilities care settings employed in NHS trusts and CCGs in England. This is 3,541 in headcount.

A table showing the number of nurses in learning disabilities care settings in each NHS trust in England is attached.

Attachments:

1. Nurses In Learning Disabilities Care Settings [PQ168952 TABLE.xlsx]

■ Medical Equipment: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[151709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there have been customs declaration problems with the flow of medical devices imported into Northern Ireland via Great Britain since 1 January 2021.

Edward Argar:

While there have been isolated and limited instances of interruption to a small number of supplies caused by new customs processes, the borders are working well and medicines have not seen widespread disruption. We continue to work closely with the Border and Protocol Delivery Group, Department for Transport and others across Government to monitor the flow across the borders.

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review

Andrew Gwynne:

[171542]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his Department on implementing the recommendations made by the Cumberlege report, First Do No Harm: the report of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

I refer the hon. Member to my Written Ministerial Statement of 11 January 2021 ([HCWS692](#)).

The Government will respond in full to the report later this year.

■ Mental Health Services

Luke Pollard: [\[160795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the plan for mental health services is beyond the end date of the current NHS Long Term Plan for Mental Health Services of March 2024.

Luke Pollard: [\[160796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to make a decision on commissioning mental health services beyond the current NHS Long Term Plan for Mental Health Services end date of March 2024.

Luke Pollard: [\[160797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps stakeholders can take to have an input into the re-commissioning of mental health services beyond the end date of the current NHS Long Term Plan for Mental Health Services of March 2024.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The future of the National Health Service budget beyond 2023/24 will be for a future Spending Review.

We expect NHS England and NHS Improvement to work with stakeholders in developing its plans for mental health services beyond March 2024 and to set out their plans for mental health services for consideration by the Government in due course.

Sir John Hayes: [\[169790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what publicly funded counselling services are available to people experiencing mental health problems.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There is a range of support available for people experiencing mental health problems and they can be referred by their general practitioner based on clinical need. People can also self-refer to most services for treatment. This includes the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme which provides counselling and therapy services. We continue to expand access to talking and psychological therapies through the IAPT programme. The NHS Long Term Plan commits to ensuring that an additional 380,000 adults will be able to access IAPT services by 2023/24.

■ Motor Neurone Disease: Research

Mr Steve Baker: [\[169847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report entitled, Accelerating research for a treatment for motor neurone disease, published by the My Name's Doddie Foundation.

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[169848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to My Name's5 Doddie Foundation's report entitled Accelerating research for a treatment for motor neurone disease (MND), if he will implement the recommendation of that report to fund £50 million over five years in a new MND Research Institute.

Edward Argar:

The Department has not made a specific assessment of the report. The Government is committed to supporting research into dementia and neurodegeneration, including motor neurone disease (MND). Over the past five years, the Department has spent over £9 million on MND research through the National Institute for Health Research. Additionally, UK Research and Innovation, through the Medical Research Council, has spent £45 million on MND research over the past five years. This includes research which aims to increase our understanding of the causes and genetic mechanisms of MND. We are currently working on ways to significantly boost further research on dementia and neurodegeneration at all stages on the translation pathway including medical and care interventions.

■ **NHS: Dental Services**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[152621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry (a) nationally and (b) in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Jo Churchill:

Dentists have been asked to prioritise urgent treatment, with provision of over 600 urgent dental care centres across the country, 13 of which are operating across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also commissioned additional clinical sessions in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, including in Basingstoke, Alton, Farnborough, Gosport, Southampton, Ventnor and Bembridge.

From April 2021 two new dental practices will be opening in Portsmouth and a new practice is expected to open in Tadley in July. This is in addition to a new practice that was established in Alton in December 2020. The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible.

■ **NHS: Nurses**

Tim Loughton:

[\[168816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of nurses working in the NHS in (a) August 2019 and (b) March 2021 (i) as full time equivalents and (ii) in total.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 18 March 2021]: NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups, excluding staff working in primary care, local authorities or other providers.

As at August 2019 there were 287,458 full time equivalent (FTE) nurse and health visitors working in the HCHS workforce, 322,810 headcount.

Data for March 2021 is not yet available. In November 2020, the latest period for which data for FTE and headcount is available, there were 307,227 FTE nurse and health visitors working in the National Health Service, or 343,240 headcount.

■ NHS: Pay**Dan Jarvis:**[\[169854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the one per cent pay rise for NHS staff announced in Budget 2021 on the (a) economy and (b) retention of nurses.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 March 2021]: The Government has committed to providing National Health Service staff, including nurses with, a pay increase in 2021/22, in order to recognise the unique impact of the pandemic on the NHS. However, the level of pay award has not yet been set. We have submitted our written evidence to the independent pay review bodies, which sets out what is currently affordable and provides information on current levels of recruitment and retention in the NHS.

■ Pandemic Delivery Service**Alexander Stafford:**[\[169114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many prescriptions have been delivered by the Pandemic Delivery Service to shielded patients in the last 12 months.

Jo Churchill:

Between April and December 2020 dispensing contractors (community pharmacies and dispensing doctors) have claimed for 3,477,259 deliveries to shielded patients. Data for January to March 2021 is not yet available due to the claiming and payment timetable.

■ Pharmacy**Alexander Stafford:**[\[169113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that housebound patients can access a free community pharmacy medicines delivery service once the covid-19 lockdown restrictions have ended.

Jo Churchill:

A National Health Service medicine delivery service has been available to clinically extremely vulnerable patients since April 2020 when shielding advice has been in place. The medicine delivery service for clinically extremely vulnerable patients will stop at the end of March. However, from 16 March to 30 June initially, a medicine delivery service for people who are required to self-isolate is in place.

Anyone, who is unable to collect medicines or does not have anyone to do so on their behalf continue to make use of volunteers. Some pharmacies offer a medicine delivery service to all patients, though this may come at a charge as it is not a NHS service or alternatively patients can use an online pharmacy.

Alex Norris:[\[170715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the cashflows of community pharmacies; what estimate he has made if the number of community pharmacies that (a) have closed in each of the last three financial years and (b) will close in the financial year 2021-22; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Norris:[\[170716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 December 2020 to Question 127034 on Pharmacy: Rother Valley, on what basis the Government has determined that £370 million has been made in advance payments to support pharmacies; what assessment he has made of how those advanced payments have been spent; when he estimates those advanced payments will be repaid; what assessment he has made of the effect on community pharmacies of repaying those advanced payments; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 March 2021]: The latest data available from the NHS Business Services Authority show that there were 74 net pharmacy closures, reflecting openings and closures, from June 2017-18; 82 net closures in 2018-19; and 126 net closures in 2019-20. The data for the year 2020-21 is not yet available. We have not estimated the number of community pharmacies that might close in 2021-22 but we continue to monitor the market.

Discussions are ongoing with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) about additional funding for costs incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its assessment of COVID-19 costs incurred by the sector the Government will take account of the £370 million increased advance payments paid to community pharmacies. The COVID-19 support package for community pharmacy also included general COVID-19 business financial support, funding for Bank Holiday openings, social distancing measures and the medicine delivery service to shielded patients and free personal protective equipment, as well as non-monetary support including the removal of some administrative tasks, flexibility in opening hours and the delayed introduction of new services.

■ Pharmacy: Coronavirus**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[165636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of levels of funding provided to community pharmacy owners during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Discussions are ongoing with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee about additional funding for costs incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its ongoing assessment of COVID-19 costs incurred by the sector the Government will take account of the £370 million increased advance payments paid to community pharmacies.

The support package for community pharmacy also included general COVID-19 business support, funding for Bank Holiday openings, social distancing measures and the medicine delivery service to shielded patients, free personal protective equipment and non-monetary support including the removal of some administrative tasks, flexibility in opening hours and the delayed introduction of new services.

Thangam Debbonaire:[\[166480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that pharmacies are being supported to remain financially viable throughout the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Discussions are ongoing with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee about additional funding for costs incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its ongoing assessment of COVID-19 costs incurred by the sector the Government will take account of the £370 million increased advance payments paid to community pharmacies.

The support package for community pharmacy also included general COVID-19 business support, funding for Bank Holiday openings, social distancing measures and the medicine delivery service to shielded patients, free personal protective equipment and non-monetary support including the removal of some administrative tasks, flexibility in opening hours and the delayed introduction of new services.

Olivia Blake:[\[169109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support pharmacies while covid-19 restrictions are in place.

Olivia Blake:[\[169110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to ensure that pharmacies are not overly burdened in the future by the debts they have incurred during the period of covid-19 restrictions.

Olivia Blake:

[\[169111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the financial sustainability of pharmacies in the future.

Olivia Blake:

[\[169112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the request for the repayment of the £370 million allocated to community pharmacies during the covid-19 outbreak on the future financial sustainability of that sector.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 March 2021]: Discussions are ongoing with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee about additional funding for costs incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its ongoing assessment of COVID-19 costs incurred by the sector the Government will take account of the £370 million increased advance payments paid to community pharmacies.

The COVID-19 support package for community pharmacy also included general COVID-19 business support, funding for Bank Holiday openings, social distancing measures and the medicine delivery service to shielded patients, free personal protective equipment and non-monetary support including the removal of some administrative tasks, flexibility in opening hours and the delayed introduction of new services.

■ Pharmacy: Finance

Emma Hardy:

[\[169010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the financial position of community pharmacies; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of converting the £370 million of covid-19 emergency cashflow loans into grants.

Jo Churchill:

Discussions are ongoing with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee about additional funding for costs incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its ongoing assessment of COVID-19 costs incurred by the sector the Government will take account of the £370 million increased advance payments paid to community pharmacies.

The COVID-19 support package for community pharmacy also included general COVID-19 business support, funding for Bank Holiday openings, social distancing measures and the medicine delivery service to shielded patients, free personal protective equipment and non-monetary support including the removal of some administrative tasks, flexibility in opening hours and the delayed introduction of new services.

Julian Sturdy: [\[170629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of writing off the repayment of advance funding extended to community pharmacy in 2020 to maintain services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Julian Sturdy: [\[170630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of whether the performance of community pharmacy during the covid-19 outbreak necessitates the creation of a new national pharmacy contract.

Julian Sturdy: [\[170631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of current funding arrangements for community pharmacy.

Jo Churchill:

Discussions are ongoing with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) about additional funding for costs incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its assessment of COVID-19 costs incurred by the sector the Government will take account of the £370 million increased advance payments paid to community pharmacies

The support package for community pharmacy also included general COVID-19 business financial support, funding for Bank Holiday openings, social distancing measures and the medicine delivery service to shielded patients and free personal protective equipment, as well as non-monetary support, including the removal of some administrative tasks, flexibility in opening hours and the delayed introduction of new services. The Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework 2019-24 five-year deal was agreed with the PSNC in 2019. Negotiations on year three 2021/22 with the PSNC will begin shortly, which will take account of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on community pharmacy.

■ Phenylketonuria: Sapropterin

Daisy Cooper: [\[169047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make urgent representations to NICE to ensure that Sapropterin (Kuvan) can be made available for Phenylketonuria (a) on the basis of clinical need and (b) not restricted to people under the age of 18 years.

Daisy Cooper: [\[169048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that Sapropterin (Kuvan) may be prescribed in doses greater than 10mg in the event that there is an identified clinical need.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for providing evidence-based guidance for the National Health Service on whether medicines represent a clinical and cost-effective use of resources. NICE is currently developing recommendations for the NHS on the use of sapropterin for the treatment of phenylketonuria and it would not be appropriate for Ministers to intervene in the development of its guidance.

NICE published draft guidance on the use of sapropterin for consultation on 25 February 2021 which recommends its use for children under 18 up to a dose of 10mg/kg. NICE will carefully consider the comments received in developing its final recommendations. NICE expects to publish its final guidance on sapropterin in June 2021.

■ Postnatal Care: Mental Health Services**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[169878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that parents receive timely mental health and wellbeing support in the event that their baby has been admitted to a neonatal unit during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are taking steps to protect the mental health of parents during the perinatal period, including ensuring parents are able to visit and be involved in their child's care as much as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic. The NHS Long Term Plan includes new measures to improve safety, quality and continuity of care and a commitment for a further 24,000 women to be able to access specialist perinatal mental health care by 2023/24. This care will also be available from preconception to 24 months after birth, which will provide an extra year of support. Partners of women accessing specialist care will be able to access an assessment for their mental health and signposting to support as required.

■ Prostate Cancer: Abiraterone**Jim Shannon:**[\[170639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the decision to reject the use of the drug Abiraterone to tackle prostate cancer.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for providing evidence-based guidance for the National Health Service in England on whether medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of resources. NICE published technology appraisal guidance in 2016 that recommends abiraterone for some patients with prostate cancer and is currently appraising abiraterone for the treatment of newly diagnosed high risk metastatic hormone-naive prostate cancer. NICE issued draft guidance for consultation for this appraisal in

January 2021, which states that NICE is unable to recommend abiraterone as an effective use of NHS resources.

NICE will carefully consider the comments received in response to its latest draft guidance in developing its final recommendations. As NICE is an independent body it would not be appropriate for Ministers to intervene in the development of its recommendations.

■ Public Health: Finance

Steve Reed:

[168949]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2021 Question 135951 on Public Health: Finance, if he will publish an update on the timescale for the announcement of individual local authority public health grant allocations for 2021-22.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 March 2021]: Public health allocations to local authorities in England were published on 16 March 2021 and are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-grants-to-local-authorities-2021-to-2022>

■ Smoking

Mary Glendon:

[168916]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure adult smokers have access to (a) e-cigarettes and (b) other tools to help them quit smoking.

Mary Glendon:

[168919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether local stop-smoking services encourage to adult smokers to switch from smoking conventional cigarettes to e-cigarettes.

Mary Glendon:

[168921]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will work with the vaping industry in challenging misinformation that is deterring smokers from switching to less harmful alternatives.

Jo Churchill:

The Government continues to review the evidence of reduced risk products such as e-cigarettes, including their harms and usefulness as an aid to stop smoking. Although not risk free, current evidence suggests e-cigarettes are less harmful to health than smoking and can help some people quit.

Public Health England (PHE), through their stop smoking campaigns, provide information, advice and support on using e-cigarettes to help smokers quit. Smokers can also access local stop smoking services who provide a range of quitting methods

to suit the individual smoker's preferences and this may include support for smokers who wish to use e-cigarettes to quit smoking. The highest success rates in these services are seen among those combining expert advice with e-cigarettes.

In line with the Government's commitment to article 5.3 of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the Department only meets with vape trade organisations who are independent of the tobacco industry. The Department and PHE meet with the Independent British Vape Trade Association to discuss industry concerns and wider regulatory matters, including misinformation.

Mary Glendon:

[\[168917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government is on track to reach the smokefree 2030 target.

Jo Churchill:

This Government is committed to levelling up in society to ensure no communities get left behind. This is why we announced our bold ambition for England to be Smokefree by 2030 because we want to continue to address the harms from smoking. As part of this commitment, we have announced the publication of a new Tobacco Control Plan which will set out our roadmap to achieving this challenging ambition. The Plan is due to be published in Summer 2021.

■ **Smoking: Poverty**

Mary Glendon:

[\[168918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps local stop-smoking services are taking to reduce smoking rates amongst the poorest in society where smoking prevalence is highest.

Jo Churchill:

Local authorities are responsible for providing stop smoking services in their communities and are best placed to identify those in need of support and how to deliver an effective service. Public Health England provides analytical toolkits, assessments and guidance to help local authorities.

■ **Smoking: Public Places**

Mary Glendon:

[\[168920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to issue guidance on differentiating between smoking and vaping in (a) the workplace and (b) other public places to help support smokers who are transitioning away from cigarettes from risk of relapse.

Jo Churchill:

It is for individual organisations and businesses to implement their own policies on e-cigarette use in the workplace. Public Health England has published guidance to support organisations in developing policies around vaping in workplaces and public places and recommend such policies to be evidence-based. The guidance is

available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-e-cigarettes-in-public-places-and-workplaces>

■ Tobacco: Regulation

Mary Glendon: [168915]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his Department's policy to take an evidence-based approach to the upcoming Tobacco and Related Product Regulations review.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is conducting a Post Implementation Review of both the Standardised Packaging of Tobacco Products Regulations 2015 and the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 to assess if the regulations have met their objectives. As part of this review a public consultation is being conducted, which was open until 19 March 2021. The responses, alongside other available evidence, will be fully analysed and used to inform the Post Implementation Review.

■ Tourette's Syndrome: Research

Carolyn Harris: [169895]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of funding for support and research into Tourette's Syndrome.

Edward Argar:

The Department, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), has funded or supported various studies into Tourette's syndrome. Since 2018, £2.1 million has been invested into research on Tourette's syndrome through the NIHR's Research Programmes. This includes a study on deep brain stimulation in people with Tourette's syndrome and a digital behavioural intervention for tics in children and adolescents.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum

Holly Lynch: [171652]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims have been deemed inadmissible since the most recent Immigration Rule changes came into effect.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on the number of asylum applications are published in Table Asy_D01 and data on the number and type of asylum initial decisions are published in table Asy_D02 of the Asylum and Resettlement datasets.

Figures on the number of asylum application decisions made in the first quarter of 2021 are due to be published on 27 May 2021. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'. We are working to bring inadmissibility decisions in line with current reporting and hope to publish that information in the same timeframe.

■ Asylum: Wakefield

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[169076]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2021 to Question 163327, what the proportion of asylum seekers housed in the Wakefield constituency was in comparison to the population of the local authority as recorded in the 2011 census.

Kevin Foster:

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>

Data is published on a quarterly basis, with the latest information published 25 February 2021. The next quarterly figures are due to be released in May 2021.

■ Borders: France

Helen Hayes:

[171666]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the administrative agreement concluded between herself and Mr Gérard Darmanin on 28 November 2020, which further strengthened the system providing for additional patrols and technological resources at the France-UK border and mobilised additional French mobile police and gendarmes from December 2020.

Helen Hayes:

[171667]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the breakdown in the funding between the four areas concluded as part of the new set of measures with France under an administrative agreement on 28 November 2020 for (a) the deployment of police and Gendarmes reservists, (b) the purchase of technical equipment, (c) contributions to the operation of Asylum Reception Centres and (d) improvements to security infrastructure at ports in Northern and Western France.

Chris Philp:

In November the UK and France agreed a package of £28.1m to support a range of activity including continued deployment of French reservists from the Gendarmerie and Police Nationale, technical equipment to improve detections of crossings; suitable alternative accommodation for migrants away from the immediate port and beach areas; and border security infrastructure and capabilities at priority ports in France.

The UK-France joint statement can be found on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website. We are not intending to publish detailed information on the package agreed with the French Government, as it relates to sensitive operational activity.

■ British Nationality: Fees and Charges

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[171678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many eligible (a) adults, (b) children in Wales have applied unsuccessfully for UK citizenship as a result of being unable to pay the non-administrative costs of the citizenship fee since 2010.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office publishes data on citizenship applications and grants at:

www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-statistics-data-tables-year-ending-june-2020#citizenship

An incomplete payment is just one of a number of reasons which could lead to an application being rejected and included under the ‘*rejected applications*’ heading in Table 4.

The Home Office does not have accessible management information on applications rejected in Wales specifically, as a result of being unable to pay the non-administrative costs of citizenship fees. Fees are set according to section 68 of the Immigration Act 2014 and are set within parameters agreed by Parliament.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[171679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of effect of the removal of all non-administrative costs from the child citizenship fee on her ability to discharge her duty under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office keeps all fees under review.

The Home Office has acknowledged the judgment given in the recent court case on child registration fees, where the Court of Appeal upheld the High Court’s decision the Home Office had not demonstrated compliance with its duties under Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 in setting the child registration fee

A Section 55 assessment of the child registration fee is currently being carried out.

■ Cybercrime

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[171548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Home Department, with reference to the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, published in March 2021, how her Department plans to strengthen the UK’s criminal justice response to cyber attacks.

Kevin Foster:

The Integrated Review is a comprehensive articulation of the UK's national security and international policy. It outlines three fundamental national interests that bind together the citizens of the UK – sovereignty, security and prosperity – alongside our values of democracy and a commitment to universal human rights, the rule of law, freedom of speech and faith, and equality.

Cyberspace is increasingly fundamental to the UK's security, prosperity and sovereignty.

The existing National Cyber Security Strategy sets out ambitious policies to protect the UK in cyberspace, address cyber attacks and protect critical national infrastructure. This has been managed through the National Cyber Security Programme (NCSP) and has been supported by £1.9billion of investment.

As detailed in the Integrated Review, work is well underway to develop a new cyber strategy. Further details on this, including how we plan to strengthen the UK's criminal justice response to cyber attacks, will be set out in the new National Cyber Strategy later this year.

■ Detention Centres: Females**Holly Lynch:**[\[169892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2021 to Question 162658, what the current operational capacity is of the units for women at (a) Colnbrook, (b) Dungavel and (c) Yarl's Wood immigration removal centres.

Holly Lynch:[\[169893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2021 to Question 162658, on Detention Centres: Females, whether her Department has plans to undertake an equality impact assessment on the practice of detaining women at immigration removal centres that predominantly hold men.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has acquired the former Hassockfield Secure Training Centre in County Durham and will open it as an immigration removal centre (IRC) for around 80 women by the autumn. We plan to supplement the new Hassockfield IRC by continuing to provide some detention capacity for women at Colnbrook, Dungavel and Yarl's Wood IRCs.

The operational capacity for women under normal operating conditions is 18 at Colnbrook IRC, 12 at Dungavel IRC and 304 at Yarl's Wood IRC. Yarl's Wood has additional capacity of 68 for adult families more than half of whom could be women.

An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for the change to predominantly male accommodation at Yarl's Wood IRC.

■ Home Office: Conflict of Interests**Holly Lynch:** [\[171654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the guidance on what her Department's officials are required to declare in terms of (a) additional earnings, (b) gifts and (c) hospitality provided to them by law firms.

Kevin Foster:

Per the Civil Service Code, Civil Servants must not accept gifts or hospitality or receive other benefits from anyone which might reasonably be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-code/the-civil-service-code>

The Home Office policy on Gifts and Hospitality is in line with Cabinet Office guidance.

■ Housing: Sales**Gareth Thomas:** [\[168822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many investigations there have been into the fraudulent sale of (a) houses and (b) powers where a power of attorney has been used in each police force area; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects information on the number of fraud offences that the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau refer to police forces for investigation but breakdowns specifically for those relating to fraudulent sales of houses are not separately identifiable. This data is published annually as part of the Home Office's 'Crime Outcomes in England and Wales' publication. The latest available data for year ending March 2020 can be found be here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-statistics>

Related data on investigations where the use of a power of attorney has been involved is not held centrally.

■ Immigration: Married People**Stephen Farry:** [\[169107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the fiscal merits of minimum income requirements for spouse visas with regard to demand for public services and welfare systems.

Kevin Foster:

The minimum income requirement was set, following advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee, at £18,600 for sponsoring a partner, rising to £22,400 for also sponsoring a non-qualifying child and an additional £2,400 for each further

such child. This reflects the level of income at which a British family or a family settled in the UK generally ceases to be able to access income-related benefits.

The income requirement and the qualifying period over which the requirement must be met ensure family migrants are supported at a reasonable level without reliance on public funds.

The number of partner applications granted permission to come to the UK has reduced since the introduction of the minimum income requirement in 2012, from 36,290 in 2011 to 30,669 in 2019/20, which means a reduction in demand for public services and welfare systems and savings for the taxpayer.

We continue to keep the family Immigration Rules under review and make adjustments should they prove to be necessary. Our overall assessment is the Rules, including the minimum income requirement, are having the right impact by helping to ensure public confidence migration to the UK is not based on access to public services paid for by UK taxpayers.

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■ **Mick Cain**

Holly Lynch:

[\[171653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the report into Home Office official Mick Cain's conduct undertaken by her Department's anti-fraud and criminal investigations unit in 2016.

Kit Malthouse:

We expect the highest levels of professional conduct from our civil servants, and, in 2016, the Department acted decisively in this case. You will be aware the Home Office has obligations under data protection legislation and in law generally, and I regret disclosing information relating to an individual would run contrary to those principals.

■ **Police: Coronavirus**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[169080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to encourage police officers to take-up their covid-19 vaccinations when eligible.

Kit Malthouse:

There are no plans to make the Covid-19 vaccine compulsory. The decision to do so is a personal one for each of us, including police officers. But we would encourage anyone offered a vaccine to accept it.

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

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice for Phase 2 of the vaccination programme sets out that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age. This is because age is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations, and because the speed of delivery is crucial, prioritising people by age enables us to operationally vaccinate more people, providing them with protection from Covid-19.

■ Police: Recruitment

Catherine West:

[\[171683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support she is making available to police forces in England to increase the recruitment of (a) women (b) BAME officers.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is clear that the police uplift is a once in a generation opportunity to increase the diversity of police officers in England and Wales. This includes increasing the proportion of female police officers and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic officers.

The Home Secretary has been clear that the Uplift is a once in a generation opportunity to increase police diversity and chaired a detailed discussion with senior policing partners the National Policing Board on 3 March. Both the Home Secretary, and most recently the Minister for Policing and Crime have written to Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables urging all forces take the opportunity presented by the Uplift to increase police diversity.

We are working hard to deliver the diverse police workforce that our communities need and through the Police Uplift Programme we are coordinating efforts between Government and policing to not only attract more diverse candidates into policing, but to ensure it's a career where all recruits can thrive.

Sharing best practice, engagement with staff associations, upskilling recruitment teams and enhanced data capture are just some of the efforts being made to support all forces to improve police diversity through Programme.

■ Police: West Yorkshire

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[169083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to increase the number of police officers recruited in (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire.

Kit Malthouse:

We are increasing the number of police officers in England and Wales by 20,000 by the end of March 2023.

West Yorkshire Police was allocated 256 additional officers in the first year of the police uplift which covers the period to the end of March 2021. In 2020/21 the force received funding of £485m. As at 31 December 2020, West Yorkshire Police had recruited 390 additional officers.

As announced in the Police Settlement 2021/22, West Yorkshire Police has been allocated 251 additional officers for year two of the Police Uplift Programme. West Yorkshire Police will receive funding of up to £512.3m in 2021/22, an increase of up to £27.3m since 2020/21.

The deployment of these officers is an operational decision for the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police.

■ Slavery

Paul Maynard:

[\[168874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her policy is on the provision of Government support to victims of modern slavery after a decision has been made on their status.

Victoria Atkins:

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the process by which the UK identifies and supports victims of modern slavery, with support being delivered through the specialist Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) in England and Wales, the asylum system, local authorities and other mainstream services.

The MSVCC, which went live on 4 January 2021, builds on the wide-ranging support provided through the previous Victim Care Contract to deliver a service that is needs-based and better aligned to the requirements of individual victims. It provides accommodation, financial support payments, translation and interpretation, transport and access to a support worker for those who are identified as a potential victim, having received a positive Reasonable Grounds decision from the Single Competent Authority.

Support continues until the individual receives a Conclusive Grounds (CG) decision. If a victim receives a positive CG decision, they will receive a minimum of 45 calendar days of 'move on' support. The Recovery Needs Assessment (RNA) takes place shortly after a positive CG decision to ensure that ongoing support after this period is tailored to the individual recovery needs of the confirmed victim. The RNA informs a tailored move-on plan, with the aim of establishing longer-term stability by helping victims to transition out of MSVCC support and back into a community, as appropriate. The MSVCC has also introduced a number of new services, including the 'reach-in' service, which is available to all confirmed victims to help support a smooth and sustainable transition after exit from MSVCC support.

If an individual receives a negative CG decision, they will receive nine working days of move-on support from date of receipt of the decision by the individual or the party acting on their behalf. An extension request may be made where an individual has

received a negative decision and needs an additional period to become self-supporting or to transition into mainstream support.

In addition to this, the Government recognises the particular vulnerabilities of child victims of modern slavery, including trafficking.

Local authorities are responsible for the safeguarding and promotion of welfare of all children in their area, co-operating closely with police and other statutory agencies to offer child victims of modern slavery required protection and support. In addition, through Section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the Government provides [Independent Child Trafficking Guardians](#) (ICTGs), an independent source of advice and support for all potentially trafficked children, irrespective of nationality. ICTGs are currently available in one third of local authorities in England and Wales. We are now progressing the national rollout of ICTGs as part of the NRM Transformation Programme.

■ Youth Mobility Scheme: EU Countries

Caroline Nokes: [\[168886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2021 to Question 162580 on Youth Mobility Scheme, when she plans to commence formal discussions with the EU collectively or any EU member state individually on a reciprocal youth mobility scheme.

Caroline Nokes: [\[168887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2021 to Question 162580 on Youth Mobility Scheme, whether she plans to include au pairs in any future Youth Mobility Scheme with the EU or individual EU Member States.

Caroline Nokes: [\[168888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2021 to Question 162580 on Youth Mobility Scheme, how many visas her Department plans to include in any reciprocal Youth Mobility Scheme (a) with the EU and (b) with individual EU Member States.

Kevin Foster:

We have indicated our intention to continue operating and further expanding our youth mobility arrangements both to countries within the EU and beyond.

Any agreement must be reciprocal hence there is no timeframe for when formal discussions will take place as this involves other nations. The specific terms of each scheme, including the numbers of places available under it, will be confirmed with the relevant parties during such negotiations.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Buildings: Fire Prevention****Neil Coyle:**[\[171625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on zero-rating VAT on fire safety works for anyone retrospectively required to undertake fire safety works on buildings that met regulations when completed.

Christopher Pincher:

Hundreds of thousands of leaseholders will be protected from the cost of replacing unsafe cladding on their homes as part of the Government's five-point plan to provide reassurance to homeowners and build confidence in the housing market.

An additional £3.5 billion in funding to remediate unsafe cladding will be provided, bringing the total Government investment in building safety to an unprecedented £5.1 billion. Funding will be targeted at high-rise residential buildings in line with longstanding independent expert advice and evidence on risk.

Lower-rise buildings between 11 and 18 metres, with a lower risk to safety, will gain new protection from the costs of cladding removal through a long-term, low interest, Government backed financing scheme. No leaseholder in this scheme will ever pay more than £50 a month towards the removal of unsafe cladding. To ensure the largest property developers pay their fair share, we are also introducing a developer levy and a new tax. Together we anticipate that will raise at least £2 billion over a decade.

I can confirm there have been no discussions to date on the particular issue raised. Problems with cladding and other fire safety defects are typically as a result of a failure to comply with building regulations. Government funding does not absolve building owners of their responsibility to ensure their buildings are safe. They should consider all routes to meet costs, protecting leaseholders where they can – for example through warranties and recovering costs from contractors for incorrect or poor work.

■ Business Premises: Landlord and Tenant**Bambos Charalambous:**[\[169937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish further guidance to the voluntary Code of Practice for the commercial property sector to support negotiations between landlords and tenants.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government announced that it would provide the commercial property sector with further guidance to facilitate negotiations between tenants and landlords on the issue of accumulated rent debts building upon the principles of the Code of Practice published in June last year. This is in addition to a forthcoming call for evidence to monitor progress on rent negotiations and set out further intervention Government

could take if these do not progress. Both the further guidance and the call for evidence will be published shortly.

■ Care Homes: Older People

Mike Amesbury:

[\[169031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of defining and recognising the housing-with-care model within the planning system.

Eddie Hughes:

Housing-with-care has a vital role in enabling older people to live independently, with the necessary care and support available if required.

As part of our ongoing work on planning reform, we hosted a series of roundtables during the formal consultation period for the White Paper, which included representatives from the retirement development sector. We will continue to engage with a range of stakeholders as we further develop our proposals.

Government also recently consulted on raising the accessibility standards of new homes, recognising the importance of suitable homes for older and disabled people. We are currently considering responses and will publish a Government response.

We are continuing to work closely with the sector and across Government to look at how we can further support its growth. Ministers have regular meetings with representatives of the older people's housing-with-care sector and value their insight.

■ Community Development

Naz Shah:

[\[171635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Government's Integration Area Programme from the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper ended; what conclusions were made from that programme; and what plans his Department has to take forward initiatives from that programme.

Naz Shah:

[\[171636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking in response to the consultation on the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper.

Eddie Hughes:

For some people, places and communities, the benefits and opportunities of our society are not felt equally. No community should suffer poorer outcomes simply because of the school they went to, the faith they hold, or the area that they live in. That is why the Government published the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper in 2018 and followed this up with a cross-Government Action Plan in 2019. Since then, significant progress has been made, including providing over 18,000 learner places through new English Language programmes, delivering a new Integration Action Plan covering all relevant Whitehall departments, and setting up an

innovative new Integration Area Programme, to identify what works and share this learning nationally

This progress continues today. For example, Government continues to work with the first wave of Integration Areas, as they deliver interventions and build stronger communities and places in Blackburn with Darwen, Waltham Forest, Peterborough, Walsall and Bradford. An evaluation of the Integration Area Programme is scheduled to be published later this year, which will provide further evidence on the impact of this work and help to inform future Government integration policy and programmes. This Government is proud to continue to ensure that local voices are heard, valued and produce change - so that no community is left behind and that we strengthen work to recognise and value those common themes which bind us all together - not least as we begin to vital process of helping people, places and communities across the whole of the United Kingdom to build back better from the coronavirus pandemic.

■ Council Tax

Duncan Baker:

[\[171733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the (a) cash and (b) percentage change was in the Band D precept for the Greater London Authority in (i) real and (ii) cash terms between (A) 2009-10 and 2016-17 and (B) 2017-18 and 2020-21.

Eddie Hughes:

The Greater London Authority precept charged in the 32 London boroughs decreased by £33.82 (10.9%) between 2009-10 and 2016-17; a real terms (CPI) decrease of £71.81 (23.2%). Between 2017-18 and 2020-21, it increased by £52.05 (18.6%); a real terms (CPI) increase of £31.10 (13.2%).

■ First Time Buyers

Darren Jones:

[\[169001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress he has made on the First Homes scheme and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

First Homes, the Government's new home ownership initiative, will provide a sustained and ongoing supply of homes sold to first-time buyers and key workers with a discount of at least 30% below market value. In some areas, the discount could be as high as 50%. Crucially, the discount will be passed on each time the property is sold, ensuring local areas continue to benefit for generation to come.

The Government has published two consultations regarding the implementation of First Homes. The first of these was published on 7 February 2020 and closed on 1 May that year, we responded to that consultation on 6 August 2020.

On that same day we published the second consultation, as part of the wider document 'Changes to the current planning system'. This consultation was technical in nature, exploring specific planning system changes required to implement First

Homes. This consultation closed on 1 October and we have been analysing responses. We hope to be able to publish our response and outline next steps very soon.

■ **Free Zones: North East**

Bridget Phillipson: [\[171582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the English Freeports selection decision, whether any additional information was (a) sought, or (b) received from the (i) Teesside or (ii) North East Freeport bid during the assessment process.

Eddie Hughes:

All bidders were contacted to provide contact details for the operators of their proposed customs sites. No other information that was assessed as part of the selection process for the English Freeports competition was received from, or sought for, the Teesside or North East Freeport bids following the competition deadline of 12 noon 5 February 2021.

■ **Free Zones: Tees Valley**

Bridget Phillipson: [\[171580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Government's policy paper, entitled English Freeports selection decision-making note, updated 17 March 2021, which states that Teesside bid's stronger alignment with government policy (in particular the Net Zero agenda and the Prime Minister's recently published 10 Point Plan) resulted in a decision to select that as the Freeport bid within the region, which aspects of that bid's alignment with Government policy formed part of the decision-making process; and how that alignment was quantified.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[171581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Government's policy paper, entitled English Freeports selection decision-making note, updated on 17 March 2021, how alignment with Government policy was (a) assessed and (b) quantified.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[171583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the English Freeports selection decision note, published 17 March, whether he will publish the criteria and process used to evaluate which Freeport bids had greater alignment with Government policy.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[171584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the English Freeports selection decision-making note, updated 17 March 2021, which aspects of the Teesside Freeport bid's alignment with Government policy, in

respect of (i) the Net Zero agenda and (ii) the Prime Minister's recently published 10 Point Plan, (a) formed part of the decision-making process, and (b) how that alignment was quantified; and whether he will make a statement.

Eddie Hughes:

The Freeports Bidding Prospectus set out a fair, open and transparent assessment process to select Freeport locations in England, informed by relevant experts across Government to ensure objective and robust assessment. The English Freeport Selection Decision-Making Note clearly outlines how decisions on the successful freeport locations, announced at Budget, were made. Unsuccessful bidders were offered feedback calls with officials to discuss the assessment of bids in more depth.

■ **Future High Streets Fund and Towns Fund: County Durham**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[171747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which towns in County Durham did Durham County Council submit bids for to the (a) High Streets Fund and (b) Towns Fund.

Eddie Hughes:

Durham County Council submitted an Expression of Interest to the Future High Streets Fund for four towns in County Durham. These towns were Chester Le Street, Bishop Auckland, Seaham and Spennymoor. Bishop Auckland was successful at this stage, and on 26 December 2020 we announced it had successfully secured £19.8 million from the fund.

Bishop Auckland was also invited to submit proposals to secure a Town Deal as part of the £3.6 billion Towns Fund. Bishop Auckland submitted its Town Investment Plan in January 2021 and that plan is currently being assessed by officials.

■ **Hate Crime**

Naz Shah:

[\[171637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding his Department has provided to tackle (a) racism, (b) anti-semitism, (c) Islamophobia and (d) other types of hate crime and prejudices since 2015.

Eddie Hughes:

All forms of hate crime are completely unacceptable. The Government takes hate crime very seriously which is why we are clear that victims should be supported and the individuals who carry out hateful attacks must be brought to justice. This Department has, since 2015, supplied over £8,130,000 to combat all forms of hate crime and prejudices.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Hilary Benn: [171502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of residential buildings in England with unsafe cladding which are unable to get insurance, what steps he is taking to ensure that cover is provided to those buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

This information is not currently held in a data set by the Department.

The Department is aware that obtaining building insurance for some multi storey, multi occupied buildings can be challenging and are working to better understand the scale, scope and drivers of the issue as well as any potential resolutions.

■ Local Government Finance

Steve Reed: [171615]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish all local authority budgets set for the 2021-22 financial year.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department is currently collecting data on local authorities' budgets for the 2021/22 financial year. This information is scheduled to be published as usual in June at www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing and www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-capital-expenditure-receipts-and-financing.

■ Local Government: Meetings

Dr Dan Poulter: [171562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department will publish further clear guidance to local councils about holding meetings virtually after the 6th May 2021 whilst national covid-19 restrictions are in place.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government keeps all policy under review. To extend the facility for all local authorities to continue to meet remotely or in hybrid form after 7 May 2021 would require primary legislation. We have received representations from local authorities and sector representative organisations making the case for the continuation of remote meetings beyond 7 May 2021 and we are carefully considering next steps in this area.

■ Planning

Steve Reed: [171616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of reduced central Government

grants to local authorities since 2010 on the resources and capacity of planning departments.

Eddie Hughes:

We want to ensure that local authority planning departments are well resourced and that planning professionals have the right skills to make creative decisions and take forward our ambitious proposals for planning reform. Since 2010 we have provided direct grant support to local authorities and Neighbourhood Planning Groups to help them engage their communities in Neighbourhood Planning to shape and influence the places in which they live and work.

The Planning White Paper states that we will explore options to introduce a new planning fee structure to ensure that local planning authorities are properly resourced to improve the speed and quality of their decisions. We will also develop a comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the planning sector to support the implementation of our reforms.

■ **Planning: Crime Prevention**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[168881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will take steps to amend planning guidance so that construction should address the natural surveillance concept in urban environments.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government recognises the importance of planning and design in creating the right conditions for people to feel safe and secure. The National Planning Policy Framework clarifies that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve places which are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas. The National Design Guide and draft National Model Design Code refer to the recommendations set out in Secured by Design, to ensure new developments create safe environments, including the need to ensure natural surveillance. The Government is currently seeking views on the draft National Model Design Code by 27 March.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Standards**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[169015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department is providing to local authorities to help them ensure that their social housing stock meets the decent homes standard.

Eddie Hughes:

The Decent Homes Standard has driven improvements to the quality of social housing. Between 2011 and 2016 Government provided a total of £1.76 billion to 45

councils across England to tackle the backlog of non-decent homes, making over 158,000 homes decent.

Local Authority Housing Statistics show that the proportion of non-decent local authority dwellings was 5% as of 31 March 2020. The English Housing Survey shows that, in 2019, 12% of social rented homes overall (504,000) were considered non-decent, down from 20% (759,000) in 2010. This is lower than the proportion of private rented (23%) and owner occupied (16%) homes.

In the Social Housing White Paper, we committed to reviewing the Decent Homes Standard. The review will consider whether the standard needs to be updated to ensure it is delivering what is needed for safety and decency now, including on energy efficiency and green spaces.

■ Towns Fund

Steve Reed:

[\[171614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how the individual allocations of funding to Town Deals were calculated.

Eddie Hughes:

In 2019, we invited 101 places to develop proposals for Town Deals. Towns submit these proposals in a Town Investment Plan. Those plans are robustly assessed against a range of criteria, with value for money a central consideration. The funding allocation is based on quality of the Town Investment Plan and the projects it contains. Full details of our assessment are set out in the [Towns Fund Further Guidance](#).

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Arms Trade: Avant Garde Maritime Services

Gareth Thomas:

[\[171480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many arms export licences were issued to Avant Garde Maritime Services since January 2013; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

No such licences have been issued.

■ Department for International Trade: Social Media

Darren Jones:

[\[167279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many officials in (a) his private office and (b) the wider Department have been allocated to the production and promotion of online content for use on social media in (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

Greg Hands:

There are no officials in my Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade's Private Office whose dedicated role is the production and promotion of online content for use on social media.

In the UK, the number of officials in the Department whose roles are dedicated to the production and promotion of online content for use on social media is 6 full-time employees. Other officials in the UK and overseas may contribute content as required.

This has been at a consistent level across the years indicated at (a), (b) and (c).

In UK Export Finance, the number of full-time equivalent members of staff working on production and promotion of content for social media in those three years was (a) 2018-19 1.5 FTE; (b) 2019-20 1.5 FTE; and (c) 2020-21, 1.0 FTE. Other officials contribute to the production and promotion as required.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[171559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what support she has provided to countries in the Global South that have seen their supply chains adversely affected by the covid-19 pandemic.

Greg Hands:

HM Government is working hard to keep supply chains open to ensure essential goods and services reach consumers and vulnerable livelihoods are protected. Last year, HM Government launched the Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility, which has helped over 200,000 vulnerable people working in the agriculture and garments sectors in developing countries to recover from, and remain resilient to, the impacts of Covid-19.

Moreover, we are providing opportunities for exporters from developing countries through our Economic Partnership Agreements and our Generalised Scheme of Preferences.

■ Security and Policing 2021**Zarah Sultana:**[\[169970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will list the countries and territories (a) invited by UK Defence and Security Exports to attend Security and Policing 2021 and (b) that attended Security and Policing 2020.

Graham Stuart:

The countries, territories and organisations invited to attend Security and Policing 2021 are listed below. Those annotated with a * are the countries, territories and organisations that attended.

Algeria *

Argentina
Australia *
Austria *
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Belgium *
Brazil
Bulgaria *
Canada *
Croatia *
Czech Republic *
Denmark *
Egypt *
Finland *
France
Germany
Ghana *
Greece *
Hungary *
India *
Indonesia
Iraq
Italy *
Japan *
Kenya *
Latvia *
Lithuania
Luxembourg *
Malaysia *
Mexico
Morocco *
NATO

Netherlands *

New Zealand *

Nigeria *

Norway *

Oman *

Pakistan *

Peru *

Poland *

Portugal *

Qatar

Romania *

Saudi Arabia *

Singapore *

South Africa *

South Korea *

Sweden *

Switzerland *

Taiwan *

Thailand

Trinidad & Tobago

Turkey

Ukraine *

UN *

USA *

Vietnam *

The list of countries, territories and organisations that attended Security and Policing 2020 were:

Australia

Belgium

Botswana

Brazil

Bulgaria

Canada

Colombia
Czech Republic
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Italy
Japan
Luxembourg
Morocco
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Peru
Poland
Portugal
Qatar
Romania
Saudi Arabia
Slovakia
South Africa
Spain
Trinidad & Tobago
Turkey
UAE

Ukraine

United Nations (UN)

United States

Uzbekistan

The full list of countries, territories and organisations invited and those that attended Security and Policing 2020 can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/security-and-policing-2020>

JUSTICE

■ Animal Welfare: Prosecutions

Elliot Colburn:

[169058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) prosecutions for animal cruelty and (b) the number of people found guilty of those offences in each year from 2005 to 2019; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice holds data on prosecutions and outcomes for offences regarding animal cruelty, in England and Wales, up to the year ending December 2019, available in the 'Outcomes by offence' data tool, here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938568/outcomes-by-offence-tool-2019.xlsx

This tool includes data from the last 10 years; figures for 2005 to 2019 can be found in the table attached.

The following are the offences that were considered:

- 108a Animal Cruelty under sections 4-8 under Animal Welfare Act 2006
- 108b Other Cruelty to animal offences.

■ Offenders: Domestic Abuse

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[169045]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to support survivors of domestic abuse who commit offences as a result of trauma from their past abuse.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recognises the ongoing impact that trauma caused by past domestic abuse can have, and the importance of supporting victims who commit offences as a result of their experiences. The Government remains committed to delivering its Female Offender Strategy, published in June 2018, and which makes clear that a different approach is likely to be more effective in addressing the needs of

female offenders and women at risk of entering the criminal justice system. £7 million has been invested since publication of the Strategy, which is sustaining and enhancing current women's services, filling gaps in provision, and providing properties for new women's centres.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Government has also committed unprecedented funding to support all victims, including £40m announced by the Ministry of Justice on 1 February for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence and a further £11m announced on 15 March to recruit additional Independent Sexual Violence and Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors over the next two years.

This year, we will publish two new strategies that will build on our landmark Domestic Abuse Bill, on violence against women and girls and on domestic abuse, which will take further our drive for a step-change in the response to these crimes.

■ Powers of Attorney: Complaints

Gareth Thomas:

[\[168820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many complaints his Department has received on the use, including fraudulent use, of powers of attorney in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

The OPG does not have the data available to answer the specific question. Below is the number of overall safeguarding referrals received by OPG in the last five years, along with the number of those referrals that were accepted for investigation but these cover referrals in relation to both LPAs and Deputyship cases

YEAR	SAFEGUARDING REFERRALS	ACCEPTED FOR INVESTIGATION
2015-16	2,681	876
2016-17	5,327	1,266
2017-18	5,245	1,886
2018-19	6,740	2,883
2019-20	7,118	2,810
2020-21	6,476	1,893

The rise in safeguarding referrals and investigations reflect the increase in LPAs and deputyships being registered each year – but the percentage of investigations as a total remains low (less than 1% of the number of registered LPAs and deputyships result in investigations).

In addition to the above, OPG have received 9 concerns related to potential fraud involving LPAs so far in 2020-21. OPG record a case as potential fraud if either the donor didn't sign the LPA forms and/or the attorneys are not known to the donor.

Most of the concerns OPG receive involve financial misappropriation, however OPG also receive concerns where it's claimed the donor signed the form but didn't understand what they were signing.

The OPG does not have the data available to answer the specific question. Below is the number of overall safeguarding referrals received by OPG in the last five years, along with the number of those referrals that were accepted for investigation but these cover referrals in relation to both LPAs and Deputyship cases

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Gareth Thomas:

[168824]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many complaints he has received on powers of attorney being improperly agreed by solicitors; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

OPG is the registering authority for LPAs and has a statutory duty to maintain a register of Powers of Attorney and Deputyship orders.

OPG does not, however, record whether a solicitor was involved in the creation of the LPA so cannot provide the data requested.

■ Powers of Attorney: Prosecutions

Gareth Thomas:

[168821]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions there have been for misuse of powers of attorney in the most recent period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

The number of prosecutions involving misuse of powers of attorney is not centrally held in the court proceedings database as this specific offence is not separately identified in legislation. Identifying this offence separately would require a manual search of court records, incurring disproportionate costs.

Published figures do provide the number of prosecutions for the following offences that may include misuse of powers of attorney amongst other offences:

- Committing fraud by dishonestly abusing one's position
- Ill-treatment or neglect of a person lacking capacity by anyone responsible for that person's care

The number of prosecutions can be found by searching the above offences in the 'detailed offence' filter of the following data tool:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx

■ Prisoners' Release: Females

Andrew Gwynne:

[171543]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the level of support for women leaving prison.

Alex Chalk:

We are committed to doing all we can to address the issues around female offending. It is vital that we do so to better protect the public and deliver more effective rehabilitation. This includes supporting women when they are leaving prison.

In June 2018, the Government published the Female Offender Strategy. This set out a programme of work to improve outcomes for female offenders and make society safer by tackling the underlying causes of offending and reoffending. We have begun work on delivering the first of five Residential Women's centres, a key commitment in our Strategy. These will provide a robust community alternative for women who would otherwise receive a short custodial sentence, offering safe residential accommodation and holistic support to address the often-complex needs that underlie their offending behaviour.

The Concordat on Women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System was a commitment in the Female Offender Strategy and was published on 23 January 2021. The Concordat contains an action plan that the signatory Government

departments have agreed to deliver to work together more closely at a national level to identify and respond to the often multiple and complex needs of women. The Concordat strongly promotes the idea of and need for greater collaboration at local levels, including through the adoption of whole system approaches.

We are working across Government with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Welsh Government and Other Government Departments, to address the barriers offenders face in securing suitable accommodation.

We are investing more than £20m in supporting prison leavers at risk of homelessness into temporary accommodation. Individuals released from prison will be provided up to 12 weeks of temporary accommodation and will be supported into long-term settled accommodation before the end of that 12-week period. Initially launching in five national probation regions, the service will support around 3,000 offenders in its first year and will be commencing in Summer. It will be in operation during the next financial year 2021-22, with a view to scaling up and rolling out nationally.

The service will take account of the needs of women, including those with complex needs and accommodation provision will be dedicated to single gender usage as required. Community Offender Managers, working together with local partners, will be responsible for ensuring that vulnerable female prison leavers with complex needs receive appropriate support and are provided with housing beyond the 12 weeks emergency accommodation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh:

[171658]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what the timeframe is for (a) consideration of the (i) membership and (ii) terms of the Fiscal Council and (b) the establishment of that council.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Independent Fiscal Council is a key part of the reforms committed to in the New Decade, New Approach agreement. I am pleased with the progress that the Executive has made in establishing the Fiscal Council and delighted by the appointment of Robert Chote as Chair of the Council alongside the other members.

The NIO and the Treasury have reviewed the draft Terms of Reference for the Independent Fiscal Council and made a number of recommendations to the NI Finance Minister.

I hope these revisions can be agreed quickly and that the Fiscal Council can be established as soon as possible so that it can begin, between UKG and NIE, its important work in reviewing the sustainability of the Executives finances.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Official Engagements**Louise Haigh:** [\[171659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will provide details of his engagements on 16 March 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regularly undertakes engagements in line with his ministerial portfolio. On 16 March, he attended Cabinet alongside the Prime Minister and ministerial colleagues. Later that day, he conducted meetings with various stakeholders on a range of matters relating to departmental business.

■ Victims' Payment Scheme: Northern Ireland**Louise Haigh:** [\[171657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he will next plans to meet with the Northern Ireland Executive to discuss a resolution on victims payments.

Mr Robin Walker:

I have made clear the high priority on which I place having the Troubles Permanent Disablement Scheme open and receiving applications as soon as possible, so that people can begin to receive the payments to which they are morally and legally entitled as soon as possible.

This is a devolved scheme which the Executive is required to fund from the resources available to it through the block grant and the Executive's own revenue. However, following engagement with Executive Ministers and to enable them to progress the scheme without further delay, I want to ensure that budget management issues should not stand in the way of progress. I have therefore taken the exceptional approach of offering access to NDNA funds that will help the Executive manage the cost of the Scheme in the early years when the annual costs are expected to be greatest, significantly reducing the costs in any year where costs exceed £60m.

This flexibility means there is nothing now standing in the way of the Executive delivering the scheme as set out in legislation. I will continue to engage with Executive Ministers to see this Scheme delivered.

TRANSPORT**■ Driving Instruction: Coronavirus****Rachael Maskell:** [\[171651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the DVLA plans to allow driving instructors to resume their lessons as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Rachel Maclean:

In line with the Prime Minister's road map announcement driving lessons will resume in England on 12 April 2021 providing the data shows it is safe to move on to this next step.

The Welsh Government has agreed to restart driving lessons on 12 April 2021 if the public health position remains favourable in Wales.

The Scottish Government has announced its strategic framework that aims to move fully back to a levels system from the last week in April. If data allows, driving lessons can restart in Scotland from 26 April 2021.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[171540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much his Department has provided in plug-in vehicle grants in the financial year (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020 to date.

Rachel Maclean:

As of 1st March 2021, the committed spend for plug-in vehicle grants is set out as follows:

- 2018/19: £164.3 million
- 2019/20: £304.2 million
- 2020/21: £238.8 million

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas**Daisy Cooper:**[\[170743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Government's response to the Consultation on managing pavement parking, which closed on 22 November 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department received over 15,000 responses to the consultation and we are currently analysing them to ensure we capture all views. We will publish a response to the consultation in due course.

■ Railways: North of England**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[171706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2021 to Question 158167 on Railways: North of England, whether he plans to electrify the Transpennine Route during the Transpennine Route Upgrade.

Andrew Stephenson:

In July 2020, government released £589m of funding for design and development work to upgrade and electrify the Transpennine main line from Manchester to York via Huddersfield and Leeds, under the Transpennine Route Upgrade programme

(TRU). This has enabled early construction work, and further development of electrification design for the sections between Manchester and Stalybridge, Huddersfield and Leeds, as well as Church Fenton and York. We are actively reviewing the case for TRU to deliver full electrification on the route, with construction decisions to be taken once TRU's full business case is approved.

■ Roads: Safety

Lilian Greenwood: [\[171579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the report on road safety targets that was commissioned by his Department in conjunction with WSP and Loughborough University.

Rachel Maclean:

The report will be published in full later this year.

■ Transport for the North: Finance

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[171549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister of State of 17 March 2021, Official Report, column 447, that Transport for North's budget was adjusted to ensure it did not build up unnecessarily large reserves, what Transport for North's reserves were projected to be in 2020-21.

Andrew Stephenson:

As I stated in the House on 17 March during the adjournment debate on this matter, Transport for the North's reserves were projected to rise to £9.5m in 2020-21, had their core funding grant not been adjusted.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[171550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister of State of 17 March 2021, Official Report, column 447, that Transport for the North's budget was adjusted to ensure it did not build up unnecessarily large reserves, what his estimate is of an acceptable reserve.

Andrew Stephenson:

As I stated in the House during the adjournment debate on this subject on 17 March 2021, the Department for Transport and Transport for the North have an agreed minimum reserve level of £2 million.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[171551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of whether Transport for the North's reserves were earmarked for anything.

Andrew Stephenson:

Transport for the North is required to operate a reserves strategy, to enable the organisation to operate with a degree of flexibility, whilst also guarding against

unexpected costs or cash flow fluctuations. It is for Transport for the North to manage their funding allocation, and reserves strategy, accordingly.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[171552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister of State of 17 March 2021, Official Report, column 447, that Transport for the North underspent its core grant, in which areas of that budget there was an underspend.

Andrew Stephenson:

Transport for the North is allocated a core funding grant to enable them to carry out their statutory functions. It is a decision for Transport for the North Board as to how that grant is spent, subject to the conditions set out in the Grant Funding Agreement between the Department for Transport and Transport for the North.

TREASURY

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Neil Coyle:

[\[169866\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will work with banks to allow businesses to defer repayment of bounce back loans until they can reopen once covid-19 restrictions are eased.

John Glen:

Under the Bounce Back Loan scheme, no repayments are due from the borrower for the first 12 months of the loan, giving businesses the breathing space they need during this difficult time. In addition, the Government covers the first 12 months of interest payments charged to the business by the lender.

In order to give businesses further support and flexibility in making their repayments, the Chancellor has announced "Pay as You Grow" (PAYG) options. PAYG will give businesses the option to repay their Bounce Back loan over ten years. This will reduce their average monthly repayments on the loan by almost half. Businesses will also have the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months (an option which they can use up to three times), or to pause their repayments entirely for up to six months. Given the continued challenges businesses are facing, HM Treasury has opted to make the full repayment holiday available to borrowers from the first repayment, which means that businesses can choose to make no payments on their loans until 18 months after they originally took them out. If borrowers want to take advantage of this option, they should notify their lender when they are contacted about their repayments.

Together, the 12-month payment holiday and interest-free period for borrowers, along with the PAYG options, form a generous part of the Government's unprecedented support package for businesses to protect jobs - including paying wages through the furlough schemes and self-employed support payments, generous grants, tax deferrals.

■ Caribbean: Debts**Kerry McCarthy:****[171539]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much debt is owed to the UK Government by (a) each of the five UK Overseas Territories in the Caribbean (b) other small island states; and how much of that debt will be due for repayment in each of the next three years.

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

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-18/171539>

Sir Christopher Chope:**[171490]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of raising the maximum measurements for VAT zero rated clothing so that nine out of ten thirteen year olds come within the maximum measurements.

Jesse Norman:

No estimate is available. I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given on 22 March 2021 to UIN 169785 for further information on this subject.

■ Credit: Coronavirus**Stephen Farry:****[171770]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of waiving the limitation on the number of payment holidays to credit providers that people can apply for in response to the prolonged economic effect of the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

In November 2020, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) extended its guidance on mortgage and consumer credit payment holidays. This allows borrowers to apply for up to six months of payment holidays until 31 March 2021, with all payment holidays under this guidance ending by 31 July 2021. These measures have provided consumers with a much-needed respite period, giving time to smooth out finances that may have taken a hit by the pandemic.

The Government and FCA have been clear from the start that this guidance should only be a temporary solution for those borrowers facing short-term financial difficulties as a result of COVID-19. For borrowers needing ongoing support beyond six months, the FCA's business-as-usual rules require that lenders provide tailored forbearance for the specific needs of the borrower. The tools available to lenders under these rules include suspending, reducing or waiving interest, fees or charges as well as offering further payment holidays if agreed between the borrower and lender.

■ Cryptocurrencies

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[168929\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the energy being using to mine cryptocurrency will be discussed at COP26; and whether further regulation on that matter will be on the COP26 agenda.

John Glen:

The Government's private finance objective for the upcoming COP26 climate change forum is to ensure that every professional financial decision takes climate change into account. The recovery from COVID-19 will determine the mitigation and adaptation pathways for decades to come.

The finance campaign will provide the conditions for a future that is genuinely greener, more resilient and more sustainable than the past. Action on finance underpins all the other COP campaigns: adaptation & resilience, energy transition, nature and zero-emission vehicles. Without the right levels of finance, the rest is not possible.

The Government has already taken actions to signal a commitment to green technology, including a pledge to make Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) aligned financial disclosures mandatory across the economy by 2025, making the UK the first G20 nation to make such a commitment.

Additionally, the Government has committed to the implementation of a green taxonomy. This will allow us to accelerate our work towards a greener financial sector, by providing a common definition for environmentally sustainable economy activities

The Cryptoasset Taskforce, comprising HM Treasury, the Financial Conduct Authority, and the Bank of England, considers the impact of cryptoassets and assesses what, if any, regulation is required in response. The Government stands ready to respond to emerging risks or changes in the market and will continue to monitor developments in cryptoassets.

■ Customs: EU Countries

Catherine West:

[\[171680\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide guidance on how ATA carnet rules will be applied when travelling between EU Member States for multi-country tours.

Jesse Norman:

The ATA Carnet system is an internationally agreed method of moving certain goods between customs territories temporarily (i.e. a passport for goods). An ATA Carnet simplifies the customs formalities by allowing a single document to be used for clearing goods through customs in the countries that are part of the ATA Carnet system.

The ATA Carnet must be presented to customs for endorsement each time the goods enter or leave a customs territory (for customs purposes the EU is treated as a single

territory) and is currently a manual, paper-based process. It is valid for one year and allows for movement of the goods shown on the Carnet as many times as required during the 12 months to any of the destinations applied for; this would allow for multi-country tours.

In the UK, ATA Carnets are administered by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry can be contacted directly to discuss particular needs, and further information is available on their website.

■ Directors: Coronavirus

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[171592\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what urgent financial support he is planning to put in place for directors of small businesses who have so far been ineligible for covid-19-related support.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided a substantial package of measures throughout this pandemic to protect people's jobs and livelihoods and to support businesses and public services across the UK, spending over £407 billion. In order to support businesses and employees through the next stage of the pandemic, the Chancellor announced at Budget the extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) until September.

Directors who pay themselves a salary through PAYE are eligible for the CJRS. Those paid annually through PAYE have been and still are eligible to claim, as long as they meet the relevant conditions including being notified to HMRC on an RTI submission within the relevant cut-off dates.

There is no practical way to identify directors who have been unable to access the SEISS or CJRS, and then identify the value of support they should receive, without exposing the taxpayer to significant fraud, legal risk and poorly targeted use of public money. The Government has worked closely with business groups on proposals to support directors who pay themselves through dividends. However, no proposal has been able to address the significant fraud risks in relying on self-certification.

The CJRS and SEISS are only two elements of the wider economic support package. Businesses and individuals may have access to further funding announced in the Budget such as the Restart Grant of up to £18,000 to business premises, and an additional £425 million to English local authorities for discretionary business grant funding. The Government is also extending previous VAT reductions and business rates relief, extending the temporary £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit, and has announced a £500 one-off payment to provide similar support to eligible Working Tax Credit claimants.

■ Food: Packaging

Elliot Colburn:

[\[169060\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the plastic used in food packaging that will be liable for the plastic packaging tax.

Kemi Badenoch:

From April 2022, the Plastic Packaging Tax will encourage the use of recycled plastic instead of new material within plastic packaging. This will create greater demand for recycled plastic, and in turn stimulate increased levels of recycling and collection of plastic waste, diverting it away from landfill or incineration. Hand in hand with Defra's wider packaging reforms, this tax will provide the necessary incentives for producers to make more sustainable packaging, and ensure the UK does its part in tackling this global issue.

Packaging used to protect food makes up a significant proportion of packaging in the UK and many types of food packaging already include recycled plastic or use alternative materials to plastic. Without being included in the tax, the types of food packaging where it is currently challenging to increase the level of recycled content would have fewer incentives to find new ways to overcome issues for including recycled material in the production of plastic packaging. However, the Government will continue to monitor progress in this area.

■ Free Zones

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[171526\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that the establishment of freeports will include all (a) regions and (b) nations of the UK.

Steve Barclay:

At Budget, the Chancellor announced 8 Freeports from 8 regions of England, as selected by the Secretary of State for the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government – this followed the fair, open and transparent assessment process outlined in the Bidding Prospectus.

We want to ensure that the whole of the UK can benefit, not just England. We will continue to work with the Devolved Administration to establish at least one Freeport in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

■ Investment: Fraud

Stephen Farry:

[\[171771\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he received reports of the Ready to Invest scam; and whether his Department was aware that the Financial Conduct Authority had been notified of related fraudulent activities in 2010.

John Glen:

Ready2Invest was an unauthorised firm that went into liquidation in 2013.

The FCA is an independent non-governmental body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry. Matters of fraud are the responsibility of the police, not the FCA. However, it is the responsibility of the FCA, as an independent regulator to investigate and decide upon the appropriate course of action when it identifies potential cases of investment fraud. I understand that this matter has been referred to the relevant law enforcement agencies and it would be inappropriate to comment on an ongoing investigation.

Although the Treasury sets the legal framework for the regulation of financial services, it has strictly limited powers. In particular, the Treasury cannot intervene in individual cases and does not monitor individual financial services firms.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Leicester

Claudia Webbe:

[169087]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the finding by the British Retail Consortium that workers in Leicester's apparel manufacturing industry are underpaid by over £2.1 million a week, whether he plans to take steps to help ensure that those workers receive backdated pay in line with the National Minimum Wage.

Kemi Badenoch:

Exploiting vulnerable workers for commercial gain is despicable and the Government will not stand for it. The Government is determined that everyone who is entitled to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) receives it.

All businesses, irrespective of size or business sector, are responsible for paying the correct minimum wage to their staff; and consequences for not complying with paying NMW can include fines of 200% of the arrears, public naming and, for the worst offences, criminal prosecution.

HMRC take seriously and review all complaints from workers referred by the Acas helpline, or received via the online complaints form, and investigate as appropriate. If anyone thinks they are not receiving at least the minimum wage, they can contact Acas, in confidence, on 0300 123 1100 or submit a query online using the link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pay-and-work-rights-complaints>(opens in a new tab) .

HMRC NMW has undertaken joint operations with partner agencies in Leicester for a number of years and have historically investigated more than 150 textile businesses, including multiple employers operating in Leicester; recovering over £215,000 in wage arrears for over 400 workers and issued over £325,000 in penalties. HMRC NMW has also opened a significant number of investigations in Leicester since 1 July 2020.

HMRC continues to take proactive steps in this industry: we have written to over 18,000 workers in the textile sector flagging their entitlement to minimum wage, common causes of underpayment and encouraging confidential reporting of employers, and have written to over 2,500 employers in the sector highlighting the main risks which lead to NMW underpayment.

The British Retail Consortium has alleged that workers in the Leicester textile sector are underpaid by £2.1m per week. Previous and ongoing HMRC investigations have not identified non-compliance with NMW on this scale.

We continue to work closely with industry bodies and would welcome any evidence they have in support of the findings by the British Retail Consortium.

■ National Skills Academies: Shipbuilding

Douglas Chapman:

[\[171633\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Defence Secretary on the approval of the Shared Outcome Fund bid for the creation of a National Skills Academy for Maritime (Shipbuilding).

Kemi Badenoch:

The Chancellor is in regular contact with Cabinet colleagues, including the Defence Secretary.

On 16 March 2021, the Defence Secretary outlined in his speech to the Society of Maritime Industries that HM Government is currently refreshing the National Shipbuilding Strategy, in order to deliver a more successful and sustainable UK shipbuilding enterprise.

Some of the most difficult social, environmental and economic challenges sit across the areas of responsibility of multiple public sector organisations.

Spending Round 2019 and Spending Review 2020 announced a combined £400 million for the Shared Outcomes Fund to fund pilot projects to test innovative ways of working across the public sector, with an emphasis on thorough plans for evaluation. The assessment process for the second round of funding is ongoing.

■ Off-payroll Working

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[171748\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) client businesses and (b) contractors working through personal service companies who will be affected by changes to IR35 from 6 April 2021.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[171749\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of business preparedness for implementing changes to IR35 from 6 April 2021.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[171750\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of additional revenue to the Exchequer that will be raised by changes to IR35 from 6 April 2021..

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[171751\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what provision there will be for a contractor to challenge an IR35 decision about their employment status made by a business after 6 April 2021.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[171752\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential for the mass transfer of contractors into the workforce due to changes to IR35.

Jesse Norman:

The changes to the off-payroll working rules come into effect on 6 April 2021 and were legislated for in Finance Act 2020. The off-payroll working rules have been in place for over 20 years and are designed to ensure that individuals working like employees but through their own limited company, usually a personal service company or PSC, pay broadly the same Income Tax and National Insurance contributions as those who are directly employed.

The off-payroll working changes shift responsibility for determining an individual's status from the individual's limited company to the client organisation engaging them. The Government has legislated to ensure there is a client-led status disagreement process where contractors can lodge a complaint, if they disagree on how they have been categorised under the off-payroll working rules.

The Tax Information and Impact Note published at Spring Budget 2021 sets out that the reform is expected to affect about 60,000 client organisations and 180,000 individuals working through their own limited companies.

The additional revenue estimated to be raised by the reform is approximately £3.8bn over the tax years 2020/21 to 2025/26.

The off-payroll working rules do not prevent anyone from continuing to work through a limited company, or require individuals to move into employment. However, the Government is aware that some businesses will reconsider whether PSCs are still the best way to engage individuals who are working like employees. Some contractors will provide their services in a different way, such as through an agency or umbrella company, and some organisations may offer individuals permanent roles instead, where that suits their business needs. These are commercial decisions, and individuals also have a decision about whether to accept the terms and conditions on offer to them.

The reform was originally announced at Budget 2018. Many businesses would have been prepared for the reform to be implemented in April 2020 as originally planned. HMRC have undertaken a significant programme of education and support to ensure that large and medium-sized businesses are ready to implement the reform. This includes a series of webinars viewed over 19,000 times since October 2020 as well as more targeted bespoke support, such as one-to-one calls and workshops with sectors and customer groups where the reform is expected to have the most impact. HMRC have also worked with representative bodies in specific sectors to reach those

customers. For those customers who still require further assistance, HMRC have a dedicated helpline to provide assistance with queries related to the off-payroll working rules.

■ Overseas Workers: Income Tax

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[171488\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it the policy of the Government to extend exemption from income tax for the year 2020-21 to people who work full time overseas but have remained in the UK for a longer period than intended in the tax year as a result of the closure of international borders and restrictions on international travel.

Jesse Norman:

The Government believes the UK's current residency rules broadly deliver outcomes for taxpayers that are fair and reasonable. It is a fundamental premise of the tax system that an individual who spends much of the tax year in the country will be treated as resident for tax purposes.

HMRC have published guidance which explains that in some circumstances, time spent in the UK due to Covid restrictions will not be counted as days spent in the UK for the purpose of the Statutory Residence Test under the 'exceptional circumstances' rule. However, the exceptional circumstances test excludes only up to 60 days of presence and so will not preserve non-resident status for an individual who is here for most of the year.

The Government does recognise that the current pandemic has caused immense difficulties for many people and this is why it has provided a very substantial economic support package.

■ Public Sector Debt

Alison Thewliss:

[\[169880\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with (a) European and (b) G7 counterparts of 2021 and 2022 inflation on government borrowing costs.

Alison Thewliss:

[\[169881\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of (a) increased inflation and (b) normalisation of the Government bond yield on public borrowing costs.

Alison Thewliss:

[\[169882\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet and (b) devolved administration colleagues on the effect of (i) increased inflation and (ii) normalisation of the Government bond yield on public borrowing costs.

John Glen:

The Chancellor has regular discussions on macroeconomic policy with European and G7 counterparts. They all recognise the significant challenges ahead of us in the

months to come. The G7 has an important role to play in steering the global economy, and as Chair of the G7 Finance Track, the Chancellor has discussed with colleagues how best to shape and respond to the phases of the global recovery from Covid-19. This includes the short- and medium-term economic challenges relating to both fiscal and monetary policy. The Chancellor will continue to work with colleagues over the coming months to learn from each other's policy interventions, to recognise and manage spillover effects, and to support continued coordination on policy responses.

As highlighted in the Budget, while borrowing costs are affordable now, interest rates and inflation may not stay low forever. A sustained 1 percentage point increase in both interest rates and inflation would increase debt interest spending by £27.8bn in 2025-26.

It is important to take action as the economy durably recovers to limit the UK's exposure to this risk and to build fiscal resilience. The Office for Budget Responsibility's March 2021 forecast shows that the medium-term outlook for the public finances has returned to a more sustainable path, supported by the fiscal repair measures set out in the recent Budget.

Treasury Ministers have regular discussions with counterparts in the devolved administrations on matters of mutual interest.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[171650]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to ensure the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, covering February, March and April, is immediately available for applications.

Jesse Norman:

The Government announced at Budget 2021 that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue until September, with a fourth and a final fifth grant.

The Government also announced a significant change in access to the SEISS. Basing the fourth and fifth grants on 2019-20 Self Assessment tax returns means more than 600,000 people are brought into scope who either became self-employed in 2019-20, or were ineligible for previous grants but now may be eligible for the fourth grant on the basis of submitting their 2019-20 tax return.

Individuals must have submitted their 2019-20 tax return by 2 March to be considered for the SEISS. This date balances access for the vast majority of eligible self-employed individuals, with the duty to protect the taxpayer against fraud as the details of the SEISS grants became public. Using these returns requires time to deliver, due to the increased population and new data.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will open the online claims service for the fourth SEISS grant from late April 2021.

HMRC expect to notify potentially eligible people of their personal claim date from mid-April.

The SEISS is just one part of a wider package of support for the self-employed, including Restart Grants, the Recovery Loan scheme, business rates relief, and other business support schemes.

■ Social Care Sector Covid-19 Support Task Force: Membership

Justin Madders:

[\[168955\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the membership of the Prime Minister's Health and Social Care Taskforce.

Steve Barclay:

The No10 and HM Treasury Health and Social Care Taskforce was made up of civil servants from a number of Government departments, who met on a daily basis as part of their policy development work, from the beginning of June through to the end of October 2020. It reported to the Prime Minister and Chancellor through a Steering Group chaired by Munira Mirza (Director of No10 policy unit), with membership from No10 and HM Treasury and attended variously by officials from Cabinet Office, the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

■ Teachers: Pensions

Gareth Thomas:

[\[170522\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what further discussions and consultation took place with stakeholders as part of the 2014 Review of Survivor Benefits in Public Sector Pension Schemes, following the *Walker v. Innospec* court case, before the decision was made not to equalize benefits in the Teachers' Pension Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

In July 2019, the government published its response to the Review of Survivor Benefits. Following internal discussions, the Government concluded that, beyond its decision to equalise the benefits received by surviving male same-sex and female same-sex spouses and civil partners with those received by the widows of opposite sex marriages in public service schemes, in the majority of cases, following the Supreme Court judgment in *Walker v Innospec*, it would not make any further retrospective changes to equalise survivor benefits. There was no further external consultation on the issue of male survivors of opposite sex marriages. The position has since changed following a claim brought against the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The Department for Education will consult on regulatory amendments that give effect to a declaration agreed between the parties and made by consent by the Employment Tribunal to ensure that the surviving opposite-sex spouse or civil partner of a female member is treated in the same way as a surviving same-sex spouse or

civil partner of a female member. The government believes that this difference in treatment will also need to be remedied in other public service pension schemes.

■ UK Trade with EU: VAT

Bill Esterson:

[\[171588\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent representations he has received on the clarity of VAT payments on exports to and imports from EU member states.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is working hard to support businesses to enable them to continue trading with the EU.

In addition to publishing guidance on GOV.UK, the Government has also introduced the SME Brexit Support Fund. This offers individual grants of up to £2,000 to SMEs. This pays for practical support, including training and professional advice on, for example, the VAT rules on import and export.

■ Young People: Pay

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[169873\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of pay amongst 16-24 year olds in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

John Glen:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods across the UK, including in Coventry North East constituency, Coventry, the West Midlands and England. The Government remains committed to helping hard working individuals earn more whilst levelling up this country. While the data is not published broken down by age and region together, the table below shows growth in median monthly pay for employees in the latest data (January 2021) in comparison to February 2020.

	GROWTH IN MEDIAN MONTHLY PAY - JANUARY 2021 COMPARED TO FEBRUARY 2020
UK - all employees	3.4%
West Midlands - <i>region</i> , (NUTS 1)	4.2%
West Midlands - <i>county</i> , (NUTS 2)	4.7%
UK- Under 18s	8.46%
UK- 18-24 year olds	0.37%

Source: HMRC RTI data – employees only, seasonally adjusted. The Government will continue to monitor labour market developments using the latest available data.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Helen Hayes:

[\[171663\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the adequacy of funding for local authorities to encourage vaccine uptake in ethnic minority communities.

Helen Hayes:

[\[171664\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the (a) Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and (b) Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on expanding the Community Champions scheme to support vaccine uptake in ethnic minority communities.

Kemi Badenoch:

On 25 January, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced allocations of £23.75 million to support the Community Champions scheme which supports those groups at greater risk of COVID-19. This includes funding for 60 local authorities and voluntary and civil society partners.

As part of this, Community Champions will use their local networks to provide advice about COVID-19 and promote the take-up of vaccines.

Officials in the Race Disparity Unit, who are supporting me in my work to address COVID-19 disparities amongst ethnic minorities, continue to meet regularly with colleagues in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health and Social Care to discuss a range of topics related to the delivery of the Community Champions scheme including vaccination uptake amongst ethnic minorities.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Disability: Coronavirus**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[169969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to consult (a) people with disabilities and (b) representative groups on her Department's strategic objectives following the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department for Work and Pensions places a strong emphasis on engaging with stakeholders to inform health and disability policy. Before the Covid-19 outbreak we hosted a series of workshops across the country where local disability organisations and disabled people shared their experiences of DWP services and priorities for future changes. We have continued this engagement since Covid-19 with a series of virtual events with charities and disabled people, where we heard from people about the impact of the pandemic on their lives. The forthcoming Health and Disability

Green Paper will reflect themes coming out of those conversations and ask for views on how best to address them. We will continue this engagement with further events with disabled people and their representatives in the run up to the publication of the Green Paper, during the consultation period, and beyond.

To support the development of the National Strategy for Disabled People and future work, the Government has already engaged widely with a diverse range of stakeholders, including the Disability Charities Consortium, the Regional Stakeholder Networks, individual disabled people and others.

■ Employment: Carers

Stuart Anderson:

[169961]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has been made of the access of carers to employment opportunities; what potential barriers to working have been identified; and what steps she plans to take to tackle those barriers.

Justin Tomlinson:

Many carers experience considerable challenges balancing work with caring responsibilities. This can have a big impact on their careers and limit their participation in the workplace. The impact falls disproportionately on women, who make up 60 per cent of carers.

Regulations for flexible working arrangements may be particularly beneficial for carers, the Government has made a clear commitment to encourage flexible working, and will be consulting on making it the default position. The Government has also consulted on proposals to introduce a new employment right to one week's additional leave for unpaid carers, to support those with caring responsibilities balance employment. The consultation received a significant number of replies, and the Government will issue its response in due course on the way forward.

Carers are being particularly impacted by COVID-19 and the government is committed to promoting the benefits of retaining them in the workforce, for both carer and employer. To support carers to remain in work during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department have been working with employer organisations to encourage employers, including small and medium sized enterprises, to retain employees who are carers, hosting a series of webinars delivered by the Business Champion for Older Workers and Employers for Carers. Carers can also access other resources, for example the Business in the Community (BITC) [Supporting Carers toolkit](#), or [COVID 19: Supporting Carers in the work place](#), published in March 2020.

For those who become unemployed, The Government's Plan for Jobs provides new funding to ensure more people, including those aged over 50, get tailored Jobcentre Plus support to help them find work and to build the skills they need to get into work. As part of the Jobcentre Plus offer for over 50s, we are also providing dedicated support through 50 PLUS Champions, and mentoring circles to ensure they fully benefit from the Plan for Jobs package and existing Jobcentre Plus support.

Jobcentre Plus is geared-up to offer advice to those claiming welfare benefits. They also offer on a voluntary basis, to all carers working less than 16 hours per week and irrespective of benefit status (subject to any existing conditionality): adviser support; access to the Flexible Support Fund; and payment for replacement care, childcare, travel and course costs to allow the carer to undertake approved activity or interviews with Jobcentre Plus, providers or employers.

■ **Employment: Disability**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[169906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Health and Work programme announced in the Improving Lives: the future of work, health and disability White Paper in supporting individuals into work.

Justin Tomlinson:

The response refers to the Work and Health Programme, which was announced in Improving Lives: the future of work, health and disability. The Work and Health Programme (WHP) is a national programme of employment support, which began in November 2017. It predominantly helps disabled people, as well as the long-term unemployed, and certain priority groups (known as early access groups) to enter into and stay in work.

Since, November 2018, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has released experimental statistics about the WHP. These provide information on a regular basis about referrals, starts and employment outcomes of WHP participants. WHP statistics are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/work-and-health-programme-statistics>

The WHP has been delivered as a Randomised Control Trial, where a small percentage of claimants who were eligible for the WHP were randomly allocated to a control group and were given standard Jobcentre Plus support. This will enable a robust impact assessment of the programme.

■ **Kickstart Scheme**

Seema Malhotra:

[171612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March to Questions 167206 and 167207, how many kickstart placements (a) have started and (b) are currently advertised as vacancies via Jobcentres in each local authority district.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to PQ [169973](#) in relation to the number of jobs started.

We are unable to publish data below regional level, I refer the honourable member to PQ [165610](#).

Seema Malhotra:

[\[171613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March to Questions 167206 and 167207, how many kickstart placements (a) have started and (b) are currently advertised as vacancies via Jobcentres in each (i) region and (ii) nation of the UK.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to PQ [169973](#) in relation to the number of jobs started and to PQ [165550](#) for regional vacancies.

■ **Kickstart Scheme: South West**

Luke Pollard:

[\[170737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many jobs the Kickstart scheme has created since its creation in (a) Plymouth Sutton and Devonport constituency (b) Plymouth Moor View constituency (c) South West Devon and (d) the South West region.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to PQ [157063](#). I also refer the honourable member to PQ [165550](#) for regional breakdown of jobs made available for young people to apply to.

■ **Means-tested Benefits: Coronavirus**

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[171640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the number of recipients of (a) means tested benefits, (b) Pension Credit and (c) other means tested payments administered by her Department whose savings or capital may breach a relevant savings or capital limit due to economic disruption during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[171641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to prevent (a) people over state pension age, (b) disabled people and (c) other recipients of means-tested payments from experiencing (i) a reduction in benefit, (ii) an overpayment reclaim and (iii) becoming ineligible for a means-tested payment as a result of changes to their savings due to economic disruption during the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

No such assessment has been made.

There have been no steps to change the savings threshold limits, which allow people to continue to receive means tested benefits even though they may have an increased amount of capital, by gradually reducing the level of their entitlement.

The capital thresholds strike a balance between protecting less well-off people and the taxpayer, whilst at the same time recognising the conscientious efforts of people

who have built up capital. This limit also ensures that the help which comes from taxpayers, many of whom are themselves on low incomes and have limited capital, is directed to people who need it most. Whilst it is important to encourage saving, it has never been thought right for substantial amounts of capital to be ignored, therefore it is also reasonable that there should be a capital limit above which benefits are not available.

■ Occupational Health

Vicky Foxcroft:

[170689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2021 to Question 166493 on Employment: Surveys, if she will provide further clarification as to what her Department means by shortly.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is considering the timing of the response in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A response will be available as soon as possible.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Vicky Foxcroft:

[169907]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2021 to Question 161811 on Personal Independent Payment, whether her Department carried out an equality impact assessment before drafting the renewed guidance following the MH and RJ decisions.

Justin Tomlinson:

I can confirm an equality analysis was undertaken by the Department to enable Ministers to fulfil the requirements placed on them by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the approach to be taken for the MH/RJ administrative exercise.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[169909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2021 to Question 161811 on Personal Independent Payment, whether the guidance used to (a) produce the estimates and (b) process the backdated payments following the judgement is publicly available.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Advice for Decision Making (memos 15/18 and 16/18) give guidance on applying the MH and RJ Upper Tribunal (UT) decisions. This is publically available through this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-for-decision-making-staff-guide>

The estimates in the Equality Analysis were based on medical and policy expert advice, as well as a small in-depth exercise to look at actual cases. This was before knowing the full detail of which claimants would be eligible for additional payments and producing the guidance to implement the MH decision.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals

Vicky Foxcroft:

[169908]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2021 to Question 161811 on Personal Independent Payment, whether her Department has written to all individuals affected by the judgement to (a) inform them whether they were successful and (b) explain the appeals process.

Justin Tomlinson:

Our progress update published on 25 February 2021 set out the number of cases cleared against the MH and RJ Upper Tribunal (UT) decisions. All these claimants will have been sent a decision letter, including next steps if they disagree with our decision. We are still reviewing claims and will send a decision letter to everyone we review.

As I explained in my previous answer ([161810](#)), we are writing to other claimants, explaining how we apply the UT decisions and letting them know they can get in touch with us if they think they are affected. We will review any claim where claimants ask us to and they will receive a decision letter.

This is a very complex and substantial exercise and we are committed to ensuring that claimants get the PIP they are entitled to.

■ Post Office Card Account

Dan Jarvis:

[171607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect on claimants of no longer being able to receive benefits through their Post Office card accounts.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has been encouraging Post Office card account customers to transfer to a standard account since 2016. Paying claimants into a standard account is the most efficient and safest payment method for the customer, and the Department.

Standard accounts have many advantages for the individual, for example, the ability to use direct debits and to pay for goods and services using a debit card. A standard account allows customers to access cash payments via a wide range of outlets and settings. The Post Office delivers personal banking services for a wide range of banks, building societies and other financial institutions, including cash withdrawal with a debit card.

The Department has continuously gathered insight from customers who contact us to discuss the closure of their Post Office card account to better understand their needs. This insight identified that some customers are unable to open or use an alternative account and for these customers we will pay through an alternative payment exception service to ensure that nobody will be left without access to their benefits or pension.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[171608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department will provide to vulnerable claimants to manage the transition away from benefits being paid into Post Office card accounts.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is committed to supporting claimants to access their benefit and pension payments as we transform our payment exception services. Nobody will be left without a means to access to their benefits or pension.

The Department has put in place a dedicated team, the Financial Inclusion Customer Contact Centre, to support all Post Office Card Account customers. The Team can help customers update their payment details to a standard account; answer questions about the payment change and; signpost customers to impartial financial advice available through the Money and Pensions Service where they need help to identify a suitable alternative account.

We are working closely with Post Office Limited on the support that their teams can provide to Post Office card account customers. For example, we have recently launched leaflets in some Post Offices to support Post Office card account customers, together with details of how they can update their payment details to a standard account.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[171609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with Post Office Limited on the payment of benefits to Post Office card accounts.

Guy Opperman:

The Department holds weekly meetings with Post Office Limited to discuss the payment of benefits and pensions into Post Office card accounts.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[171610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has in place to support claimants who currently receive payments to Post Office card accounts and who will be unable to provide new banks details by November 2021.

Guy Opperman:

An alternative Payment Exception Service will remain in place to ensure claimants and pension recipients who are not able to access a standard account can continue to receive their benefit and pension payments.

■ Prescribed Industrial Diseases

Andy McDonald:

[\[171617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether reviews of classifications of workplace diseases according to the Enforcement Management Model are constant, automatic and regular or initiated only by the instruction of the Chief Executive.

Andy McDonald:

[171619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the decision-making process on the Health and Safety Executive's classification according to Enforcement Management Model of novel workplace diseases.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Enforcement Management Model (EMM) provides a framework within which to ensure consistent enforcement decisions are made and which can be applied to all workplace risks, whether safety or health related. It does not provide specific guidance on the application of the EMM to every workplace risk, including the classification of every workplace disease or illness caused by work, as it would be impracticable to do so. Instead, HSE's Inspectors are expected to use their professional judgement when applying the EMM to the particular circumstances that they come across and to seek specialist advice where needed. For example, advice may be sought from one of HSE's occupational hygienist specialist inspectors when considering the health effect of exposure to a particular hazardous substance.

Where guidance does exist, reviews of EMM classifications are not instigated by the Chief Executive but as a result of regular guidance reviews and the outcome of research e.g. the Workplace Health Expert Committee endorsed the reclassification of mild steel welding fumes as a human carcinogen following evidence that exposure to welding fumes is associated with an increase in developing lung cancer. As a consequence, HSE changed the classification of the likely health outcome when considering the working population as a whole from "significant" to "serious".

In relation to COVID-19, as this was a novel workplace risk, guidance was produced for HSE's inspectors at the start of the pandemic; including in relation to the most likely health effect of someone being exposed to the virus when considering the working population as a whole i.e. ignoring an individual's susceptibility to the disease. This guidance was reviewed last November and a technical paper, explaining the classification is available on HSE's website at the following link <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/assets/docs/proportionality-hse-enforcement-decisions-covid19-pandemic.pdf>.

■ **Prescribed Industrial Diseases: Coronavirus**

Andy McDonald:

[171618]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the 11 individual issues were that were raised with the Health and Safety Executive by its inspectors concerning the classification of covid-19 as significant rather than serious with regards to Enforcement Management Model; and what the HSE's response was to each of the issues raised.

Mims Davies:

During her appearance before the Work and Pensions Select Committee, on Wednesday 17 March, the Chief of Executive of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) noted a number of items of feedback were provided to senior leaders of the

Field Operations Division (FOD) of HSE, by members of the Prospect Trade Union via their Branch Council representative. The comments represented a mixture of issues and views, including in respect of the Enforcement Management Model (EMM) and its application to COVID-19. Individual responses were not provided to the comments raised. Instead, one response was put together with the aim of:

- correcting any misunderstandings as regards the policy position, concerning the application of the EMM to COVID-19;
- reminding Inspectors of previously issued internal guidance on the matter and;
- providing clarity as regards the unchanging support, for the use of Inspector discretion, should individual Inspectors come to a decision that a Prohibition Notice should be served to control an immediate risk associated with COVID-19.

The response referred to above was part of a wider internal communication, to HSE inspectors, aimed at providing support and reminding inspectors of the routes available to deal with specific regulatory challenges. It was shared with Trade Union representatives before it was shared with HSE inspectors.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[169910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the reasons are for the delay to the publication of her Department's review of the Special Rules for Terminal Illness.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[169911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 15 March 2021 to Question 166429, if her Department will remove the three-year award duration for claims made under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to delivering an improved benefit system for claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working across Government to bring forward proposals following the evaluation. I remain committed to implementing the key areas identified in the evaluation; a consensus to change the six-month rule; improving consistency with other services used by people nearing the end of their lives; and raising awareness of the support that is available.

■ **State Earnings Related Pension Scheme**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[170525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason contributors to SERPS have not been given full transitional protection in the changeover to the new state pension; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

No one who qualifies for the new State Pension will receive less than they would have done under the previous system, based on their National Insurance record to 6 April 2016.

Amounts of additional State Pension (formerly State Earnings Related Pensions and Graduated Retirement Benefit) built before 2016 are carried forward into the new system, as part of the calculation of the Starting Amount for new State Pension.

Where the amount of additional State Pension already built up at 6 April 2016 exceeded the full rate of new State Pension (when combined with basic State Pension eligibility) the excess will be paid to the individual as a 'Protected Payment' when they reach State Pension age.

State Earnings Related Pension Scheme: Widowed People**Gareth Thomas:****[170524]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what direct notification was given to people who retired after April 2016, having paid into SERPS, that their survivor benefits were to be (a) reduced for the second time or (b) eliminated; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

Since 2014, DWP has run a comprehensive communications campaign, raising awareness of the new State Pension. This has included signposting people to resources that provide personalised information, so they can see what it might mean for them. This has included information on Gov.uk at www.gov.uk/new-state-pension and www.gov.uk/state-pension-through-partner about the new State Pension inheritance rules, including how these apply to different circumstances.

Welfare Assistance Schemes: Coronavirus**Catherine McKinnell:****[171599]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the adequacy of pre-covid-19 funding for local welfare provision in England; and if she will make a statement.

Catherine McKinnell:**[171600]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October 2019 to Question 293440 on welfare assistance schemes, whether her Department plans to reconsider its decision not to conduct a review of pre-covid-19 local welfare assistance provision in England.

Will Quince:

Local welfare assistance is an umbrella term used to describe local authority provision for people who are in need of urgent help. The ability of local authorities to act in this area are provided under various powers, for example, section 2 of the

Local Government Act 2000 enables local authorities to provide financial assistance to any individual.

Provision of local welfare assistance is entirely the responsibility of local authorities. Councils have flexibility to use the funding they receive from the annual Local Government Finance Settlement for local welfare assistance. Next year, depending on local decisions, Core Spending Power in England may rise from £49 billion in 2020-21 to up to £51.3 billion in 2021-22, a 4.6% increase in cash terms. If councils do decide to take up the entirety of the increase on offer, they will see an increase in line with last years. This recognises the resources councils need to meet their pressures and maintain current service levels.

Going forward, we will continue working with individual local authorities to support the most vulnerable people affected during the pandemic.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Libya update

Minister for Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): [\[HCWS874\]](#)

In March 2019, the then Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, appointed Mr William Shawcross as his Special Representative on UK victims of Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism. Mr Shawcross was commissioned to write an internal scoping report on the subject of compensation for UK victims of Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism. Mr Shawcross submitted his report in March 2020.

The Government thanks Mr Shawcross for his report. Since it was commissioned as an internal scoping report, to provide internal advice to Ministers, and draws on private and confidential conversations held by Mr Shawcross, the Government will not be publishing the report.

These important issues have needed careful and thorough consideration across Government given the complexity and sensitivity of the issues raised.

The UK Government reiterates its profound sympathy for UK victims of Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism and indeed for all victims of the Troubles. We recognise the pain and suffering of victims of violent crime, including terrorism, and provide publicly funded support and compensation schemes for those affected.

The UK Government is clear that the primary responsibility for the actions of the IRA lies with the IRA. Nevertheless, the Qadhafi regime's support for the IRA was extensive. It is widely documented in the public domain. It involved money, weapons, explosives and training from the 1970s onwards. It helped fuel the Troubles in Northern Ireland and enhanced the IRA's ability to carry out attacks in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

The responsibility for providing compensation specifically for the actions of the Qadhafi regime lies with the Libyan State. The Government has therefore repeatedly urged the Libyan authorities, including at the highest levels of the Libyan government, to engage with UK victims and their representatives, and to address their claims for compensation.

However, there are clear practical difficulties in obtaining compensation from Libya for Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism. The conflict, political instability and economic instability that have prevailed in Libya for most of the last ten years since the fall of the Qadhafi regime present particular challenges.

Mr Shawcross has considered these issues, including the difficulties of defining UK victims of Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism given the extensive nature of Libyan support for the IRA, and the range of proposals for providing compensation to victims. The Government has reflected fully on these issues. The Government's considered view is that an additional, UK-funded mechanism for providing compensation to victims of the

Troubles would not provide accountability for the specific role of the Qadhafi regime in supporting the IRA.

Mr Shawcross also considered whether compensation for UK victims should be funded from Libyan frozen assets in the UK. Under international law, when assets are frozen, they continue to belong to the designated individual or entity. Frozen assets may not be seized by the UK Government.

In implementing financial sanctions, the UK is obliged to comply with the relevant United Nations obligations. UN Security Council Resolution 2009 (2011) states that the aim of the Libya financial sanctions regime is “to ensure that assets frozen pursuant to resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011) shall as soon as possible be made available to and for the benefit of the people of Libya”. There is also no legal basis for the UK to refuse the release of frozen assets once conditions for delisting or unfreezing those assets set out in UN Security Council Resolution 2009 of 2011 are met.

Therefore, regrettably, the UK has no legal basis to seize frozen Libyan assets or to refuse the release of frozen assets. The Government cannot lawfully use Libyan assets frozen in the UK to provide compensation to victims.

The UK Government has also considered whether it should provide compensation to victims from public funds, which it may subsequently recoup from Libya. The responsibility for providing compensation specifically for the actions of the Qadhafi regime is the direct responsibility of the Libyan State. It is not therefore for the UK Government to divert UK public funds specifically for this particular purpose.

Victims of violent crime, including terrorism, occurring in Great Britain can access the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, funded by the UK Government, subject to eligibility criteria and time limits. Bereaved family members can access bereavement and funeral payments. In Northern Ireland, victims have access to the Northern Ireland Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme. The Troubles Permanent Disablement Scheme, to be delivered by the Northern Ireland Executive, will provide acknowledgement payments to people living with permanent physical or psychological disablement resulting from being injured in Troubles-related incidents. Details of when the scheme will be open for applications, and how people can apply, will be published by the Northern Ireland Executive.

The UK will continue to press the Libyan authorities to address the Libyan State’s historic responsibility for the Qadhafi regime’s support for the IRA.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Healthy Weight Programme: funding for local authority weight management services**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care) (Jo Churchill): [\[HCWS868\]](#)

On the 4th of March this year, the Prime Minister announced an additional £100 million over 2021/22 to support people living with obesity to lose weight and maintain healthier lifestyles. I am pleased to confirm that the Government is dedicating £34.9 million of this new funding to support the expansion of local authority weight management services for adults, children, and families. Funds will be allocated via two ringfenced grants under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and will be available to Local Authorities for 12 months from the beginning of the 2021/22 financial year.

The first grant will distribute £30.5 million among all local authorities in England to commission adult behavioural weight management services, based on population size, obesity prevalence, and deprivation. The funding is conditional on local authorities commissioning new, or expanding existing, behavioural weight management services, providing information on current service provision, and regularly submitting user data. This will be critical to demonstrate what works as we build a long-term approach to behavioural weight management services. The grant circular, setting out local authority allocations and the funding conditions, will be published on GOV.UK today.

The second grant will distribute £4.4 million to test the expansion of behavioural weight management services for children and families and pilot an intervention to improve access to local services for children identified as overweight or obese through the National Child Measurement Programme. All local authorities may submit an expression of interest for this funding. Funding will be allocated to local authorities according to the strength of their application and local need based on population size, child obesity prevalence and child-specific deprivation measures. The government will look to fund up to 10 areas, depending on the volume and strength of applications received. As with the adult grant, funding will be conditional on successful local authorities: commissioning behavioural weight management services for children and families; piloting an extended brief intervention linked to the National Child Measurement Programme; providing information on current child and family service provision; and regularly submitting outcome data using a standardised dataset. The expression of interest for child and family weight management services will be announced on GOV.UK today.

Public Health England will administer both grants and will be working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care to monitor and evaluate this important investment in behavioural weight management services.

■ **Update on the Government's response to the Independent Inquiry into the Issues raised by Paterson**

Minister of State (Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health) (Ms Nadine Dorries): [\[HCWS869\]](#)

It is now 12 months since the Independent Inquiry into the issues raised by the convicted breast surgeon, Ian Paterson, published its report. The report made for difficult reading and describes the terrible harms that can occur when the malpractice of an individual, rogue surgeon goes unchecked.

In my statement to Parliament on 28 April 2020 I reluctantly announced a delay in our work to respond to the report. The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to exert unprecedented pressures on the health system, and this has necessitated a pragmatic response to the recommendations of the Paterson Inquiry.

The independent sector has stepped up and supplied much needed additional capacity for the NHS in its treatment of NHS patients during the response to the pandemic.

We have taken stock of all the recommendations and engaged with stakeholders across the system to gather views on the best way forwards. As part of this we have listened carefully to former patients of Ian Paterson through regular conversations with representatives of the three main patient groups and a bespoke event to ensure their voices are heard.

The immediate safety of patients has been our top priority and we have sought and received reassurance that the recalls of patients by University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and Spire Healthcare have proceeded as quickly as possible.

When the recommendations have provided a clear way forward, we have worked with our system partners to put in place, or require, effective action. We will continue to consider all the recommendations and produce a full response to the inquiry's 15 recommendations during 2021.

Today I am able to update the House on the Government's initial response to the following five recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into the Issues raised by Paterson , and update on three other developments.

Recommendation 2 - Information to Patients: We recommend that it should be standard practice that consultants in both the NHS and the independent sector should write to patients, outlining their condition and treatment, in simple language, and copy this letter to the patient's GP, rather than writing to the GP and sending a copy to the patient.

NHS England and NHS Improvement will examine how current guidance published by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC) in 2018 on writing outpatient clinical letters addressed to patients (and copied to their GP) using simple, appropriate language can be incorporated into the requirements of the NHS standard contract.

Recommendation 4 – Consent: We recommend that there should be a short period introduced into the process of patients giving consent for surgical procedures, to

allow them time to reflect on their diagnosis and treatment options. We recommend that the GMC monitors this as part of 'Good Medical Practice'.

The General Medical Council (GMC) published its revised good practice guidance on consent on 30 September 2020. This came into effect on 9 November 2020 and sets out seven principles of decision making and consent, including giving patients the information they need to make a decision and the time and support they need to understand it. The GMC will work with organisations across the UK's health services to support doctors to embed this into their everyday practice.

Recommendation 5 - Multidisciplinary Team (MDT): We recommend that CQC, as a matter of urgency, should assure itself that all hospital providers are complying effectively with up-to-date national guidance on MDT meetings, including in breast cancer care, and that patients are not at risk of harm due to non-compliance in this area.

Specific questions relating to MDT are already included in appropriate CQC service frameworks. As part of a longer-term strategy (based upon a short- and medium-term action plan that includes this recommendation) the CQC will work to ensure these become mandatory elements of its assessment and inspection approaches and communicate its expectations to service providers.

Recommendation 7 – Patient Recall and Ongoing Care: We recommend that the University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust board should check that all patients of Paterson have been recalled, and to communicate with any who have not been seen.

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) contacted 4,394 patients between May and August 2020. This has given rise to 355 enquiries. Following receipt of each enquiry, the patient /relative was contacted directly by a member of a dedicated team to ensure that the Trust was responding in a way that was respectful and responsive to individual patient preferences. For patients who underwent a breast procedure, care was reviewed by a Consultant Breast Surgeon who was independent from the Trust. For patients who had a general procedure e.g. hernia repair or a varicose veins/other vascular procedure, care was reviewed by a consultant from UHB.

Recommendation 8 – Patient Recall and Ongoing Care: We recommend that Spire should check that all patients of Paterson have been recalled, and to communicate with any who have not been seen, and that they should check that they have been given an ongoing treatment plan in the same way that has been provided for patients in the NHS.

By December 2020 Spire Healthcare had contacted all known living patients of Ian Paterson for whom they had addresses (approximately 5,500). Spire Healthcare is currently ensuring that those patients' care has been fully reviewed, that the outcome of the reviews has been fully communicated to them and that, if required, they are getting the support and care that they needed. Additionally, several hundred people have contacted Spire as a result of the letters sent out last year. A proportion of these are having their care reviewed by an independent consultant surgeon and some have been

referred for counselling, follow up support or, where clinically appropriate, treatment. Spire Healthcare will continue their review of patients' care during 2021.

In addition, we are taking three legislative actions to drive up patient safety and ensure care provided by the independent sector is closely scrutinised.

- First, prior to the publication of the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review the Government acted in June last year to amend the then Medicines and Medical Devices Bill to create the power to establish a UK-wide medical device information system. This system will mean that in future, subject to regulations, we can routinely collect medical device, procedure and outcome data from both NHS and private provider organisations across the UK, ensuring that no patient in the UK falls through the gaps. The Government is also considering how best to supply patients with the details of any device that has been implanted, to ensure they can continue to access that information in the future.
- Secondly, following the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review the Government is establishing a Patient Safety Commissioner (PSC) for England with responsibility for medicines and medical devices. The main duties and powers of the PSC are detailed in the Medicines and Medical Devices Act which achieved Royal Assent on 11 February 2021 and establishes the Commissioner role. The PSC for England will be able to exercise their powers in both the independent sector and the NHS.
- Thirdly the White Paper, published in February 2021 setting out legislative proposals for the Health and Care Bill, announced our intention to extend the remit of the Health Service Safety Investigation Branch to private providers.

The report of the Paterson Inquiry shone a light on a set of harrowing events over many years and recommended a way forward to improve safety and quality in both the NHS and the independent sector. I believe it is right that we have taken urgent action where we can, and we will respond in full to the inquiry during 2021.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Report of the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation on the operation in 2019 of the Terrorism Acts**

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):

[[HCWS870](#)]

Jonathan Hall QC, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, has prepared a report on the operation in 2019 of the Terrorism Acts.

In accordance with section 36(5) of the Terrorism Act 2006, I am today laying this report before the House, and copies will be available in the Vote Office. It will also be published on GOV.UK.

I am grateful to Mr Hall for his report. I will carefully consider its contents and the recommendations he makes and will respond formally in due course.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021****Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):****[[HCWS875](#)]**

Yesterday the Minister of State made the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021 which are today being laid before Parliament. The Regulations have been made because women and girls in Northern Ireland are still unable to access high-quality abortion and post-abortion care in Northern Ireland.

The Regulations have been made to ensure, as required by the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019, that all of the recommendations in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the 2018 UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) report are implemented in Northern Ireland.

We are disappointed with the continuing failure to commission abortion services that are consistent with the Regulations we made almost a year ago. After a year of engaging to see positive progress made, with no success, the legal duties included in section 9 of the NIEF Act are such that I have to act now.

The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021 laid in Parliament today give me a power to direct Northern Ireland Ministers and, departments or relevant agencies to implement all of the recommendations in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the CEDAW report, consistent with the conditions set out in the Abortion (Northern Ireland) (No.2) Regulations 2020.

We do not take this step lightly. However, the devolution settlement does not absolve us of our responsibility to uphold the rights of women and girls. Our strong preference remains for the Northern Ireland Executive to take responsibility itself for upholding these rights.

It has always been our expectation and preference that the Department of Health would drive forward the commissioning of abortion services. The approach we took was to put in place the legal framework for how abortion services could be accessed and provided, consistent with our legal duties. However, it is crucial that abortion, as a healthcare service, is delivered and overseen locally by the Department of Health and relevant health bodies with the relevant legal powers, policy and operational expertise to do so. This ensures that abortion can be delivered in a sustainable way, and become embedded into the health and social care system in Northern Ireland in the longterm.

In March 2020, I wrote to the relevant Northern Ireland Ministers to achieve this, by asking that they work to ensure the implementation of all of the recommendations under paragraphs 85 and 86 of the CEDAW Report. We had anticipated this would be acted upon at the earliest opportunity.

Over this past year the Northern Ireland Office has continued to work closely with the Department of Health, and other relevant Northern Ireland departments, trying to progress this work. I, together with the Minister of State, have continued to engage through political channels to encourage positive progress by the devolved administration.

However, almost one year later, women and girls are still unable to access high-quality abortion and post-abortion care locally in Northern Ireland in all of the circumstances in which they are entitled to under the 2020 Regulations.

We understand that managing the Covid-19 response has been an immense challenge, and has placed the Health and Social Care system in Northern Ireland under considerable pressure.

I put on record my thanks to the medical professionals who have ensured that women and girls have had some local access to abortion services in Northern Ireland to date, and the organisations that have supported this work, particularly in the current circumstances and wider strains on the health system. This includes the work that Informing Choices Northern Ireland have taken forward on the central access point and counselling service for women and girls since April last year.

However, more needs to be done with respect to formally commissioning abortion services and supporting the rights of women and girls in accessing safe local services and relevant support measures; as well as putting in place clear guidance for medical professionals.

While Parliament considers the Regulations, we will continue to engage with the Minister of Health and the Executive to try and find a way forward over the coming weeks before any direction is given.

We have used every opportunity and avenue to encourage progress and offer our support over the past year so we are disappointed that we have reached this impasse. We take this step now, to further demonstrate our commitment to ensuring women and girls can safely access abortion services in Northern Ireland.

TRANSPORT

■ HS2 6 monthly report to Parliament

Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson):

[[HCWS867](#)]

Overview

This is the second bi-annual update to Parliament on the progress of High Speed Two (HS2). It marks one year since the Government gave Phase One of the scheme, between the West Midlands and London, the green light to begin civils construction. The report uses data provided by HS2 Ltd to the HS2 Ministerial Task Force for Phases One and 2a and covers the period between September 2020 and January 2021 inclusive. Copies of this report have been placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Covid-19 has made this an incredibly challenging year, and the pandemic has had a devastating effect on individuals, our economy and our communities. However, as we look to the future, with the roll-out of the vaccine firmly underway and a roadmap out of lockdown now in place, this Government is more committed than ever to 'build back better'. HS2 remains at the forefront of our long-term investment plan to better connect

people and places, boost productivity and create jobs to help rebalance opportunity across the UK.

Just as importantly, HS2 will play a pivotal role in creating a greener alternative to regional air and road travel. This is essential if we are to meet our commitment to bring greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

The key achievements of the HS2 programme in this reporting period include:

- Progressing the remaining Enabling Works and mobilising Main Civils construction for Phase One whilst employing Covid-safe working practices.
- Achieving Royal Assent of the Phase 2a High Speed Rail (West Midlands to Crewe) Bill, cementing in law the Government's commitment to bring the new high speed railway to the north of England.
- Evolving our approach to community engagement, including an enhanced complaints procedure to address concerns about how HS2's impact on communities along the line of route is managed.
- Speedy implementation of over a quarter of the proposed reforms recommended by the Land and Property Review of November 2020, improving the experience of property owners most immediately and directly affected by HS2.
- Supporting over 15,000 skilled jobs and creating more than 500 apprenticeships. Over 2,100 companies now have contracts with HS2 Ltd, with 97% of these being UK-based businesses. At its peak the programme will support over 30,000 jobs and create at least 2,000 apprenticeships.
- Establishing HS2 Ltd's Environmental Sustainability Committee to strengthen oversight and reporting of efforts to limit and mitigate the environment impacts from the construction of the railway.
- Planting over 430,000 trees so far, with the number expected to rise to over 730,000 trees by spring 2021.

Programme update on schedule, affordability and delivery

Schedule

Some schedule pressures on Phase One have emerged from delays in completing Enabling Works including issues with completing utilities diversions, postponed land acquisition and access during the first Covid-19 lockdown, and slower than planned development of detailed designs by the Main Works contractors.

HS2 Ltd is currently re-planning its schedule for Phase One in conjunction with its construction suppliers with a view to mitigating these delays. The schedule pressures reported above will not impact the projected Delivery into Service date range of 2029-2033 set last year, but further cost pressures could still emerge if mitigation activity is required. The re-planning exercise is due to conclude in the spring and I will update Parliament on its outcome in my next report. We should continue to remain cautious of the accuracy of long-range estimates this early in a 10-year programme.

Affordability

The overall budget for Phase One, including Euston, is £44.6bn (2019 prices). This is composed of the Target Cost of £40.3bn and additional Government-retained contingency of £4.3bn. The Target Cost includes contingency delegated to HS2 Ltd of £5.6bn for managing the risk and uncertainties that are an inherent part of delivering major projects.

The Target Cost for Phase One remains at £40.3bn. Around £11.0bn (actual prices) has been spent to date including land and property provisions. Approximately £12.6bn (2019 prices) has additionally been contracted, with the remaining amount yet to be contracted.

To date HS2 Ltd has drawn £0.4bn of its £5.6bn delegated contingency to specific additional costs, which represents 4% of the overall contingency for Phase One, and reflects an increase of £0.2bn since my last report. HS2 Ltd is currently reporting potential cost pressures of around £0.8bn over and above this. If these, or other costs, come to pass then they would be managed from within the existing total budget using the remaining HS2 Ltd delegated contingency. In the case of verified cost increases resulting from Covid-19, these will be managed from within the Government-retained contingency.

The cost pressures currently being reported by HS2 Ltd which may require a call on contingency if not mitigated are:

- An estimate of £0.4bn, predominately due to slower than expected mobilisation of Main Works Civils Contractors, associated with delays to approvals of designs, planning consents, protestor action and some Covid-19 impacts.
- As already reported in the autumn report to Parliament, an estimate of £0.4bn that relates to Euston station remains. Work to consider opportunities, efficiencies and scope reductions to address potential pressures is now underway. This may be an underestimate of the unmitigated pressure, so the Department has asked HS2 Ltd to provide a revised estimate once it has concluded its initial design work on the revised design as set out below.

My last report to Parliament included £0.4bn from expected increases in the scope and duration of Enabling Works. These costs are now expected to be incurred and so are not shown as pressures but have instead been taken into the core cost estimate. They will be funded through surplus provision within HS2 Ltd's core budget rather than from its delegated contingency. Estimates of the impact of Covid-19 are set out below.

Other pressures will arise as the programme progresses, some of which may crystallise into additional costs that will need to be covered from the contingency within the existing budget, and some of which will be mitigated or avoided.

Over the last six months HS2 Ltd has made progress on a programme of opportunities for efficiencies designed to identify and realise tangible savings in delivering the agreed scope of Phase One. From a deeper pool of potential opportunities, HS2 Ltd has so far identified up to £0.2bn to pursue to the next stages of development. Going forward I will report on progress towards realisation of these opportunities as well as the identification of others through this efficiency programme.

Delivery

On Phase One the focus has primarily been on progressing the remaining Enabling Works and preparatory works, and the start of Main Works. This includes dedicated power at launch sites for the tunnel boring machines (TBMs) by the M25 and Long Itchington in Warwickshire and moving two huge modular bridges into place at the Birmingham Interchange station site. The first pair of TBMs, Florence and Cecilia, will launch this summer.

Elsewhere, progress continues to be made on the four new HS2 stations. At Euston, work is underway to develop an optimised design and delivery strategy, alongside work by the Euston Partnership to integrate the HS2 and Network Rail stations and wider placemaking across the Euston campus. The Department has instructed HS2 Ltd to investigate whether building the station in a single construction stage can speed-up delivery and address cost pressures. Notwithstanding this, bringing the station fully back within its existing budget presents a significant challenge. The initial stage of this work is expected to conclude in the coming months, at which point the Government will confirm any design changes and set out its intended way forward at Euston.

The start of main construction of Old Oak Common Station has now been approved and excavation work for the HS2 underground platforms can begin. I also note the High Court's dismissal of Bechtel Ltd's legal challenge to the Old Oak Common Station Construction Partner award, which found that HS2 Ltd's procurement process was in accordance with the rules of the tender and procurement law.

Tender evaluation is underway ahead of the planned award by the summer of a construction partner for Birmingham Curzon Street Station and tendering for a construction partner at Birmingham Interchange Station is expected to begin this summer. Budget 2021 announced £50m of funding to develop transport proposals around Birmingham Interchange. This will be matched by £45m of funding from Arden Cross Ltd and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council. This will support the goal of the West Midlands Combined Authority, by reconfiguring planned car parking at the regional hub station, releasing 28 hectares of land space for new businesses, homes and jobs in the area.

Qualification of bidders is underway for the majority of the rail systems packages for Phases One and 2a ahead of inviting tenders. HS2 Ltd is finalising the procurement of the new HS2 rolling stock for Phases One and 2a, with the contract to be awarded later this spring.

I am very pleased to report that the HS2 Phase 2a Act, for the section of the route between Lichfield and Crewe was given Royal Assent in February, after its passage through Parliament. This represents a major milestone for the programme and HS2 Ltd can now begin accessing and acquiring land for the necessary construction works as well as taking forward early environmental and enabling works.

Phase 2a will bring high speed services to the north, helping to realise the benefits of the whole programme and to underpin future phases of the scheme, while also supporting regional economic growth through the construction stage.

Local consultation on the scheme was undertaken during February and I will publish the Consultation Report in April before detailing the response to its findings in June, following the election period.

With formal agreement on the scope of the Phase 2a scheme now set, the funding and schedule ranges will be finalised alongside the delivery model for the construction works. I will provide more information to Parliament once this work has concluded.

Before the end of spring, the Department will publish the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands (IRP) which will consider how best to deliver and sequence HS2 Phase 2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail, and other major rail schemes including schemes within Midlands Engine Rail such as Midlands Rail Hub, to ensure transformational rail improvements are delivered to passengers and communities more quickly.

Preparations are underway for a Hybrid Bill for the Western Leg (Crewe to Manchester) and supporting Outline Business Case (OBC) to be deposited in Parliament in early 2022, or sooner if possible. Further updates on cost and schedule will be provided at the time the OBC is published.

Impacts from Covid-19

Although Covid-19 continues to pose a considerable challenge to the programme, HS2 Ltd and its supply chain continues to adapt positively. In the early stages of the pandemic, HS2 Ltd successfully kept a high proportion of its sites open and operating safely and at the time of writing this report 100% of HS2 sites are open, in-part due to the collaboration and innovation between HS2 Ltd and its supply chain through initiatives such as rapid testing and the introduction of new social distancing technology. Health and safety guidance at work sites continues to be rigorously followed and remains under constant review. Nothing is more important than the wellbeing of the communities we are working in and the safety of everyone working on HS2.

HS2 Ltd's initial estimates suggest that the financial impact of Covid-19 on the cost of delivering Phase One up to December 2020 is between £0.3bn and £0.4bn, largely as a consequence of schedule prolongation from access delays and reduced productivity.

A proportion of this estimate is already captured within the cost pressures that I have set out above. The full impact of Covid-19 on cost and schedule will continue to be assessed, including work to disaggregate Covid-19 impacts from other cost and schedule impacts on the programme. The Department will be scrutinising these costs very carefully, and only validated and unavoidable costs arising from Covid-19 will be funded from the Government-retained contingency, and therefore covered by the existing HS2 budget. I will continue to update Parliament through my reports as this work progresses.

Local Community Impact and Engagement

Since my appointment as Minister for HS2 I have been clear that managing the programme's impact on communities along the line of the route is one of my key priorities. That is why last autumn I commissioned a detailed review of the acquisition and compensation process for land and property affected by HS2. The conclusions of the review, detailing opportunities for change across a wide variety of policies and activities,

were published in November and will ensure that there is a renewed focus on those people who are being directly impacted by the new railway.

The proposals vary in scale and context, but all seek to improve the experience of property owners most immediately and directly affected by HS2 by improving existing processes and interaction with the public. The Department has worked quickly on implementing the proposals, in close conjunction with HS2 Ltd, the Residents' Commissioner (Deborah Fazan) and relevant Government Departments, with 25% now in place. I expect to begin a public consultation later this spring to focus on aspects of the proposals that require further engagement. Alongside the Land and Property Review, I am continuing to engage closely with Parliamentary colleagues and the communities they represent.

Due to the scale and nature of the HS2 project, some impacts of construction on line of route communities are unfortunately unavoidable. This January, at the Transport Select Committee, I heard first-hand how HS2 construction is impacting on communities. The testimonies I heard were powerful and strengthened my resolute commitment to ensure that HS2 Ltd properly informs and consults communities and minimises negative impacts wherever possible. I have therefore tasked HS2 Ltd to look again at the way it engages communities to improve the responsiveness, sensitivity and objectivity of its approach.

In response, HS2 Ltd is deploying a package of measures to strengthen its community handling approach including:

- A unified single management system for community engagement and complaints handling across HS2 Ltd and the supply chain, so there is a single consistent record for all organisations operating in a single location.
- Additional proactive local communications to provide notice and raise awareness of HS2 activity in impacted communities.
- Shortened HS2 Ltd helpdesk response times so that construction issues can be picked up, assessed and mitigated quickly.
- New area-based Delivery Unit Managers with geographical responsibility for joining up construction contractors and communities to prevent and tackle local issues.
- New briefing materials to alert MPs and Councillors of the agreed single points of contact along the Phase One and 2a routes so issues can be escalated if they are not resolved in the first instance.
- Enhanced engagement and assurance from the Construction Commissioner (Sir Mark Worthington) and the Residents' Commissioner to provide independent advice on potential improvements to HS2 Ltd complaint handling and community engagement operations.

I have furthermore established a small team of Construction Inspectors reporting to the Department to support the assurance of the delivery of works along the route. An important part of their role will also be to provide a capability to investigate intractable or persistent construction issues working independently of HS2 Ltd and its suppliers where needed.

I expect these measures to improve engagement and responsiveness in relation to avoidable impacts of construction on local communities. I will continue to review this and remain committed to taking further action if necessary.

Environmental Impact

Another of my key pledges as HS2 Minister is to limit the unavoidable impact of HS2 construction on the natural environment both in terms of direct impacts on biodiversity and its carbon impact.

The first report of the HS2 Ltd Environmental Sustainability Committee will be published in the autumn. The approach and content of the report will be informed by the Global Reporting Initiative methodology, and will also be shaped by seeking input from Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, the HS2 Independent Design Panel and members of HS2 Ltd's Ecology Review Group. The Government has also given a statutory commitment to provide an impact assessment of construction on ancient woodland within the report, building on previously conducted assessments. The environmental impact data in the report will be verified externally.

Alongside the new Committee, HS2 Ltd launched its '[Green Corridor Prospectus](#)' in December, providing information to the public on projects along the route which are being introduced to mitigate and compensate for the environmental impact of HS2's construction. This includes over 30 projects funded through the Community and Environment Fund, and the Business and Local Economy Fund, which add benefit over and above committed mitigation and statutory compensation.

Further to the commitments made in my last report to support biodiversity improvements on Phase 2a, the Department and HS2 Ltd have initiated a study to investigate options to consider whether and how we might move the HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg scheme from seeking no net loss, to aiming to deliver net gains in biodiversity.

HS2 Ltd has become the first UK transport client organisation to achieve PAS 2080 accreditation, a gold standard for carbon management across the globe. It will continue its work to reduce carbon emissions during construction and operation ahead of COP26 later this year.

Forward look

As well as continued focus on its construction programme for Phase One, the next six months will see HS2 Ltd award contracts for a construction partner at Birmingham Curzon Street and for the supply of the new HS2 rolling stock. Work to identify affordable design and delivery arrangements for Euston station is also expected to progress.

On Phase 2a we will conclude work on a preferred delivery model for the construction stage as well as finalising the funding and schedule ranges for the project's schedule and cost. Work on the legislation and business case for the Phase 2b Western Leg will also continue and the Integrated Rail Plan will be published this spring.

I will continue to engage closely with Members of Parliament and will provide my next report to Parliament in October 2021.

Financial Annex

Annex A: 6 monthly financial report

Forecast Costs by Phase	Phase	Target Cost	Total Estimated Costs Ranges
	One	£40.3bn	£35.0-45.0bn
	2a	Not set yet	£5.0-7.0bn
	2b	Not set yet	£32.0-46.0bn*

*Validation of the Phase 2b cost range is ongoing and will be updated to support the bringing forward of separate legislation for the HS2 route into Manchester, in line with the conclusions of the Oakervee review. The range provided excludes scope intended to be funded by other sources such as Northern Powerhouse Rail.

Historic and Forecast Expenditure	Phase	Spend to Date**	2020/21 Budget	2020/21 Forecast
	One	£11.0bn***	£3.79bn	£3.33bn
	2a	£0.4bn	£0.18bn	£0.13bn
	2b	£1.0bn	£0.25bn	£0.16bn
Total		£12.4bn	£4.22bn	£3.62bn

All figures in 2019 prices, are excluding VAT and correct as of 31 January 2021 and made up of a combination of Resource and Capital spend.

** Spend to date is represented in outturn prices.

***Spend to date includes a £1bn liability (provision) representing the Department's obligation to purchase land and property.

TREASURY

■ Oil and Gas Decommissioning Relief Deeds

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Kemi Badenoch):

[\[HCWS872\]](#)

At Budget 2013, the government announced it would begin signing decommissioning relief deeds. These deeds represented a new contractual approach to provide oil and gas companies with certainty on the level of tax relief they will receive on future decommissioning costs.

Since October 2013, the government has entered into 98 decommissioning relief deeds.

Oil & Gas UK estimates that these deeds have so far unlocked approximately £8.1bn of capital, which can now be invested elsewhere.

The government committed to report to Parliament every year on progress with the decommissioning relief deeds. The report for financial year 2019-20 is provided below.

1. Number of decommissioning relief agreements entered into: the government entered into 4 decommissioning relief agreements in 2019-20.
2. Total number of decommissioning relief agreements in force at the end of that year: 96 decommissioning relief agreements were in force at the end of the year.
3. Number of payments made under any decommissioning relief agreements during that year, and the amount of each payment: two payments were made under a decommissioning relief agreement in 2019-20, for £54.6m in total. These were made in relation to the provision recognised by HM Treasury in 2015, as a result of a company defaulting on its decommissioning obligations.
4. Total number of payments that have been made under any decommissioning relief agreements as at the end of that year, and the total amount of those payments: six payments have been made under any decommissioning relief agreement as at the end of the 2019-20 financial year, totalling £148.6m.
5. Estimate of the maximum amount liable to be paid under any decommissioning relief agreements: the government has not made any changes to the tax regime that would generate a liability to be paid under any decommissioning relief agreements. HM Treasury's 2020-21 accounts will recognise a provision of £258.1m in respect of decommissioning expenditure incurred as a result of a company defaulting on their decommissioning obligations[1]. The majority of this is expected to be realised over the next three years.

[1] This figure takes into account payments made subsequent to the financial year covered by this Written Ministerial Statement.

■ **Public Service Pensions: Guaranteed Minimum Pension indexation consultation, government response**

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay):

[\[HCWS871\]](#)

The Government is today publishing its response to the consultation titled 'Public Service Pensions: Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) indexation consultation'. The consultation, which took place between 7 October and 30 December 2020, considered how the Government will continue to meet past commitments to public service pension members regarding the full indexation of public service pensions, including any GMP element related to membership of a public service pension scheme, beyond 5 April 2021. It considered options to extend the current GMP indexation methodology to 5 April 2024 or to a later date before reconsidering alternative methodologies, namely conversion, or to make the current methodology the permanent solution. The consultation made clear that the Government remains fully committed to the price protection of GMPs for members of public service pension schemes under any solution adopted.

As proposed by the majority of respondents to the consultation, the Government has decided to discount conversion as a long-term policy solution and make full GMP indexation the permanent solution for public service pension schemes. Public service pension schemes will therefore provide full indexation to those public servants with a GMP reaching State Pension age beyond 5 April 2021.

The Government is of the view that this is the most practical solution to GMP indexation. This is because before conversion could be undertaken, schemes would need to ensure that they have accurate reconciled data, along with a finalised methodology to convert those GMP benefits where conversion on a £1:£1 basis would not result in equalisation. This is likely to be resource intensive at a time when public service pension schemes do not have the capacity to undertake conversion until 2024 at the earliest. There also remains a chance that conversion might not be deliverable by then. Furthermore, the benefits of conversion diminish over time as the number of members with a GMP is steadily reducing. It is for these reasons that the Government has decided to make full GMP indexation the permanent solution for public service pension schemes.

The consultation set out the benefits of undertaking conversion, which include a reduction in administrative complexity in the long term regarding those public servants yet to reach State Pension age. In addition, some respondents also highlighted additional benefits of undertaking conversion, some of which were highlighted in the Government's response to the previous GMP indexation and equalisation consultation in 2016 / 17. However, notwithstanding these arguments, the Government does not consider these benefits to outweigh the benefits of making full indexation the permanent solution.

Public service pension schemes will now provide full indexation to those public servants with a GMP reaching State Pension age from 6 April 2021. The Government's response to the consultation, has been published online on gov.uk and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-service-pensions-guaranteed-minimum-pension-indexation-consultation>

■ Tax policies and consultations - Spring 2021

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):

[HCWS873]

I have today laid before Parliament "Tax policies and consultations - Spring 2021" [CP 404].

The measures set out in this command paper will shape the next steps in delivering the Government's tax administration strategy, announced in July 2020. The command paper also includes a range of important policy announcements and updates which will support wider improvements in the tax system, including on business rates and environmental taxes, as well as measures to drive down non-compliance and enhance simplification.

By announcing these tax measures and consultations separately from the Budget, the Government is seeking to provide greater visibility and transparency for Parliamentarians, tax professionals and other stakeholders, in order to increase the overall quality of tax policy and legislation.

Copies of the paper are available in the Vote Office and the Printed Paper Office and on www.gov.uk/government/publications/tax-policies-and-consultations-spring-2021

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ DWP – Expanding Our Services

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Employment (Mims Davies):

[\[HCWS876\]](#)

As part of the Government's ongoing commitment to support claimants back into work, DWP is moving at pace this spring and summer to introduce new Jobcentres, as a direct response to the pandemic.

On top of the 13,500 new Work Coaches who will be in place by the end of this financial year, this expansion of our Jobcentre network will bolster existing capacity, enabling Work Coaches to provide tailored, face-to-face support in a Covid-secure environment. This expansion will drive forward our ambitious £30 billion Plan for Jobs, helping people back into the Labour Market right across the UK.

During the pandemic, DWP successfully pivoted to a more multi-channelled approach, offering more digital support in line with social distancing measures. However, as restrictions ease, it is vital we adapt our services and reintroduce face-to-face support, given that we know how effective this has been for our claimants in the past.

As the economy recovers, we will review the need for these temporary sites on an ongoing basis, to ensure we are continuing to strike the right balance between providing essential services for claimants and delivering value for money for the taxpayer.

This is not about reversing previous decisions on the broader renewal of the DWP estate, rather it is a temporary measure, in direct response to the pressures the pandemic has placed on the Labour Market.

These new sites provide a high quality, modern and digitally enabled environment for both colleagues and customers. As part of our design requirements, we are reducing the environmental impact, for example, by increasing the Energy Performance Certificate rating across sites. This is something DWP is committed to, as part of the programme to review and renew our estates.

The expansion programme will itself create a further 1,500 ancillary jobs when the sites open, as well as construction jobs generated by the work needed to repurpose the buildings and the supply chain to furnish them, boosting local economies and providing crucial support across the country.

The sites being secured are predominantly in major centres. All new sites meet the planning requirements for a Jobcentre, which means they are fully accessible for colleagues and customers, with good transport links.

Leases have already been secured on 80 sites. A list of these sites can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), and will be continually updated as and when new site leases are agreed.