



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 26 March 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:42 P.M., 26 March 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Climate Change: Advisory Bodies

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[171686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the UK hosting COP26, what steps he is taking to ensure there are no conflicts of interest on the (a) Committee on Climate Change and (b) other Government climate advisory boards.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

This November, the UK will host COP26 in Glasgow bringing together world leaders, climate experts, business leaders and citizens to agree ambitious action to tackle climate change. We are setting out ambitious plans across key sectors of the economy, and ahead of COP26 we will be publishing further plans including a comprehensive Net Zero Strategy. We are extremely grateful to our independent advisors, the Climate Change Committee (CCC), for their expert analysis and advice in this process, including their recommendations on the level of the Sixth Carbon Budget published in December 2020.

The Government expects all holders of public office to work to the highest personal and professional standards. According to the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies, members must ensure that no conflict arises, or could reasonably be perceived to arise, between their public duties and their private interests, financial or otherwise.

In order to prevent conflict of interests within the CCC, BEIS carries out thorough due diligence exercises on each new member prior to approving their appointment. The CCC also have their own conflict of interest policies, which require members and staff to recognise and disclose activities that might give rise to actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

■ Conditions of Employment

Sir George Howarth:

[\[171519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the economic effect of insecure employment models such as zero-hours contracts, rolling contracts and other casual or insecure employment models.

Paul Scully:

The UK economy's continued success is built on the flexibility of our labour market. Flexible working provides opportunities for those who may not be able to work in more conventional ways and has played a crucial part in our high rates of employment pre-Covid-19. For example, in 2019, the UK employment rate was 76%, the highest since comparable records began in 1971. The Government also

recognises the valuable contribution made by those in the gig economy during the Covid-19 pandemic and anticipate that these jobs will be crucial to our economic recovery.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[171532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the EU's decision to continue export controls on the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine produced in Halifax on the availability of the covid-19 vaccine in the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

UK and EU supply chains are interlinked as vaccines have complex supply chains. We are in constant contact with the vaccine manufacturers and remain confident in the continued supply of vaccine for the UK.

We have successfully met our target of offering a first vaccine dose to every person in the top four priority groups by 15 February and are on track to offer a vaccine to all priority cohorts by 15 April, as well as all adults by the end of July.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Chief Scientific Advisers**

Greg Clark:

[\[170572\]](#)

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

Amanda Solloway:

The CSA, at the time Prof. John Loughhead, has been in meetings with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 3 times between 1 March 2020 and 31 May 2020.

The CSA, at the time Prof. John Loughhead, has been in meetings with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 3 times between 1 June 2020 and 31 August 2020.

The CSA, at the time Prof. John Loughhead, has been in meetings with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 2 times between 1 September 2020 and 30 September 2020. Prof. Paul Monks took over as CSA on 1 October 2020 and met with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 11 times between 1 October 2020 and 30 November 2020. This is a total of 13 meetings between 1 September 2020 and 30 November 2020

The CSA, Prof. Paul Monks, has been in meetings with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 23 times between 1 December 2020 and 28 February 2021.

■ Electric Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries

Sir George Howarth: [\[171514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations he has received from the automotive industry on the (a) transition from petrol, diesel, and hybrid engines, and (b) Government's support for such a transition timetable.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government consulted last year on bringing forward the end to the sale of new petrol, diesel and hybrid cars and vans. We sought views on the phase out date, the definition of what should be phased out, barriers to achieving the proposals, the impact of the ambitions on different sectors of industry and society, and what measures were required by government and others to achieve the earlier phase out date.

As part of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's ten point plan published in November 2020, we announced that we would phase out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe. On 10 March, the Government published the full written outcome of the consultation including stakeholder views and the Government's response. These ambitions will be supported by an accompanying package of £2.8 billion, with up to £1 billion to support the electrification of UK vehicles and their supply chains, £1.3 billion to accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure and £582 million for plug in vehicle grants.

Between 2030 and 2035, any new cars and vans sold that emit from the tailpipe must have significant zero emission capability. This will be defined through consultation in the coming months. We will continue to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles and will publish a clear delivery plan later this year.

Sir George Howarth: [\[171515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the environment costs and benefits of the transition from petrol, diesel, and hybrid engines, in terms of the (a) carbon emissions from the electricity required and (b) steel used.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department for Transport developed the Transport Energy Model, published in 2018, to provide a clear assessment of the relative environmental impacts of different road vehicle technologies and fuels in the UK. For a typical medium car travelling at 34 km/hour, Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG from fuel/electricity production and vehicle use) for a Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) were 66% lower than for a petrol car and 60% lower than for a diesel car. The Transport Energy Model also showed that BEVs are highly energy efficient – a typical BEV uses a two thirds less energy than the average petrol vehicle to move the same distance.

Lifecycle analysis looks at the total GHG emissions of a vehicle across its lifetime, including manufacturing, in-use and end-of-life. The latest evidence from lifecycle analysis shows that BEVs have significantly lower GHG emissions than their petrol, diesel or hybrid equivalents today. The leading lifecycle analysis studies have included emissions associated with vehicle production, including steel, and emissions from fuel or electricity production. To maximise environmental benefits, electric vehicles (EVs) and their batteries need to be manufactured and charged using electricity from low carbon sources. With the Government's announcement of up to £1bn to support EV supply chains, our increasing use of low carbon energy sources, and our commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, the UK is an attractive option for investment in low-carbon battery manufacture. UK BEV emissions, from energy production and use, are expected to fall to near zero by 2050 as the electricity grid decarbonises in line with Government projections.

■ Electronic Equipment

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[171529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance his Department plans to publish for small electronic companies to help them comply with right-to-repair legislation.

Paul Scully:

The new right to repair provisions in the Government's forthcoming ecodesign legislation will enable consumers to have their products repaired, including washing-machines and televisions. This will reduce waste and increase the UK's resource efficiency.

We have worked closely with suppliers of electronic goods to help them understand the new requirements; and guidance will be made available when the legislation is published. We expect the new requirements to have a very limited impact on small electronic companies who produce products that are covered by the legislation. By contrast, the changes present a great opportunity for small repair businesses.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[167238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many employers have been fined under The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 for preventing an employee from adhering to the required self-isolation period.

Paul Scully:

It is critically important that the following people stay at home and self-isolate immediately: anyone who has tested positive with COVID-19, anyone who has been contacted by NHS Test and Trace or their local authority, and anyone who has returned from abroad and is required to quarantine.

The Government has developed guidance on employment rights and self-isolation so that workers and employers are clear about their rights and obligations. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/if-you-need-to-self-isolate-or-cannot-attend-work-due-to-coronavirus>

In addition, anyone who is due to work anywhere other than where they are self-isolating (normally their home) must inform their employer that they are required to self-isolate. An individual can receive a Fixed Penalty Notice of £50 for not doing so.

It is an offence for an employer to knowingly allow a person who is required to self-isolate to work anywhere other than where they are self-isolating. If an employer is reasonably believed to be in breach of this requirement, they may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice, ranging from £1,000 to £10,000.

Local Authorities provide written and verbal advice to businesses to enable them to comply with their obligations. Enforcement action is taken against employers who do not follow this advice and who do not take reasonable steps to ensure that their workers who must be self-isolating are not working from outside their home.

■ **Financial Institutions: Recruitment**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[170742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether financial institutions are permitted to refuse offers of employment to people who have a poor credit history where that poor credit history is as a result of a period of ill health or a newly acquired disability.

Paul Scully:

Employers should treat all job applicants courteously as well as being fair and objective in their selection of successful candidates.

The Government does not impose requirement on employers as to how they carry out recruitment. However, the law is clear that they must not discriminate unlawfully, for example on grounds of race, sex or disability.

■ **Help to Grow Programme**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[170781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing micro businesses with fewer than five employees access to the Help to Grow programme.

Paul Scully:

The Help to Grow programmes will support UK small businesses to scale and grow as they recover from the pandemic. Help to Grow: Management will provide intensive management skills support to 30,000 small businesses. Help to Grow: Digital aims to support 100,000 small businesses, through an online platform to support businesses to adopt technology and a voucher for software costs.

The eligibility criteria ensures funding is used where it will have the greatest overall impact in saving time and money across businesses, and strikes the best possible balance between helping a large number of businesses and promoting the greatest productivity benefit per business. Firms with fewer employees can still benefit from free, impartial advice through the online platform.

■ Iron and Steel: Electricity

Alexander Stafford: [\[170783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to facilitate a level playing field in electricity price cost for UK steelmakers compared to their French and German counterparts.

Alexander Stafford: [\[170784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential disparity in electricity prices between steelmakers in the UK, France and Germany.

Alexander Stafford: [\[170785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will provide additional support on electricity price disparity now that the UK has left the EU.

Alexander Stafford: [\[170790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the effect on the steel sector of the extension of the Carbon Price Support.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There have been regular discussions with my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer on a wide range of issues of importance to the steel industry.

We recognise that industrial consumers currently pay higher electricity prices than elsewhere in most of Europe and we have therefore taken steps to reduce the indirect cost due to the Renewables Obligation, Contract-for-Difference and small-scale Feed-in Tariff for certain energy intensive industries, including the steel sector, and to provide compensation for the indirect emission cost due to the UK Emission Trading System and Carbon Price Support Mechanism, including to the steel sector. These steps total more than £500m in relief to the sector between 2013 and the end of 2019 to make electricity prices more competitive, including around £150 million during 2019.

We have also introduced a metallurgical exemption from the Climate Change Levy. France and Germany have taken similar steps. Additionally, at Budget 2018 we announced £315 million for the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) to support industrial energy efficiency and decarbonisation projects to bring energy costs down for these vital industries.

We are about to publish a consultation reviewing the compensation schemes for the indirect emission cost due to UK carbon pricing.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Alexander Stafford: [\[170786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential economic benefits of maintaining and extending the UK Steel Safeguards.

Alexander Stafford: [\[170787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Trade on the importance of extending the UK Steel Safeguards.

Alexander Stafford: [\[170789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the effect of the UK's steel safeguards not being renewed.

Nadhim Zahawi:

BEIS Ministers and officials have held regular discussions with counterparts in the Department for International Trade and other Government departments on a wide range of issues of importance to the steel industry.

The Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate (TRID) initiated a review of the current safeguard measures on 1st October 2020. The Government cannot pre-empt TRID's recommendation by considering the future of the measures before such a review is complete.

Alexander Stafford: [\[170788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure the £200 million from the EU Research Fund for Coal and Steel is used in support of steel sector innovation.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

Firstly, 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.

Secondly, 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, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer 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.

■ Local Enterprise Partnerships

Mike Amesbury: [\[171716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) effect of LEPs on their constituent areas and (b) the short and medium term future of LEPs.

Paul Scully:

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) performance is monitored through an annual assurance process and regular reporting. LEPs are required to participate in relevant Local Authority scrutiny arrangements to guarantee the effective and appropriate scrutiny of their investment decisions.

LEPs must also publish Delivery Plans and End of Year Reports, which set out details of the contributions they are making to promote economic growth in their areas.

Alongside the Budget, the Government committed to working with local businesses on the future role of Local Enterprise Partnerships.

■ Members: Correspondence

Matthew Pennycook: [\[171677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich of 3 February 2021 on his constituent's concerns on long-term financial support to the hospitality sector.

Paul Scully:

The hon. Member's correspondence about financial support for the hospitality sector was transferred to BEIS from HM Treasury on 19 March. I will write separately in response to the hon. Member.

■ Plastics: Fireworks

Anthony Browne: [\[171741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has any plans to mandate a reduction in (a) plastic and (b) other non-degradable content in fireworks sold in the UK.

Paul Scully:

Fireworks placed on the market must be safe. The Government welcomes the reduction of the use of plastics in fireworks and initiatives underway by the fireworks industry. We are not at present planning any other action to mandate a reduction in the use of plastic or other non-degradable content in fireworks sold in the UK.

Renewable Energy**David Mundell:**[\[171544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Smart Energy Guarantee in encouraging community energy development; and what additional support he plans to provide the community energy development sector in order for it to grow more widely.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Ofgem are to publish their first report on the provisions made by suppliers for smaller scale exports under the Smart Export Guarantee in the summer. We will review this before considering whether there are any further barriers to community energy development that need to be addressed. The Government continues to offer support to communities who want to generate energy locally through the Rural Community Energy Fund.

Small Businesses: Government Assistance**Alexander Stafford:**[\[170782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what Government (a) initiatives and (b) schemes are available to micro businesses with fewer than five employees to help them grow and scale up.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government offers a range of support to help businesses, including micro businesses, grow and thrive.

Businesses of all sizes can access advice and support through our online support at GOV.UK, including the online Finance Finder and via the free Business Support Helpline.

The network of 38 Growth Hubs across England plays a key role in providing tailored support to businesses at a local level in England, joining up national and local business support so businesses can find the help they need.

The Start-Up Loans Company provides funding and intensive support to new entrepreneurs. Since 2012 the Start-Up Loans programme has delivered 81,608 loans overall in the UK, supporting over £707.6m of funding (as of 28 February 2021).

Businesses can also access the Government-backed British Business Bank's online Finance Hub, which helps raise awareness of appropriate finance options for scale-up, high growth and potential high-growth SMEs.

Micro businesses are also able to apply for relevant elements of the continued comprehensive package of support designed to help as many businesses as possible during this challenging period. The measures introduced include the small business grants, the coronavirus loan guarantee schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the deferral of VAT and income tax payments, and more. These measures have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

Further measures have been announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer that build on the significant support already available as well as set out how current support will evolve and adapt. This includes the extension of the CJRS until the end of September 2021, extending and amending the coronavirus loan guarantee schemes to allow businesses more time and greater flexibility to repay their loans, and the extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) to a fourth and a fifth grant.

The Government continues to work closely with local authorities, businesses, business representative organisations, and the financial services sector to monitor the implementation of current support and understand whether there is additional need.

■ **Solar Power: Regulation**

Anthony Browne:

[\[171742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has any plans for regulation by Ofgem of energy providers' purchase price from private solar export systems under the Smart Export Guarantee scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Smart Export Guarantee (SEG), introduced in January 2020, ensures that small-scale generators have a guaranteed access to the market while enabling electricity suppliers and other market participants to innovate in this area. To provide space for this small-scale export market to develop and to promote innovation, the legislation sets out no specified minimum tariff rate, other than that a supplier must provide payment greater than zero at all times of export.

The SEG has been successful in bringing forward a range of competitive and innovative offerings to the market, with small-scale renewable generators having several tariffs to choose from, including several that are higher than the fixed export rate mandated by the previous Feed-in Tariffs scheme.

Ofgem are to publish their first report on the provisions made by suppliers for smaller scale exports in the summer. We will review this to monitor whether the market is delivering an effective, competitive and innovative range of options.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Peter Dowd:

[\[170681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of restricting wedding ceremonies to places of worship and some public buildings from 12 April 2021 on the wider wedding industry.

Paul Scully:

At Step 2, which will be no earlier than 12 April, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are permitted for up to 15 people in COVID-19 Secure venues that are permitted to open or where a broader exemption applies.

Receptions can take place with up to 15 people in the form of a sit-down meal and in any COVID-19 Secure outdoor venue that is permitted to open. Such receptions must not take place in people's private gardens or public outdoor spaces.

Over the course of the pandemic, the Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to business, which we keep under regular review.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Government Departments: Iron and Steel

Alexander Stafford:

[\[170791\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will require contractors on UK procurement projects to provide reasoning where UK steel has not been used.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[170792\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reforming the Procurement Policy Note on steel to stipulate that the tendering process for contractors include requirements to provide supply chain plans, advertise steel supply opportunities and report on the origin of steel ultimately used.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[170793\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing Contracts for Difference energy projects within the scope of the Procurement Policy Note on Steel.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[170794\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will encourage Cabinet colleagues to sign their Departments up to the UK Steel Charter.

Alexander Stafford: [\[170795\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential effect of the UK's steel safeguards not being renewed.

Alexander Stafford: [\[171783\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to encourage the purchase of UK produced steel in relevant Government contracts.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is committed to supporting the steel sector. Guidance published in December 2016 (PPN 11/16) has helped to create a level playing field by ensuring the full value offered by UK steel suppliers can be considered in major projects. Guidance covering supply chain plans and advertising opportunities is already included and the Government may consider additional obligations beyond the current guidance if they are in the public interest.

The steel guidance was designed only for contracts awarded under the Public Contracts Regulations, 2015; this does not include procurements which are based on Contracts for Difference arrangements that require a different process.

Departmental compliance with the steel guidance is published annually on Gov.uk along with a steel procurement pipeline to show future steel requirements for national infrastructure projects.

Departments are encouraged to sign up to aspects of the UK Steel Charter where relevant to their commercial activities and where consistent with the relevant procurement regulations, and the Government's steel policy guidelines.

The review of UK steel safeguards is being led by the Trade Investigation Directorate, an independent arm of the Department for International Trade and it would be premature for the Government to comment on this before the recommendations have been published.

A joint Industry/BEIS Taskforce has been established to consider issues reported by UK steel producers in relation to their ability to secure public sector contracts. It is expected to report in Autumn 2021.

■ UK Trade with EU

Fiona Bruce: [\[172056\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to tackle the delays businesses are experiencing exporting goods to Europe.

Fiona Bruce:

[\[172057\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with her European counterparts on delays to exports from the UK.

Penny Mordaunt:

I would encourage any business which needs assistance to refer to the extensive guidance available on GOV.UK.

My officials are working closely with Member State officials, businesses and their representatives to understand the reason for any delays or refusal of goods so that issues can be resolved and goods can move freely.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces Covenant

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[173192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to encourage businesses in (a) Wakefield constituency and (b) West Yorkshire to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

Johnny Mercer:

Every Local Authority in Great Britain has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and over 6,500 organisations have also pledged support. To date, over 350 organisations hold the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Standard for partnering with Defence and our network of Regional Employment Engagement Directors continue to promote the Covenant locally.

In West Yorkshire, 148 organisations have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant, 11 of which are in Wakefield.

The Department is always ready to work with local stakeholders and leaders to further raise the profile of the Armed Forces Covenant and encourage its adoption.

■ Armed Forces: Officers

Derek Twigg:

[\[170544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of officer cadets entering Sandhurst in the last 10 years attended (a) state and (b) private school.

James Heapey:

The table below shows the proportion of officer cadets entering Sandhurst in the last 10 years who attended independent and state schools:

This data has been provided from a single service source rather than official statistics produced by Defence Statistics as they do not collate this information.

TEAINING YEAR	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS %	STATE SCHOOLS %
2011-12	44	56
2012-13	47	53
2013-14	43	57
2014-15	40	60
2015-16	40	60
2016-17	42	58
2017-18	43	57
2018-19	48	52
2019-20	43	57
2020-21	44	56

■ **Veterans: Asbestos**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[174252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to equalise the compensation received by service personnel who develop lung cancer as a result of exposure to asbestos with those personnel who develop mesothelioma.

Johnny Mercer:

The Independent Medical Expert Group (IMEG), who provide medical and scientific advice on compensation to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), considered mesothelioma in their third report published in 2015. IMEG's report looked at other asbestos related cancers, including lung cancer, and recommended to the MOD that special arrangements for mesothelioma would be justified. This recommendation was implemented and, since 11 April 2016, existing and new War Pension Scheme claimants with mesothelioma have had the option of receiving weekly/four weekly payments of War Disablement Pension and any supplementary allowances with eligibility for a War Widow(er)s Pension, or a lump sum of £140,000. To be eligible for the lump sum, veterans are required to wavier their right to the weekly/four weekly War Disablement Pension and War Widows Pension. This has been introduced to offer more flexibility to veterans. The third IMEG report on the medical and scientific aspects of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/imeg-third-report-on-medical-and-scientific-aspects-of-the-armed-forces-compensation-scheme>

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Coronavirus Community Support Fund: Repayments****Mohammad Yasin:**[\[172103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the proportion of the £200 million Coronavirus Community Support Fund which must be repaid by recipients after the six month deadlines expire; and if he will make a statement.

Mohammad Yasin:[\[172104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will extend the six-month deadline for the Coronavirus Community Support Fund where lockdown measures introduced in November 2020 and from January 2021 have delayed recipients from making use of these funds as intended.

Matt Warman:

The Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF) is a £200million grant scheme which helped organisations to meet service costs where they were experiencing increased demand and/or short-term income disruption. Funding is distributed and administered by The National Lottery Community Support Fund (TNLCF).

Under the terms of the scheme, all funding had to be distributed and spent by recipients in the 2020/21 financial year. TNLCF began awarding grants in early July 2020 and, as of 15 March 2021, 99.9% of the funding had been disbursed to over 8,000 organisations.

Grant agreements are between TNLCF and grantees, and grants were initially intended to cover a six month period. However, successive lockdowns put additional pressure on charities to deliver, and not all projects were able to go ahead as envisaged. Where this was the case, TNLCF encouraged flexibility within terms of the grant agreement to help grantees adapt and continue to deliver their ambitions. This included some extensions to grants where appropriate.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Chief Scientific Advisers**Greg Clark:**[\[170573\]](#)

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

Caroline Dinenage:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport draws from a range of scientific advice and expertise, including from the Chief Scientific Advisers in individual Government Departments, and academics and researchers. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal meetings are not normally disclosed.

■ Digital Technology: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[170672]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps he has taken to tackle the digital divide in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Caroline Dinéage:

In order to address regional digital skills gaps, my department is supporting a Local Digital Skills Partnerships in the West Midlands Combined Authority areas, which brings together cross-sector regional and national partners to work collaboratively to upskill the current workforce, advance digital inclusion, and build thriving regional economies.

Public libraries are also a vital component in tackling digital exclusion. A priority of Coventry Libraries is to create improved access to digital services and increase the digital literacy skills of local residents. During 2019 to 2020 Coventry Libraries in the North East of the City have provided over 70,000 hours and over 100,000 sessions of access to public computers and Wi-Fi services. While reduced service has been provided during 2020, due to COVID 19, they are continuing with plans to increase access to public PCs, install new computers at both Bell Green and Foleshill Libraries and reintroduce computer help sessions, job clubs and benefits, debt and housing advice sessions.

The Government has also introduced new essential digital skills qualifications (EDSQs) based on [new national standards for essential digital skills.\(opens in a new tab\)](#) Adults with no or low digital skills can study essential digital skills qualifications for free.

■ Hotels: Construction

Damian Hinds:

[171577]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether it remains Government policy for 130,000 more hotel rooms to be built by 2025; and what progress has been made against that target to date.

Nigel Huddleston:

The UK Government will publish a Tourism Recovery Plan in the Spring. Given the significant impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector, we now face different challenges to when the Tourism Sector Deal was published. The Recovery Plan will build on the foundations of the Sector Deal.

We are continuing to engage with stakeholders to assess how we can most effectively support tourism's long term recovery.

■ Sports: Public Participation

James Daly: [\[174330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage participation in grass roots sports.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are crucial for our mental and physical health. The Chief Medical Officer is clear that being physically active is important to long-term health and crucial for keeping people healthy. That's why we have continued to make sure that people can exercise throughout the national restrictions, and why we have ensured that grassroots and children's sport is front of the queue when easing those restrictions.

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

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

■ Tourism: Coronavirus

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[170753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take to encourage British tourism following the easing of covid-19 restrictions.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[170754\]](#)

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

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[170756\]](#)

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

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government has been here for culture throughout the pandemic, and, as we emerge from it, we know that the public will want to be there, too. As our cultural institutions reopen, we will encourage people to get out there and support them and we will continue to provide guidance to ensure venues are safe for the public.

The Government's roadmap to recovery reaffirms its commitment to publish a Tourism Recovery Plan in support of the sector. The Government intends to set out proposals in the spring, including plans for a world class marketing campaign to welcome back visitors to the UK as soon as it is safe to do so.

DCMS has been working closely with the tourism, arts and cultural sectors to ensure that they are ready for reopening. The government published the roadmap on 22 February, which sets out a step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England cautiously.

The design of the roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country. The scientific evidence shows that opening too early or too quickly risks a further lockdown.

The Government recognises that this continues to be an incredibly challenging time and that there are many cultural organisations and professionals who are currently facing difficult and uncertain circumstances. We are continuing to engage extensively with stakeholders from across DCMS's sectors to understand the impacts of the pandemic and to determine how sectors can reopen when it is safe to do so.

Damian Hinds:[\[171576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to increase the volume of marketing spend in key (a) development and (b) other source markets in the upcoming Tourism Recovery Plan.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Global Travel Taskforce last year committed the Government to publish a Tourism Recovery Plan in support of the sector, which will include plans for a marketing campaign to welcome visitors back to the UK as soon as it is safe to do so. We will publish this document in the Spring.

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

A successor to the Global Travel Taskforce will report by 12 April with recommendations aimed at facilitating a return to international travel as soon as possible, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants of concern. Following that, the Government will determine when international travel should resume, which will be no earlier than 17 May. The Government will align the timing and details of its marketing plans with the outcome of the report.

EDUCATION**■ Cultural Heritage and Tourist Attractions: T-levels**

Damian Hinds: [\[171578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason his Department has decided not to proceed with developing a T Level in Cultural Heritage and Visitor Attractions.

Gillian Keegan:

In July 2020, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education took the decision to halt development of the T Level in Cultural Heritage and Visitor Attractions (CHVA). The Institute consulted extensively before making this decision, both with organisations from the sector as well as employers involved in the creation of relevant occupational standards.

The Institute concluded that a T Level in CHVA would have limited employer demand and insufficient interest from students, and that the needs of the sector could be met through other T Levels. For example, feedback from employers suggested that T Levels in business and administration were well placed to develop the skills that are relevant to many occupations within the Cultural Heritage and Visitor Attraction sector. Students would then be able to tailor their programme by taking their industry placement with a relevant employer in the sector.

■ Remote Education: ICT

Sir George Howarth: [\[171510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in the event of future covid-19 lockdown restrictions to schools, what proposals he has to ensure that all children have access to appropriate devices for online learning.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including making 1.3 million laptops and tablets available for disadvantaged children and young people. To date, over 1.2 million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, academy trusts, local authorities and further education colleges.

The Government is providing this significant injection of laptops and tablets on top of an estimated 2.9 million already owned by schools before the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

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

The Department also provided support for over 100,000 families to get online through uplifts in mobile data and 4G wireless routers.

We are considering future options on digital education, and we will set out our plans in due course.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Wes Streeting:

[156474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools have arrangements for mass covid-19 testing in place in (a) England and (b) each (i) constituency and (ii) local authority area.

Nick Gibb:

For England, we have published this information here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/covid-mass-testing-data-in-education>.

Please note, secondary school and college schools in scope here include all schools where the highest age in the school/college is at least 12 years old. The primary schools and local authority nurseries in scope include all primary schools/local authority nurseries which were in scope of receiving test kits deliveries[1].

[1] The number of nurseries, schools and colleges in scope are defined by those which were in scope to be registered for ATS testing for secondary schools and colleges and for primary this is schools that were in scope to receive deliveries.

■ Students: Fees and Charges

Claudia Webbe:

[173215]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of abolishing tuition fees (a) for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak and (b) in perpetuity.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is committed to a sustainable higher education (HE) funding model that supports high quality provision, meets the skills needs of the country, and maintains the world-class reputation of UK HE. We recognise that tuition fees must continue to represent value for money for students and taxpayers, both during the COVID-19 outbreak and after.

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

The COVID-19 outbreak continues to be a difficult and uncertain time for students. The government's expectations are very clear: HE providers should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and seek to ensure that all students regardless of their background have the resources to study remotely. The HE regulator in England, the

Office for Students (OfS), has made it clear that all HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and standards. The OfS is taking very seriously the potential impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on teaching and learning. It is actively monitoring providers to ensure that they maintain the quality of their provision, that it is accessible for all, and that they have been clear in their communications with students about how arrangements for teaching and learning may change throughout the year. The OfS is also following up directly with providers where they receive notifications from students, parents or others raising concerns about the quality of teaching on offer and requiring providers to report to them when they are not able to deliver a course or award a qualification. If the OfS has any concerns, it will investigate further.

If students have concerns, there is also a complaints process in place. They should first raise their concerns with their university. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) to consider their complaint. The OIA website is available at: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

After finishing study, we believe that it is right that students should contribute to the cost of their HE, and that this contribution should be linked to their income. Only those who earn above the repayment threshold, which is £27,295 per year from April 2021, are required to make repayments. This system of income-based repayment means that those who have benefited the most from their education repay their fair share and helps to ensure that costs are split fairly between borrowers and the taxpayer.

■ Students: Mental Health Services

Daniel Zeichner:

[172088]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for student mental health services to meet the increased demand resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

Protecting student and staff wellbeing is vital - these are difficult times and it is important students can still access the mental health and wellbeing support that they need. We recognise that many students are facing additional mental health challenges due to the disruption and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. I have engaged with universities on this issue, and have written to Vice Chancellors on numerous occasions, outlining that student welfare should be prioritised.

We have worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to provide Student Space, which has been funded with up to £3 million by the OfS. Student Space is a mental health and wellbeing platform, designed to work alongside existing services and to bridge gaps in support that arise from this unprecedented situation. This resource provides dedicated one-to-one phone, text and web chat facilities, as well as a collaborative online platform providing vital mental health and wellbeing resources.

Ensuring that students have access to high-quality mental health support is my top priority, which is why I asked the OfS to look at extending the platform. I am delighted that they have been able to extend the platform to support students for the whole 2020/21 academic year, because no student should be left behind at this challenging time.

Furthermore, we have asked the OfS to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in the academic year 2021/22 through proposed reforms to Strategic Priorities grant funding, to help address the challenges to student mental health posed by the transition to university, given the increasing demand for mental health services. This will target those students in greatest need of such services, including vulnerable groups and hard to reach students.

The government has also worked closely with the OfS to help clarify that providers can draw upon existing funding to increase hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by COVID-19. Providers are able to use the funding, worth around £256 million for the academic year 2020/21, towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of IT equipment, and mental health support, as well as to support providers' access and participation plans. We have also made an additional £70 million of student hardship funding available to higher education providers this financial year.

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the government has provided over £10 million to leading mental health charities including charities like Young Minds and Place 2 Be, which young people can access to support their mental health.

Students struggling with their mental health can also access support via online resources from the NHS, Public Health England via the mental health charity Mind and the Every Mind Matters website: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>.

■ Summer Schools: Coronavirus

Sir George Howarth:

[171511]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what representations he has received on the (a) adequacy of the Government's summer catch-up provision, and (b) suitability of providers who have applied for contracts to provide such programmes.

Nick Gibb:

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

In January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, committed to work with parents, teachers and pupils to develop a long-term plan to help pupils make up their education over the course of this Parliament. As an immediate step to support nurseries, schools and colleges, on 24 February the Department committed an additional £700 million to support summer schools, tutoring, early language interventions, and additional support to schools to help pupils make up their education. This builds on the £1 billion from last year and brings the total available to £1.7 billion.

The £1 billion package includes a £650 million catch up premium to support schools in helping their pupils to make up lost education. The funding will be issued in three tranches, two of which have already been delivered. The third, and largest (£271 million), will be delivered in the summer term. Schools can use catch up premium funding to support pupils to catch up in the summer. To help schools make the best use of this funding, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published a support guide for schools with evidence-based approaches to catch up for all students, which is available here:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/national-tutoring-programme/covid-19-support-guide-for-schools/#nav-covid-19-support-guide-for-schools1>. The EEF have also published a further school planning guide: 2020 to 2021, available to view here: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/guide-to-supporting-schools-planning/>.

The £700 million announcement in February also included a new one-off recovery premium of £302 million for the next academic year. The recovery premium will build on the pupil premium to further support pupils who need it most. Schools' allocations from the recovery premium will be based on the number of their pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. Schools should use the recovery premium, alongside their existing catch up premium, and their pupil premium as a single total from which to prioritise support for pupils according to their need, including to support catch up in the summer.

£200 million will be made available to secondary schools to deliver a face to face summer school. A mix of academic and enrichment activities should help the pupils involved to recover some of their lost education and should also support their mental health and wellbeing. The Department has not contracted any providers to deliver summer schools. Schools will be funded directly and they are free to resource the support to best meet the needs of the school and its pupils. The Department will shortly publish guidance that includes signposts to additional support for schools should they need it.

The Department has made an additional £630,000 available for Oak National Academy to support education recovery by developing free, high-quality resources that will be available online throughout the summer holidays. This optional suite of resources covering Reception to Year 11 will provide support to pupils who have missed important curriculum content. It can be used by teachers or holiday clubs when setting holiday homework or running summer schools.

In addition, the Department's holiday activities and food programme will make up to £220 million available to local authorities to coordinate free holiday activities, including healthy food and enriching activities, during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. The programme will be available to children who receive benefits-related free school meals in every local authority in England. The programme is delivered through grants to local authorities, and local authorities will therefore hold any contracts with local providers.

In summer 2020, as part of the initial £1 billion catch-up package, the Government launched a £350 million National Tutoring Programme (NTP). The NTP is an ambitious scheme which provides additional, targeted support for those children and young people who have been hardest hit from disruption to their education as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

As part of the £700 million plan announced on 24 February, this included £200 million to expand our successful tutoring programmes. This will fund an £83 million expansion of the National Tutoring Programme for 5–16-year-olds in 2021/22, which has been shown to boost catch up education by much as 3-5 months, a £102 million extension of the 16-19 Tuition Fund for a further year to support more students in English, maths and other vocational and academic subjects, and £18 million funding to support language development in the early years, supporting a critical stage of child development.

■ Teachers: Pensions

Gareth Thomas:

[170523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many widowers of female teachers who belonged to the Teachers' Pension Scheme are receiving smaller survivor pensions than they would have received if they had been the widower of a male teacher; and what proportion of those widowers will receive improved survivor pensions following the Goodwin Tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

There are 12,852 widowers of female scheme members who are, or may be, receiving a pension lower than they would if they were the widower of a male member. All affected widowers have been identified and will have their benefits corrected, with arrears if appropriate, as soon as practicable. The scheme administrator will soon begin writing to widowers who are affected to notify them of the change.

A Written Ministerial Statement following the Goodwin Employment Tribunal case was made on 20 July 2020 by the Chief Secretary to Her Majesty's Treasury: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-07-20/hcws397>.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animals: EU Countries

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [170771]

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

Victoria Prentis:

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

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF LIVE ANIMALS
Jan 2020	1,480,131
Feb 2020	870,907
Mar 2020	1,357,395
April 2020	1,297,715
May 2020	1,540,619
June 2020	1,586,510
July 2020	1,046,970
Aug 2020	823,823
Sept 2020	1,145,903
Oct 2020	1,263,498
Nov 2020	939,216
Dec 2020	823,948
Jan 2021	12,169,207
Feb 2021	110,935,911

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

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

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [[170772](#)]

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

Victoria Prentis:

The number of live animals exported from the UK to the EU from January 2020 to February 2021 are as follows:

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF LIVE ANIMALS
Jan 2020	2,588,293
Feb 2020	1,911,125
Mar 2020	2,073,293
April 2020	2,862,619
May 2020	2,239,639
June 2020	3,009,449
July 2020	2,158,253
Aug 2020	2,347,465
Sept 2020	1,990,329
Oct 2020	2,066,370
Nov 2020	1,356,446
Dec 2020	1,031,599
Jan 2021	N/A
Feb 2021	N/A

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

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

There are no records of individual animal numbers travelling from the UK to the EU for 2021.

EHC Online does have a section for APHA to note the total number of animals exported, but as we have changed the requirement for certified copies to be returned, this information can only be captured for livestock and camelids.

Export Health Certification issued using the new EHC Online service contains a module for Certifying Officers (CO) to record when they have approved, rejected or cancelled a certificate. As a result, APHA no longer routinely require COs to return certified copies of EHC to APHA. APHA can no longer provide data on the exact number of live animals being exported from Great Britain to the EU.

The EHC Online service was enhanced in February 2021 to include an area for APHA to record the total number of animals exported on an EHC, but this data field will only be completed by APHA for exports of cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and camelids where there remains a requirement for the return of a certified copy of the EHC. The return of certified copies of these EHCs remains due to legislative requirements for the UK to trace and report the export of animals from a holding where a disease outbreak has occurred post-export.

■ **Animals: Northern Ireland**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [[170769](#)]

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

Victoria Prentis:

The number of live animals imported from Northern Ireland to Great Britain from January 2020 to February 2021 are as follows:

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF LIVE ANIMALS
Jan 2020	7554
Feb 2020	9147
Mar 2020	13644
April 2020	7397
May 2020	6918
June 2020	8225
July 2020	7230
Aug 2020	6687
Sept 2020	8219
Oct 2020	3630
Nov 2020	3696
Dec 2020	4534
Jan 2021	16
Feb 2021	32

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

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

The data is correct according to APHA records. However, APHA is now receiving an increased number of Importer Notifications that do not specify country of origin of the consignment. This may account in the reduction of figures for January and February.

■ Budds Farm: Water Treatment

Stephen Morgan:

[\[170726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the investment made by Southern Water following funding in Government green grants for key environment programmes on measures to increase capacity at Budds Farm wastewater treatment facility to better protect the surrounding environment.

Rebecca Pow:

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

There are currently no projects planned by Southern Water to improve treatment or increase capacity at Budds Farm wastewater treatment facility within this Asset Management cycle (2020-2025). There have been improvement projects to environmental monitoring systems at Budds Farm wastewater treatment facility. The treatment works is complying with its permit and there are have been no recorded breaches of effluent quality standards for this discharge during 2020.

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.

I met water company CEOs in September and made clear that the volume of sewage discharged into rivers and other waterways in extreme weather must be reduced.

The new Storm Overflows Taskforce - bringing together Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs - has agreed to set a long term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows. The Taskforce is now working on plans to start making progress towards that goal, and they have commissioned research to gather evidence on the costs, benefits and feasibility of different options.

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

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Chief Scientific Advisers**

Greg Clark: [\[170575\]](#)

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

Victoria Prentis:

The Secretary of State attended six meetings with his Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) between 1 March 2020 and 31 May 2020; 14 meetings between 1 June 2020 and 31 August 2020; 22 meetings between 1 September 2020 and 30 November 2020; and 12 meetings between 1 December 2020 and 28 February 2021.

The Department's Junior Ministers also attend meetings with their CSA.

■ **Dogs: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[171538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19-related economic pressures on dog owners on the welfare of their dogs.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises that the coronavirus pandemic continues to affect individuals, businesses and charities caring for animals, including as a result of the economic pressures that some owners may be subject to. In April 2020, the Government commissioned the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) to advise on the potential short-term animal welfare impacts relating to the pandemic. Their preliminary report in June 2020 highlighted some concerns about the ability of businesses, veterinarians and charities to continue to provide services to animal keepers; the need for contingency planning; and the impact of owners' physical and mental health on their ability to care for their animals. However, the committee's second report, published in December 2020, concluded that many of the animal welfare risks identified in its first report had not been fully realised, particularly in the case of companion animals.

The Government has also provided updated advice for pet owners on looking after their animals throughout the pandemic: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-with-animals> We also continue to maintain close contact with animal welfare organisations, monitoring trends in animal cruelty levels, pet acquisition and pet relinquishments.

These organisations do valuable work, often on a voluntary basis, protecting animals against cruelty and, in the case of rescue and rehoming organisations, ensuring that unwanted and abandoned animals in the UK are offered the opportunity of a forever home. Throughout this challenging period, we have ensured that rescue and rehoming organisations are permitted to stay open, that staff and volunteers can continue to work and tend to the animals in their care, and that rehoming, fostering and adoption services can continue in accordance with Covid-19 secure guidance.

The sector has kept us regularly updated of the developing situation, sharing their surveys particularly with respect to rescue and rehoming rates, and information on cruelty investigations. The latest figures from a survey by the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH) show that in Quarter 4 of 2020 there was a 24% Year on Year reduction of cat intake and a 32% reduction in dogs entering rescues. 68% of rescues have reported more people wish to foster dogs or cats and 58% have seen an increase in people wishing to rehome a dog or cat, illustrating the resilience of the sector and the positive picture for pets.

With the exception of those businesses and venues required to close, the Government has emphasised that it is important for business to carry on, not least to ensure the economy keeps working and in the case of pet businesses and animal welfare charities to help safeguard the welfare of the nation's pets. Pet businesses play a key role in this and should operate within the strict advice on social distancing and hygiene. In addition, the Canine and Feline Sector Group has issued its own guidance to owners and pet businesses on how they can care for their pets and continue to operate under the restrictions in place to limit the spread of coronavirus. See: <https://www.cfsq.org.uk/coronavirus/>

We will maintain our close dialogue with animal welfare organisations, enforcement agencies and sector groups to understand the longer-term impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, monitor the animal welfare implications of this and offer appropriate advice.

■ Dogs: EU Countries

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [170768]

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

Victoria Prentis:

The number of dogs imported from the EU to the UK from January 2020 to February 2021 are as follows:

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF DOGS
Jan 2020	3810
Feb 2020	3391

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF DOGS
Mar 2020	1987
April 2020	934
May 2020	4,90
June 2020	5202
July 2020	6309
Aug 2020	5273
Sept 2020	6826
Oct 2020	7031
Nov 2020	6944
Dec 2020	8293
Jan 2021	1225
Feb 2021	5923

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

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

■ Dogs: Republic of Ireland

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [\[170767\]](#)

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

Victoria Prentis:

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

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF DOGS
Jan 2020	694
Feb 2020	658

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF DOGS
Mar 2020	467
April 2020	99
May 2020	309
June 2020	480
July 2020	461
Aug 2020	449
Sept 2020	640
Oct 2020	572
Nov 2020	508
Dec 2020	477
Jan 2021	97
Feb 2021	532

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

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

■ Flood Control: Greater Manchester

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[171556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Government will make additional funding available for flood defences in Prestolee and Stoneclough.

Rebecca Pow:

Starting from 2021, the Government will invest £5.2 billion in a six-year capital investment programme for flood and coastal erosion risk management to build around 2,000 new flood defences. This investment will better protect 336,000 properties, including 290,000 homes, from flooding and coastal erosion by 2027.

Defra provides the majority of its funding for flood and coastal erosion risk management to the Environment Agency as Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid (FDGiA). The Environment Agency spends this funding directly on FCERM, but also passes some on as grants to Local Authorities or Internal Drainage Boards

The proposed Prestolee and Stoneclough flood scheme will protect approximately 80 homes in the community of Prestolee, with the total cost of the scheme estimated to be £3 million - £4.5 million. The scheme is currently eligible for £1.47 million of Defra FDGiA, of which £250,000 has already been awarded for 2020/21 following a successful FDGiA acceleration bid. This has allowed the scheme to progress to Outline Business Case stage.

Funding for all projects are allocated according to the rules that govern Defra's existing six-year capital programme and in accordance with the Partnership Funding Policy. The Partnership Funding policy clarifies the level of investment communities can expect from Defra so it is clear what level of funding they need source from other sources to allow projects to go ahead.

■ Floods: Climate Change

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[171762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what engagement he has had with UK communities with an increased risk of flooding due to climate change in the runup to COP26.

Rebecca Pow:

Flood and coastal erosion risk management is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

Ministers meet regularly with communities, honourable members of this house, and a range of organisations representing those at risk from flooding and coastal erosion.

Adapting to the current and predicted changes to our climate is vital. The UK is already leading the fight against climate change by delivering on our world-leading target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Whilst we continue to reduce our contribution to climate change, we are also taking robust action to improve the resilience of our people, economy and environment.

Last year, the government published a long-term Policy Statement which sets out our ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. The Policy Statement includes five policies and over 40 supporting actions which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion in the face of more frequent extreme weather as a result of climate change. For example, by the end of March 2021, we will have invested £2.6 billion to better protect more than 300,000 homes from flood and coastal erosion risk between 2015/16 and 2020/21.

From April 2021, the government will double the amount it invests in the flood and coastal defence programme in England to £5.2 billion over six years. This will provide around 2,000 new defence schemes to better protect a further 336,000 properties. In addition, up to £170 million will be spent to accelerate work on 22 shovel-ready flood defence schemes that will begin construction before the end of 2021/2022. We are also investing an additional £200 million in the Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme. This will help over 25 local areas over six years to take

forward wider innovative actions that improve their resilience to flooding and coastal erosion.

Adaptation and Resilience is one of the priority action areas for COP26. This will build upon the 'Call for Action' which was launched at the United Nation's Climate Action Summit (UNCAS) in September 2019. Hosting COP26 provides the UK with an unrivalled opportunity to capitalise on its reputation in science, innovation and climate leadership to drive forward change on a global stage.

■ Horses: EU Countries

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [\[170775\]](#)

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

Victoria Prentis:

The number of equines imported from the EU to the UK from January 2020 to February 2021 are as follows:

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF EQUINES
Jan 2020	284
Feb 2020	283
Mar 2020	310
April 2020	72
May 2020	182
June 2020	361
July 2020	278
Aug 2020	379
Sept 2020	363
Oct 2020	433
Nov 2020	464
Dec 2020	379
Jan 2021	258
Feb 2021	801

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

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

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [[170777](#)]

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

Victoria Prentis:

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

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF EQUINES
Jan 2020	495
Feb 2020	422
Mar 2020	389
April 2020	295
May 2020	364
June 2020	542
July 2020	309
Aug 2020	506
Sept 2020	333
Oct 2020	395
Nov 2020	242
Dec 2020	320
Jan 2021	344
Feb 2021	991

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

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

■ **Horses: France**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [[170776](#)]

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

Victoria Prentis:

The number of equines imported from France to the UK from January 2020 to February 2021 are as follows:

MONTH	EQUINES TRAVELLED ON		TOTAL
	AN ITAHC OR EHC	A DOCOM	
Jan 2020	18	148	166
Feb 2020	15	102	117
Mar 2020	17	112	129
April 2020	4	61	65
May 2020	18	201	219
June 2020	22	73	95
July 2020	23	84	107
Aug 2020	27	70	97
Sept 2020	28	78	106
Oct 2020	37	145	182
Nov 2020	23	112	135
Dec 2020	27	187	214
Jan 2021	61	N/A	61
Feb 2021	244	N/A	244

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

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

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [[170779](#)]

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

Victoria Prentis:

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

MONTH	EQUINES TRAVELLED ON AN ITAHC OR EHC	EQUINES TRAVELLED ON A DOCOM	TOTAL
Jan 2020	71	106	177
Feb 2020	48	120	168
Mar 2020	58	114	172
April 2020	26	115	141
May 2020	18	76	94
June 2020	30	418	448
July 2020	29	337	366
Aug 2020	91	198	289
Sept 2020	36	195	231
Oct 2020	96	274	370
Nov 2020	61	78	139
Dec 2020	82	241	323
Jan 2021	8	N/A	8
Feb 2021	79	N/A	89

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

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

■ Horticulture: Imports**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:**[\[171499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) potential merits of introducing a trusted trader scheme for importers of ornamental horticulture products and (b) the role such a scheme could play in providing value for money for tax payers.

Victoria Prentis:

As the phased introduction of EU-GB plant health import controls is completed in early 2022, Defra is exploring possible options for performing plant health controls away from the border on a longer term basis, such as increased uptake in the use of designated plant health control points, or a trusted trader scheme for checks at destination. We would consult on any long term option with industry, to ensure that our high standards of biosecurity are maintained.

■ Horticulture: Northern Ireland**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:**[\[171495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the flow of plants, seeds and other horticulture products from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:[\[171496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Northern Ireland Protocol on the horticulture sector in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) Great Britain.

Victoria Prentis:

The Northern Ireland Protocol obliges both the UK and EU to seek to streamline processes for trade between Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland (NI), and to avoid controls at NI ports as far as possible. In line with that obligation, through technical engagement with the European Commission, the UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive have developed helpful practical arrangements to simplify checks and controls on goods to the maximum extent.

The Scheme for Temporary Agri-food Movements to Northern Ireland currently in place allows authorised traders, such as supermarkets and their trusted suppliers, to move a large proportion of agri-food goods from GB to NI without the need for official certification, until 1 October 2021. Exporters of fruit, vegetables or cut flowers from GB to the EU or Northern Ireland, may also be eligible for the Plant Health Exports Audited Trader Scheme. Under this scheme, exporters are able to complete their own inspections and apply for phytosanitary certificates to be issued, which means checks take place at a time which suits them and avoids the need for official on-site inspections of each consignment.

The Government has also put in place the Movement Assistance Scheme. This scheme means that businesses moving plants, plant products or agricultural

machinery from GB to NI do not need to pay for the fees associated with inspections and issuance of the phytosanitary certificates. Defra will monitor the performance of the scheme and review it after three months to determine how to best provide ongoing support to traders.

In line with announcements made by the UK Government at the beginning of March, it is now much simpler to move plants with soil and growing media attached from GB to NI. This will remain the case whilst engagement with the European Commission continues to develop appropriate, risk-based arrangements for the long-term.

Despite horticultural goods being eligible for some of these arrangements, comprehensive data on the movement of such goods between GB and NI is not available. However, total trade in Defra related goods between GB and NI is estimated to have recovered after a brief dip in January. Overall horticultural businesses have adjusting well since the end of the Transition Period and are trading effectively.

■ Horticulture: UK Trade with EU

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:

[\[171497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the costs of establishing and operating Border Control Posts for the inspection of plants and other horticultural products.

Victoria Prentis:

Border Control Posts (BCPs) are not being built or operated by the UK Government. The Government has provided generous funding to help local authorities construct and operate BCPs. This includes up to £200 million in grant funding from the Port Infrastructure Fund and Defra has provided £14 million to help recruit and train staff to support the checking regime.

■ Land Drainage: Storms

Stephen Morgan:

[\[170727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Storm Overflows Taskforce's plans to eliminate harm from (a) Langstone Harbour and (b) other storm overflows.

Rebecca Pow:

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

Nationally water companies have agreed to make real-time data on sewage discharges available at bathing sites all year round and are installing additional monitoring devices by 2023. Southern Water intends to meet this commitment ahead of the deadline.

Locally Environment Agency (EA) teams are assessing the latest data of discharges to Langstone Harbour and identifying any discharges that are not operating as they are intended. For any non-compliance they will take appropriate actions in line with

the EA's enforcement and prosecution policy and will continue to investigate and respond to any reported incidents associated with the operation of storm discharges in the area.

I also understand that the hon. Member met with the EA recently to discuss the reporting arrangements and controls relating to storm discharges into Langstone Harbour.

During periods of significant rainfall untreated sewage diluted by rainwater will discharge through storm overflows to avoid streets, premises and sewage treatment plants being flooded. Water companies are committed in the five-year business planning period (2020-25) to a significant programme of improvements to the monitoring and management of storm overflows at a cost of around £1.1 billion. This investment includes undertaking 800 investigations and 798 improvement schemes to provide environmental improvements by reducing spills from frequently spilling overflows.

The new Storm Overflows Taskforce - bringing together the Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs - 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 has 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.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries

Stephanie Peacock: [\[170702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the length of time it will take to protect all 76 offshore Marine Protected Areas from bottom trawling in those protected areas.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[170703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reasons four of the 76 offshore Marine Protected Area sites were consulted on ending bottom trawling practices.

Rebecca Pow:

Marine protection is a devolved matter and the information below relates to England only.

In England, we have 40 offshore Marine Protected Areas which have been designated to protect a variety of important habitats, species and geological features. Outside of the Common Fisheries Policy, we now are focused on ensuring these sites have the appropriate level of protection from bottom trawling.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has developed an ambitious programme for assessing sites and implementing byelaws, where necessary, to manage fishing activity in all English offshore Marine Protected Areas. We recognise the urgency to establish management measures to protect the marine environment. We will engage fully with all stakeholders and have established a process to enable evidence gathering and consultation, with the aim of all sites being protected within 3 years. As soon as the transition period ended, the MMO moved quickly to launch a consultation on draft management measures for the first four sites. All English offshore sites have been prioritised based on the features sensitivity to fishing activity and these four sites were considered the most urgent.

The consultation closes on the 28th March 2021 and the MMO is keen to hear views on the proposed management measures.

■ Tourist Attractions: Coronavirus

Sir George Howarth:

[\[171517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what representations he has received from (a) zoos, (b) aquariums and (c) safari parks on the support needed to (i) remain economically viable in the context of the effect of covid-19 restrictions and (ii) ensure that animal welfare standards are maintained.

Victoria Prentis:

We remain committed to ensuring the sector can deliver the best possible care for its animals and have regular meetings with BIAZA, the zoo and aquarium industry body, and frequently engage with the CEOs of the largest charitable zoos. These discussions touch on many topics, including updates on the financial situation of the sector.

We have reacted to feedback from the industry and expanded the eligibility criteria of the Zoo Animals Fund so that grant payments to zoos begin when zoos reach their final 12 weeks of financial reserves, rather than six weeks and also expanded the range of costs that are eligible under the Fund so zoos can now claim costs relating to pre-planned essential maintenance and repair works as well as animal care costs. Representations were also made to extend the Fund and we have acted upon on this and extended the Fund for a second time. Applications are now open until 28 May and support will be provided until 30 June.

We are pleased to say we have received positive feedback from recipients of the Zoo Animals Fund on how the funding has enabled them to continue to provide the best care for their animals and operate safely in these challenging times. We are also working closely with the sector on their reopening guidance to ensure that zoos and aquariums are ready to open their doors to visitors, as soon as it is safe to do so. We will continue to engage with the sector to fully understand the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and to provide updates as situations change.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Department for International Development: Chief Scientific Advisers**

Greg Clark: [\[170576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many meetings the Secretary of State for International Development had with her Department's Chief Scientific Adviser from (a) 1 March 2020 to 31 May 2020, (b) 1 June 2020 to 31 August 2020 and (c) 1 September 2020 to 2 September 2020.

James Duddridge:

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Ministers continually draw on science advice. Science is an integral component to the process of FCDO policy and programmatic decision-making, informed by the latest research and evidence, which is communicated to Ministers regularly largely through submissions, information notes and update paragraphs. The Chief Scientific Adviser also sits on the Executive Committee (ExCo), embedding science advice into FCDO's senior leadership's decision making. The former Secretary of State for International Development, The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, met with her Chief Scientific Adviser 9 times during the period 1 March 2020 to 31 May 2020, 4 times during the period 1 June 2020 to 31 August 2020 and did not meet on the 1 or 2 September 2020. The Chief Scientific Adviser, and her office, provides all Ministers with regular written submissions and briefings on science and research activities.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Chief Scientific Advisers

Greg Clark: [\[170577\]](#)

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

James Duddridge:

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Ministers continually draw on science advice. Science advice, and the use of evidence, is an integral component to the process of FCDO policy and programmatic decision-making. Scientific advice and the latest evidence is communicated to Ministers regularly, largely through submissions, information notes and update paragraphs, as well as in 1-1 meetings. The Chief Scientific Adviser also sits on the Executive Committee (ExCo), embedding science advice into FCDO's senior leadership's decision making. Beyond this, Ministers also regularly meet with the Department's Chief Scientific Adviser, and her office. I [Minister Duddridge] have personally met the Chief Scientific Adviser many times over the specified time periods, including 18 November 2020, 28 January 2021, with our most recent meeting on 3 March 2021. The Foreign Secretary most recently met with his Chief Scientific Adviser on 8 March 2021.

■ Hassan, Mushaima**Sir George Howarth:** [\[170546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department is making to the Bahraini Government on securing the release of Hasan Mushaima.

Sir George Howarth: [\[170547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Bahraini counterpart on the continued detention and wellbeing of Hasan Mushaima.

James Cleverly:

We continue to monitor and raise the case of Hassan Mushaima, as necessary, at senior levels with the Bahraini Government. The Government of Bahrain has been clear that access to medical care for those in detention is provided in line with the Constitution of Bahrain. We welcome those assurances. We encourage those with concerns about treatment in detention to raise the matter with the Bahraini human rights oversight bodies. The UK continues to engage with the Government of Bahrain to support its reform agenda, and to deliver on its international and domestic human rights commitments.

■ Israel: Lebanon**Andy Slaughter:** [\[172917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on the (a) number and (b) type of violations of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 involving cross-border firing of weapons and (ii) incursions by (A) land and (B) air in each of the last 12 months.

James Cleverly:

The UN's latest Report on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701 for the period 17 June to 20 October 2020 provides a comprehensive assessment of violations in this period, including air and land violations.

https://unifil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s_2020_1110_e.pdf

The UK condemns all violations of UN Security Council Resolutions 1509 and 1701, and calls for all sides to adhere to the relevant resolutions. We welcome the efforts made by United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to mediate between parties and decrease tensions.

■ Sri Lanka: Sanctions**Gareth Thomas:** [\[171481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to apply sanctions against (a) General Shavendra Silva, (b) Major General Kamal Gunaratne and (c) others resident in Sri Lanka and elsewhere credibly

accused of gross human rights violations and war crimes; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government remains concerned by the number of appointments in Sri Lanka of military figures implicated in allegations of human rights violations and war crimes to senior positions. The UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime offers a powerful tool to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations or abuses. It is not appropriate to speculate on who may be designated in the future as to do so could reduce the impact of the designations.

■ **Syria: Peace Negotiations**

Stephen Timms:

[\[172853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the new US Administration to work towards a political settlement to end the Syrian conflict.

James Cleverly:

HMG regularly discusses the situation in Syria with the US administration. Most recently the Foreign Secretary, US Secretary of State Blinken, along with the foreign ministers of France, Germany and Italy issued a joint statement commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Syrian uprising on 15 March. In the statement we jointly made clear our support for a political solution to end the conflict, as set out in UN Security Council Resolution 2254. We stressed that in order to reach a settlement to bring lasting peace the Assad regime must seriously engage with the peace process and perpetrators of the most serious crimes committed in Syria must be held to account.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Sir Alan Campbell:

[\[132773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will add funeral directors to the covid-19 vaccine priority list.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Funeral operatives have been prioritised for vaccination in cohort two and staff will be eligible for prioritisation if they carry out functions which require them to have contact with multiple patients particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[132788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of prioritising people in Tier 4 local covid alert level areas for the covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

For the first phase of the vaccination programme, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to those aged 50 year old and above, in order of age and clinical risk factors. Included in this are those with underlying health conditions, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality.

For phase two the JCVI's interim advice set 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.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[132789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including (a) teachers and (b) police officers as frontline workers for the purposes of prioritisation in the roll out of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

For phase two of the vaccination programme, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation published its interim advice setting out that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age, not occupation. Age is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations.

Jon Trickett:[\[134356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many vaccination centres are located in each UK region.

Nadhim Zahawi:

As health is devolved across the United Kingdom, vaccination is managed by the health services in each nation.

As of 12 March 2021, the total numbers of vaccination sites excluding pharmacies in each English region are as follows:

- East of England - 24 hospital hubs, 133 general practitioner (GP) led sites and 43 vaccination centres;
- London - 54 hospital hubs, 109 GP-led sites and 23 vaccination centres;
- Midlands - 40 hospital hubs, 186 GP-led sites and 22 vaccination centres;
- North East and Yorkshire - 40 hospital hubs, 178 GP-led sites and 11 vaccination centres;
- North West - 44 hospital hubs, 136 GP-led sites and 11 vaccination centres;
- South East - 46 hospital hubs, 182 GP-led sites and 18 vaccination centres; and
- South West - 19 hospital hubs, 110 GP-led sites and 10 vaccination centres.

This excludes 237 pharmacy sites as NHS England data does not include their region. A map showing the number of sites in each region is available at the following link:

www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/vaccination-sites/

Jon Trickett: [134357]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the maximum distance an individual will have to travel to their nearest covid-19 vaccination centre.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In England, more than 98% of the population is currently within 10 miles of a vaccine service. In a small number of highly rural areas, the vaccination centre will be a mobile unit.

Tracey Crouch: [134407]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure (a) teaching staff and (b) those working in special educational needs settings and (c) all others who work in education settings are vaccinated as a matter of priority.

Nadhim Zahawi:

For phase two of the vaccination programme, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's interim advice set out that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age, not occupation. Age is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations.

Rachael Maskell: [136563]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people who are not registered with a GP have the same level of access to the covid-19 vaccine as people who are.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The COVID-19 vaccination programme enables practices working within their Primary Care Network grouping to vaccinate unregistered patients provided they are within a cohort currently eligible for vaccination. Local systems are best placed to reach out to our diverse communities and avoid inequalities in access and should have a plan for full coverage for health inclusion groups.

Rosie Duffield: [146994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what safeguards he has put in place to ensure that people do not receive doses of the covid-19 vaccine from different manufacturers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Every effort should be made to determine which vaccine the individual received and to complete with the same vaccine. A number of processes are in place to ensure that knowledge of the first vaccine can be ascertained. This includes the card given to the patient at the time of vaccination, the

capture of type of vaccine on the National Immunisation Management Service and the fact that this information is transferred to the patient's medical record held by their general practitioner.

If the course is interrupted or delayed, it should be resumed using the same vaccine, but the first dose should not be repeated. There is no evidence on the interchangeability of the COVID-19 vaccines although studies are underway.

Luke Pollard: [\[149332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in the first four priority groups have been refused a covid-19 vaccine due to their medical history being incompatible with the covid-19 vaccination green book.

Nadhim Zahawi:

This data is not published in the format requested.

As with any vaccine, there are a few individuals for whom vaccination may be contra-indicated. For COVID-19, this includes those who have had a previous systemic allergic reaction to a previous dose of the same COVID-19 vaccine or any component of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Henry Smith: [\[152471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of covid-19 vaccinations for (a) people with blood cancer and (b) other immunocompromised people.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England will monitor vaccine effectiveness in different targeted groups using a range of existing surveillance systems, new enhanced surveillance and by building upon established research studies in specific populations.

UK Research and Innovation has provided initial funding of £1.8 million towards the OCTAVE study in supporting research on vaccine responses in groups of immunosuppressed individuals, including those with inflammatory disorders, high risk cancer patient groups, and patients with severe kidney and liver disease. Cancer patient groups include chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, myeloma, acute leukaemia and bone marrow transplants.

Emma Hardy: [\[158182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of ensuring priority access to the covid-19 vaccination for people with autism.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has not recommended that those with autism are prioritised for vaccination as they have not yet found evidence that autism is a predictor of more serious outcomes for COVID-19. However, although autism is not considered a learning disability, many autistic people also have a learning disability. Those with learning disabilities and who are on the general

practice Learning Disability Register are now included in cohort six in phase one of the vaccine programme.

Mr Steve Baker: [R] [[172997](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish an updated timetable for the estimated (a) regulatory approval and (b) delivery to the NHS of the (i) Novavax and (ii) Johnson & Johnson covid-19 vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: Reviews are underway by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to assess the Johnson & Johnson (known by Janssen in Europe) and Novavax vaccines. Any vaccines that are made available will have been authorised because they pass the MHRA's tests on safety and efficacy. If and when those vaccines are authorised by the MHRA, we expect to receive the doses for both vaccines in the second half of this year.

■ **Dental Services: Coronavirus**

James Grundy: [[154617](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the financial effect of the fallow times required between dentistry appointments on a dentist's total funding from the Government, in the latest period for which data is available.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made.

■ **Dental Services: Waiting Lists**

Tracy Brabin: [[166506](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish data on NHS orthodontic waiting lists.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: Data on National Health Service orthodontic waiting lists is unavailable.

■ **Epilepsy: Cannabis**

Catherine West: [[134037](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what urgent steps he is taking to support families to continue to access Bedrolite oil for the treatment of severe epilepsy following the end of the transition period.

Jo Churchill:

The Department, supported by the British Embassy to The Hague, has reached an agreement with the Dutch Government to allow the continued supply of Bedrocan oils, a form of unlicensed medicinal cannabis, against United Kingdom prescriptions for existing patients until 1 July 2021. The medicines supply chain has ensured that

there continues to be good supply of licensed and unlicensed cannabis-based medicines after the transition period.

My Written Ministerial Statement of 26 January ([HCWS734](#)) provided an update on action taken by the Government on supply from the Netherlands and next steps to establish a more permanent solution.

■ NHS: Health Services

Tim Farron: [\[168860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish NHS England's 2017 'NHS Surge and Triage' guidance document.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 March 2021]: The Department has no plans to publish NHS England's 2017 'NHS Surge and Triage' document as publication would, at this time, prejudice the conduct of public affairs.

■ Ophthalmic services

Bambos Charalambous: [\[160763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people (a) did not attend their outpatient ophthalmology appointment, (b) cancelled that appointment and (c) had that appointment cancelled by a healthcare professional in each month from (a) January 2019 to (b) December 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 March 2021]: This information is not held in the format requested. While data on the number of ophthalmology appointments by attendance type is collected, this is not a count of individuals as a patient may have had more than one appointment.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[160764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people (a) did not attend their outpatient appointment for wet age-related macular degeneration (wet AMD), (b) cancelled that appointment and (c) had that appointment cancelled by a healthcare professional in each month from (a) January 2019 and (b) December 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 March 2021]: This information is not held in the format requested.

■ Vaccination: Recruitment

Justin Madders: [\[134485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many vaccinators have been recruited, by English region.

Nadhim Zahawi:

This information is not available in the format requested.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Repatriation****Helen Hayes:**[\[171668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government is in negotiations with (a) France and (b) other European countries on a bilateral readmission agreement for the return of failed asylum seekers.

Chris Philp:

The Joint Political Declaration on Asylum and Returns between the UK and the EU agreed on 24 December 2020 noted the UK's intention to engage in bilateral discussions with the most concerned Member States to discuss suitable practical arrangements on asylum and illegal migration, in accordance with the UK's and EU's respective laws and regulations.

The Government has not yet concluded any new bilateral agreements to facilitate the return of asylum-seekers from the UK to third countries. We are currently in discussions with several Member States but we will not provide a running commentary on the progress of specific negotiations.

■ British Nationality**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[171536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to amend the British Nationalities Act 1948 to allow citizenship to be passed down from the mother as well as the father.

Kevin Foster:

Women have been able to pass on British nationality in the same way as men since 1983. The British Nationality Act 1981 now also provides for the registration of those who would have become British citizens had women been able to pass on their citizenship in the same way as men before 1983.

As part of the package of proposals announced earlier this week, I can confirm the Government intends to bring forward legislation to address the anomalies in historical nationality law which deny British citizenship to people from British Overseas Territories for unfair and outdated reasons, will be fixed.

■ Demonstrations: Clapham Common**Philip Davies:**[\[172928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers reported being assaulted on 13 March 2021 in the course of the events linked to the event at Clapham Common that day; and how many people have subsequently been (a) arrested and (b) charged with offences that relate to assaulting a police officer.

Kit Malthouse:

Information regarding how many officers were assaulted and the number of individuals arrested during the Sarah Everard vigil is an operational matter for the Metropolitan Police Service. They have informed the Home Office that 14 police officers reported being assaulted in the course of events, with five of these reporting injuries.

One person has been arrested for two of the assaults and no one has yet been charged.

Emergency Services Network**Ben Lake:**[\[173127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 157144 on Emergency Services Network: Strathconon, for what reason her Department is unable to accelerate the process for activating extended area service masts.

Kit Malthouse:

We expect the contract for connecting all 292 EAS masts to the network to be awarded in Autumn 2021. We do need to follow government procurement processes fully in this award and are unable to accelerate this aspect of the process. Each site has to be individually designed, with planning approval granted, built and then integrated into the EE/ESN network. By default, EAS masts are in the most remote and rural areas of the country, situated in difficult terrain and with accessibility issues. After the award of the contract we anticipate that a survey of each site will result in activation timelines varying depending on the work involved. We will then complete the physical work to connect the mast to the network and, separately, activate the mast. Although we cannot give firm dates for the final activation of masts at this stage, we expect this work to commence in 2022 and complete towards the end 2024.

Extradition: USA**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[173148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer on 9 February 2021 to Question 146998, what the evidential basis is for her Department's assessment that the US does not discriminate between UK and US nationals in extradition arrangements between the UK and the US.

Chris Philp:

Article 3 of the UK / US Extradition Treaty states that:

- Extradition shall not be refused based on the nationality of the person sought

Therefore nationality is not a consideration in making or receiving requests to or from the US.

Further information on the nationality of those surrendered to the US can be found in the response to the Honourable Member for Totnes to PQs 90259 and 90260 answered on 23 September 2020.

■ Heathrow Airport: Standards

Jim Shannon:

[\[170636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to reduce queues at Heathrow airport.

Kevin Foster:

Wait times in airports can be caused by a number of factors, not just related to resourcing. This includes all mandated border security activity, the volume of immigration case working, additional support and checks in relation to Covid-19, and specific security activity.

Our teams seek to balance this range of tasking each day. Whilst mindful of passenger wait times and experience, our primary objective is to ensure the security of the border

Like all public services operating throughout this unprecedented global pandemic, there have been additional pressures placed on Border Force and the safety of the public and our staff remains our priority.

Resource and staffing requirements at every port, including Heathrow, are continually reviewed by Border Force working with airport operators including Heathrow Airport Ltd. Resources are deployed flexibly as and when they are required.

■ Home Office: Chief Scientific Advisers

Greg Clark:

[\[170583\]](#)

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

Kevin Foster:

Ministers meet with the Home Office Chief Scientific Adviser as necessary during the process of policy development and delivery.

During the periods in question, the Home Secretary met with Professor John Aston on numerous occasions from 1st March 2020 until he left the department at the end of December 2020.

Following John Aston's term in post, Professor Jennifer Rubin was appointed as the new Home Office Chief Scientific Adviser from January 2021. Since January 2021 Professor Rubin met the Home Secretary and other Ministers regularly up until 28th February 2021 and continues to do so.

■ Home Office: Gifts and Endowments

Holly Lynch:

[\[171655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the details of (a) additional earnings, (b) gifts and (c) hospitality received by civil servants in her Department from law firms.

Kevin Foster:

There is no mechanism for capturing additional earnings. It is possible for Civil Servants to have other sources of income over and above their civil service salary, where those present no, or no perceived, conflict of interest.

However those arrangements are between the parties and do not involve the Home Office. Staff are required to report these arrangements to their manager and no central record is maintained.

Gifts and hospitality offered and received are recorded and reported internally. The Home Office publishes details of permanent secretaries' external meetings and senior officials' business expenses and hospitality on a quarterly basis.

The most recent publication of data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-senior-officials-business-expenses-and-meetings-july-to-september-2020>

In order to ascertain whether the gift or hospitality was offered to or received from a law firm, we would need to scrutinise every entry on the register individually and this would represent a disproportionate cost.

■ Housing: Antisocial Behaviour

Stuart Anderson:

[\[172116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of powers available to local authorities to tackle anti-social behaviour that occurs between private dwellings.

Kit Malthouse:

It is important that local authorities have the powers they need to tackle all local issues quickly and effectively. That is why we introduced a range of flexible tools and powers to tackle anti-social behaviour through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The powers in the 2014 Act are deliberately local in nature and it is for local authorities to determine how best to respond to each individual case. The powers support appropriate action to resolve housing-related anti-social behaviour, including through setting restrictions or positive requirements on individuals.

The Government updated statutory guidance in January 2021 to emphasise the importance of focusing on the impact of anti-social behaviour on victims and further to support local authorities to make effective use of these powers.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals**Neil Coyle:** [\[170663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps an EU citizen, who is eligible for but has not yet been granted status under the EU Settlement Scheme, needs to take to apply for or renew a British driving licence during the EU Settlement Scheme grace period up to 30 June 2021.

Kevin Foster:

EU/EEA citizens who arrived in the UK prior to the 31 December 2020, and who declare this as part of their application to apply for a UK driving licence, will not be required by DVLA to provide evidence of residency during the grace period.

Until the grace period ends, they will simply need to provide proof of identity, such as a passport, if they are applying for a first, provisional licence or to change a paper licence to a photocard licence.

If they are applying to renew a photocard licence, they will only need to pay the renewal fee and update their photograph.

Mike Amesbury: [\[170734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department plans to take to tackle the matter of self-sufficient individuals of EU nationality who were not informed of requirements to hold comprehensive sickness insurance but who now require such insurance to apply for British citizenship.

Mike Amesbury: [\[170735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the efficacy of Government communications on publicising the requirement for EU citizens living in the UK to hold Comprehensive Sickness Insurance.

Kevin Foster:

Guidance on which groups of EEA nationals required comprehensive sickness insurance, as well as the types of documents accepted to meet this condition, has always been publicly available. This can currently be found from page 38 of the guidance on 'qualified persons' available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-economic-area-nationals-qualified-persons>.

The requirements to naturalise as a British citizen remain unchanged by our exit from the European Union or the implementation of the EU Settlement Scheme. This includes requirements to normally have been free of immigration time restrictions for 12 months before applying, and to have been lawfully in the UK throughout the residential qualifying period.

There may be cases where nationality caseworkers need to satisfy themselves the person was here lawfully. This is not a new requirement and was an assessment we have always been making. It is also a statutory requirement and cannot be ignored. The same applies to all applicants, EEA or not. We have recently amended the

application forms to ensure we can gather as much of this information upfront at the application stage where possible.

Guidance on GOV.UK sets out when we might exercise discretion where a person did not meet the lawful residence requirements. This includes where it is because the applicant did not meet an additional/implicit condition of stay under EEA Free Movement Regulations, rather than illegal entry or overstaying, such as an EEA or Swiss national living or studying in the UK, rather than working, not having CSI.

As has previously been confirmed I am not aware of any application for UK Citizenship being declined purely on the basis of the CSI requirement under EEA Free Movement Regulations and it should not deter anyone from making their application. The guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/naturalisation-as-a-british-citizen-by-discretion-nationality-policy-guidance>.

■ Knives: Crime

Colleen Fletcher:

[170673]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle knife crime in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is determined to turn the tide on knife crime in all areas, wherever it occurs.

On 4 February 2021, the Government published a total police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion in 2021/22, an increase of up to £636 million compared to 2020/21. West Midlands Police will receive up to £656.2m in 2021/22; an increase of up to £39.5m from the previous year. Across England and Wales we are also recruiting 20,000 additional police officers by the end of March 2023. West Midlands have recruited 357 additional officers under uplift against a first year allocation of 366 additional officers (as at 31 December 2020).

From 2019 to 2022, this government will have provided over £242 million, through the Serious Violence Fund (SVF), to address the drivers of serious violence at the local level and significantly bolster the police response in 18 Police Force areas most affected by serious violence across England and Wales. Of this, the West Midlands have been allocated £15.5 million to pay for a surge in police operational activity and a further £10.1 million to develop their Violence Reduction Unit.

We have also invested £200 million through the 10-Year Youth Endowment Fund to ensure those most at risk are given the opportunity to turn away from violence and lead positive lives. In total, 12 grantees in the West Midlands are in receipt of funding from all grant rounds.

We have also made it easier for the police to use enhanced stop and search powers and we have introduced Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill which will give the police powers to make

it easier to stop and search those already convicted of knife and offensive weapon offences. West Midlands Police is one of the four police forces in the country which will pilot SVROs.

Through the PCSC bill, we have also introduced legislation which will place new duties on a range of specified agencies across different sectors, such as local government, youth offending, and health and probation, to work collaboratively, share data and information, and put in place plans to prevent and reduce serious violence.

■ Knives: Sales

Munira Wilson:

[\[173177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to require that knives sold in shops are kept locked in secure cabinets.

Kit Malthouse:

During the passage of the Offensive Weapons Bill, we considered whether to make it a criminal offence for businesses to display a bladed product and whether shops should keep knives locked in secure cabinets. We concluded that we could achieve the same aim by working closely with retailers to ensure that knives cannot be easily stolen in order to circumvent age verification processes.

We continue to work with retailers, local authorities and the police to send a clear message that retailers have a responsibility to sell and display bladed articles in a responsible manner. The Government are encouraging much stronger voluntary action in relation to displays through the set of voluntary commitments with major retailers to prevent the underage sales of knives. These commit retailers to having robust measures in place to ensure age verification and both appropriate display and access to knives in stores. Retailers also act to ensure customers and staff are reminded that knives are age restricted products and that all staff receive regular training. Since March 2016, 19 major retailers have joined the agreement, with some stopping the sale of single knives in their stores altogether.

We are keeping this work under review and we will work with retailers within the framework of the voluntary agreement on sales of knives to include stronger voluntary action on displays once we commence some provisions in the Offensive Weapons Act which were paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Migrant Workers: Immigration Controls

Sir George Howarth:

[\[171503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the UK's immigration policy enables people with (a) professional and (b) technical skills to access employment in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The Skilled Worker route is designed to allow licensed UK employers to recruit workers to fill skilled vacancies on a global basis. Workers sponsored must be paid

the appropriate salary and demonstrate they have the appropriate level of English language ability.

The new system includes broadening the minimum skill level for the skilled work route to RQF 3, equivalent to A levels, and lowering the general salary threshold to £25,600. The expanded skills threshold includes a variety of jobs requiring different professional and/or technical skills.

The new points-based system plays a key part in our long-term approach as the Government brings forward its strategy to rebuild our economy, support businesses to grow and get people back to work, with immigration policy being considered as part of our overall strategy for the UK Labour market, not in isolation to it.

■ Migrants: Finance

Claudia Webbe:

[173208]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to suspend the No Recourse to Public Funds conditions on public health grounds for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak, as recommended by the Work and Pensions Select Committee in its first report of Session 2019-21, DWP's response to the coronavirus outbreak, published 22 June 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Government remains committed to protecting vulnerable people and has acted decisively to ensure that we support everyone through this pandemic.

Healthcare is not classified as a public fund, and testing and treatment for COVID-19 is free of charge to all regardless of immigration status. Also, NHS Trusts have been advised that no immigration checks are required for these patients. The guidance can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide>.

Many of the wide-ranging COVID-19 measures the Government has put in place are available to migrants with NRPF. These range from assistance being given under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-employed Income Support Scheme, statutory sick pay and discretionary hardship payments for those who have to self-isolate.

Migrants who have been granted leave on the basis of their family life / human rights can apply to have the NRPF condition on their stay lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application.

Since the onset of the pandemic, we have continued to prioritise NRPF 'change of conditions' applications and deal with them compassionately. Data published in February 2021 for quarter 4 of 2020 shows the average time taken to make a decision on cases is 18 days. Of the decisions taken in the same period, 86% were granted.

Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support, regardless of immigration status, if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely

from destitution, for example, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question.

The Government has provided unprecedented support of over £8 billion of funding to local authorities in England to help councils manage the impacts of COVID-19 and respond to the spending pressures they are facing, including £4.6 billion which is not ringfenced. Additional funding of nearly £19 billion has also been provided for the devolved administrations under the Barnett formula as part of the wider government response.

In light of the support that is available to those with NRPF, we do not believe it is necessary to suspend the NRPF condition for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ **Police: Coronavirus**

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[171767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many serving police officers have tested positive for covid-19 since March 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office do not hold this information. It would be for National Police Co-ordination Centre (NPoCC) or individual forces to provide this information if held.

■ **Sanctions: Enforcement**

Dame Margaret Hodge: [\[171475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what specific resources have been allocated for the criminal enforcement of financial sanctions under the UK sanctions regimes introduced by the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018.

Dame Margaret Hodge: [\[171476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessments of the resources required to ensure the criminal enforcement of financial sanctions under the UK Sanctions regimes introduced by the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018.

Kevin Foster:

Criminal enforcement of financial sanctions uses broader law enforcement resources that cover bribery, corruption and sanctions evasion. The National Crime Agency's annual National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime includes an assessment of the threats from bribery, corruption and sanctions evasion.

■ **Sexual Offences**

Chi Onwurah: [\[169852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she made has made of the change in the level of sexually explicit spam during the covid-19 outbreak; and what assessment she has made of implications of that content on the sexual exploitation of women and girls during the pandemic.

Kit Malthouse:

Direct marketing, which includes spam emails containing sexually explicit content, is regulated by the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (PECR). The legislation is enforced by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the independent data protection regulator responsible for regulating unsolicited emails. The legislation specifies that organisations must only send emails to individuals who have agreed to receive them, except where there is a clearly defined customer relationship. Where an individual has received sexually explicit spam, they should consider making a report to the ICO for further investigation on their website. The ICO has the powers to impose civil penalties of up to £500,000 in the case of serious contraventions of the PECR and can take other proportionate enforcement action.

Addressing Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a top priority of this Government. We have reopened the Call for Evidence for the upcoming Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy to provide members of the public with a further opportunity to share their views. We are also currently analysing responses received to the Call for Evidence so far, including from the violence against women and girls sector and law enforcement to develop a new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, which will be published later this year. This will help us to better target perpetrators and support victims of these crimes, and increase our ability to tackle, new and emerging forms of violence against women and girls - such as those perpetrated through digital or online, including revenge porn or sexually explicit spam.

■ Tobacco: Smuggling**Shabana Mahmood:****[172049]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many illegal importations of shisha tobacco were captured by the UK Border Force in each of the last three calendar years.

Chris Philp:

Border Force does not routinely publish this level of data on the specific type of tobacco seized at the border.

Seizures relating to products related to the Tax revenue that is protected through detecting goods where excise duty has not been declared, including Tobacco seizures are published quarterly on the.gov.uk website. The latest information can be found at:

[Border Force Transparency Data August 2020](#)

■ Unexplained Wealth Orders: Northern Ireland**Stephen Farry:****[171769]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to extend the powers to use Unexplained Wealth Orders to Northern Ireland.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has been working closely with the Department for Justice, Northern Ireland and the Attorney General's Office to commence the outstanding provisions of the Criminal Finances Act 2017 in Northern Ireland. These provisions include, but are not limited to, unexplained wealth orders.

The first four of the nine statutory instruments required to commence these provisions will be laid in the House on Monday 22nd March.

Should Parliamentary timetables allow, we expect the outstanding provisions in the Criminal Finances Act 2017 to be commenced in Northern Ireland later this year.

■ Visas: Myanmar**Yasmin Qureshi:****[170596]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that students from Myanmar whose visas will soon expire will be able to temporarily stay into the UK until such time as it is safe for them to return to that country.

Kevin Foster:

If an individual continues to meet the requirements of the Student route, they are open to apply to extend their permission. If they are no longer students, but wish to stay in the UK, they can apply for any alternative route for which they qualify.

For individuals who are unable to return to their home country due to the impact of the COVID pandemic they can apply under the Exceptional Assurance process which can be found at the following link;

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): advice for UK visa applicants and temporary UK residents - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents)

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Economic Growth: Wales****Ben Lake:****[170706]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 17 March 2021 to Question 167292 on Levelling Up Fund: Wales, when his Department last had discussions with representatives of (a) Ceredigion County Council and (b) other local authorities in Wales as part of the Government's ongoing work to support local economic growth in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

The Levelling Up Fund is a competitive fund, with funding distributed to places across the UK on the basis of successful project selection.

The Levelling Up Fund will invest in local infrastructure that will have a visible impact on people and their communities. The Government regularly engages with a wide

range of stakeholders as part of ongoing work to support local economic growth as we recover from Covid-19.

■ Housing: Older People

Mr Robert Goodwill: [\[170568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what economic impact assessment his Department has undertaken on the potential effect of legislative proposals to remove future ground rents for retirement properties.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government has set out a package of measures to tackle unfair practices in the leasehold market and promote transparency and fairness for both leaseholders and freeholders.

We will bring forward legislation in the upcoming session to restrict ground rents on newly created leases to a peppercorn (zero financial value). This will be the first part of seminal two-part legislation to implement reforms in this Parliament. In line with usual practice, the government's intention would be to publish an impact assessment on our leasehold reforms as part of taking primary legislation through Parliament.

Mr Robert Goodwill: [\[170569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on purchase prices of specialist retirement properties in the event that ground rents are abolished for those properties.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government has set out a package of measures to tackle unfair practices in the leasehold market and promote transparency and fairness for both leaseholders and freeholders.

We will bring forward legislation in the upcoming session to restrict ground rents on newly created leases to a peppercorn (zero financial value). This will be the first part of seminal two-part legislation to implement reforms in this Parliament. In line with usual practice, the government's intention would be to publish an impact assessment on our leasehold reforms as part of taking primary legislation through Parliament.

■ Leasehold

Mike Amesbury: [\[171712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to implement the findings of the Law Commission on the leasehold market.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service.

On 7 January 2021 we announced the first part of our response to the Law Commission's reports.

Under the current system, too many leaseholders find the process for extending their lease or buying their freehold too complex, lacking transparency and prohibitively expensive. We will reform the process of enfranchisement valuation; abolishing marriage value, capping the treatment of ground rents at 0.1% of the freehold value, and prescribing rates for the calculations at market value. We will also introduce an online calculator, further simplifying the process for leaseholders and ensuring standardisation and fairness for all those looking to enfranchise. These changes to the enfranchisement valuation process will result in substantial savings for some leaseholders, particularly those with less than 80 years left on their lease.

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

The Government will respond to the Law Commission's remaining recommendations on enfranchisement, commonhold and right to manage in due course

We will translate these measures into law as soon as possible, starting with legislation to set ground rents on newly created leases to zero in the upcoming session. This will be the first part of major two-part legislation to implement leasehold and commonhold reforms in this Parliament.

■ Leasehold: Coronavirus

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[170518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will place a moratorium on forfeiture of all residential leasehold properties under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Eddie Hughes:

All ongoing possession proceedings, including forfeiture possession cases for leaseholders were suspended from 27 March until 20 September 2020. Any new claims entering the court system were automatically suspended.

The Government has also provided support to leaseholders through the mortgage holiday, and the application window is open until 31 March 2021. All payment holidays must end by 31 July 2021. Borrowers, including those with a buy-to-let mortgage, are entitled to up to a six-month holiday, and those that have already started a mortgage payment holiday will be able to top up to six months without this being recorded on their credit file.

The Government believes that forfeiture is a draconian measure and should only be used as a last resort. In practice forfeiture happens very rarely and is subject to the right of relief, to be exercised at the court's discretion.

■ Levelling Up Fund: Wales

Ben Lake: [\[170707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 17 March 2021 to Question 167292 on Levelling Up Fund: Wales, how the Government plans to measure the visible impact of the Levelling Up Fund.

Luke Hall:

The Levelling Up Fund will reflect this Government's greater emphasis on high-quality evaluation, which is critical to understanding what types of interventions work well in addressing levelling up challenges, through individual projects and across varying spatial scales. The development of a local growth and transport evaluation culture, which promotes sharing learning across the UK, will be an important strand of this work.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Chief Scientific Advisers

Greg Clark: [\[170585\]](#)

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

Eddie Hughes:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government draws from a range of scientific advice and expertise, including from the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, the Department's own Chief Scientific Adviser, and academics and researchers. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal meetings are not normally disclosed.

■ Park Homes

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[171493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the draft guidance on fit and proper person licensing for park home operators will be (a) finalised and (b) published.

Eddie Hughes:

The fit and proper person test for park home site operators will come into force in two parts - on 1 July, by which time local authorities must be prepared to receive applications and on 1 October, by which time all park home site operators must have submitted an application to the relevant local authority.

To assist local authorities and site owners, we plan to publish non-statutory guidance on the implementation of the fit and proper person test by the end of May.

■ Park Homes: Sales**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[171494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the procurement process for research into the potential effect of any changes to the 10 per cent maximum commission on sales of park homes will be completed; and what the length of the contract period is of that research.

Eddie Hughes:

The procurement process for the research to assess the potential effect of a change to the 10 per cent sales commission on park homes is complete. I can confirm that a consortium led by University of Liverpool has been commissioned to carry out the research.

The research is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The research team has started inviting residents and site owners to take part in focus group meetings starting in April.

■ Public Health: Coronavirus**Sir George Howarth:** [\[171509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what comparative assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the responses to the covid-19 pandemic of locally-based public health approaches and central Government-managed programmes involving private sector contracts.

Luke Hall:

MHCLG is responsible for delivering a sustainable and resilient local government sector that delivers priority services and empowers communities, however this Department is not responsible for individual council functions such as those relating to health, education and culture. As such this Department has not made an assessment of the effectiveness of the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic of public health approaches, or central Government-managed programmes involving private sector contracts.

Local public health services are supported by the Public Health Grant. In 2021 to 2022 the total public health grant to local authorities will be £3.324 billion. The grant will be ring-fenced for use on public health functions. This may include public health challenges arising directly or indirectly from coronavirus (COVID-19).

Further details can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-grants-to-local-authorities-2021-to-2022>

■ Weddings: Coronavirus**Sam Tarry:**[\[171753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he will consider amending covid-19 restrictions wedding guidelines to accommodate cultural ceremonies during the current outbreak.

Luke Hall:

Under current national lockdown restrictions, ceremonies and services are limited to six people and should be concluded in the shortest time reasonable. The Roadmap launched by the Prime Minister in February set out our ambition to progressively release these restrictions. At Step 2, the limit on those attending will increase to 15 and wedding receptions can also restart, also limited to 15. At Step 3, the limit will rise to 30 people. By Step 4, the aim is to remove all limits on weddings and other life events.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Overseas Trade: Sri Lanka****Gareth Thomas:**[\[172010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment her Department made of the credentials of speakers invited to speak at the Sri Lanka: The Gateway to Asia event on 4 November; and if she will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

Speakers were selected because of their knowledge and insight into opportunities in or out of Sri Lanka in infrastructure and financial services. They included the Sri Lankan High Commissioner, the State Minister of Finance & Capital Markets, the Director General of the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka and others including the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Sri Lanka and my honourable friend, the Minister for International Trade.

JUSTICE**■ Coronavirus: Isle of Man****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[171537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with the Lieutenant Governor on the Isle of Man on the number of covid-19 cases on that island.

Chris Philp:

The Lord Chancellor has not recently discussed the number of Covid-19 cases on the Isle of Man with the Lieutenant Governor. UK Ministers do not often meet with the Lieutenant Governors of the Crown Dependencies but, as the Minister with responsibility for the conduct of Crown Dependencies business in Whitehall, Lord Wolfson is in frequent contact with the Chief Ministers of each of the Crown

Dependencies. He most recently met the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man on Monday 22 March 2021 and discussed Covid-19. Lord Wolfson, his predecessor Lord Keen, and the Lord Chancellor have, throughout the pandemic, made clear that the UK Government will provide the Crown Dependencies with the support they need to help them manage the impact of Covid-19.

■ Courts and Tribunals: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[170669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to help tackle the backlog of (a) criminal cases and (b) First Tier Tribunal Social Security and Child Support appeals before HM Courts and Tribunal Service in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Chris Philp:

We have taken swift action to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on our courts and tribunals. We have invested £142m to improve court and tribunal buildings and roll out new technology, and a further £113m on a range of emergency measures – including the recruitment of 1,600 additional staff and adjusting courts to ensure they are Covid-secure.

However, we recognise there is further to go to address outstanding caseloads and support the system towards recovery. We are continuing with our plans to expand capacity across the criminal justice system by opening new Nightingale courts and we are on course to have 60 courtrooms open by the end of March. We have already adjusted over 290 courtrooms to safely hold jury trials, and we have an additional 120 courtrooms available for non-jury trial work.

We are also investing in technology across our estate to ensure we can continue to hold remote hearings where appropriate. Throughout the pandemic, SSCS appeals have continued to be decided on the papers or heard using telephone and other remote technology. Across all jurisdictions, we have over 3,300 Cloud Video Platform virtual court rooms available. We have installed supporting hardware in over 600 out of 750 courtrooms, with the remainder expected by the end of March 2021.

In Coventry and the West Midlands, we have:

- Delivered additional capacity through two Nightingale courts in Birmingham in Maple House and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, which provide four additional criminal courtrooms and two courtrooms for civil and family work
- Sought additional space in Birmingham Crown Court by installing four temporary buildings to provide additional room for administrative and non-jury trial work
- Increased the productivity of the Coventry combined court, which now lists 2 crown court rooms daily
- For first tier Tribunal Social Security and Child Support appeals we have been using audio and video technology to increase our listing capacity over the past year. The remote hearing technology has allowed us to work across the region to

reduce waiting times for cases at venues with lower or reduced capacity for physical hearings.

Our unprecedented action taken so far has made a difference. We were among the first of comparable international jurisdictions to re-start jury trials, and we now have around 20,000 hearings per week with remote participants. Cases are now being completed around pre-pandemic levels in most jurisdictions. Through our Spending Review settlement, we have secured significant additional funding in the next financial year to assist in the recovery of our courts and tribunals system, and we continue to consider the measures that are needed to achieve this.

■ **Criminal Proceedings: Hyperactivity**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[171638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2021 to Question UIN 157167, whether the Independent Call for Evidence on neurodiversity in the criminal justice service launched in December 2020 has led to considerations of the specific needs of adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Alex Chalk:

We are committed to improving the interaction that individuals with neurodivergent conditions have with the CJS, and we are currently still exploring how this may be achieved. I recognise that there is more we can and should be doing as a Justice system, which is why we announced a call for evidence on neurodiversity.

MoJ has commissioned HMI Prisons and Probation, with support from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, to conduct an Independent Call for Evidence on neurodiversity in the CJS. This will enable us to understand what happens to neurodivergent people now, including those with ADHD, and how we can better support them in future to realise better outcomes.

The final report from the Call for Evidence will be produced in Summer 2021, at which point my officials will be better placed to speak to the specific considerations that should be given to individuals within the criminal justice system with ADHD.

Once the MoJ receive the full written report from the call for evidence, my officials will be developing a 'Neurodiversity Toolkit', as announced in the Sentencing White Paper, which will be delivered nationwide to frontline staff. This will be informed by the findings of the Call for Evidence, and it will include information on ADHD.

Improving our staff's awareness and understanding of neurodivergent needs, including ADHD, may then enable frontline staff to feel confident to make referrals to health services effectively if needed.

■ **Cybercrime: Prosecutions**

Carla Lockhart:

[\[171775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times the Computer Misuse Act 1990 has been successfully used to prosecute cyber crime in each of the last five years.

Carla Lockhart:

[\[171776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times the Computer Misuse Act 1990 has been used successfully to prosecute offences or attacks against computer systems that involve (a) ransomware (b) malware and (c) phishing in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

The number of prosecutions and convictions for offences which take place online is not centrally held in the court proceedings database as this type of offence is not separately identified in legislation. Equally, offences involving ransomware, malware and phishing are not separately identified in legislation. Identifying these offences separately would require a manual search of court records, which would be at disproportionate costs.

Published figures provide the number of prosecutions and convictions for the following offence that may include offences which occurred online:

Computer Misuse Act 1990

- Unauthorised access with intent to commit or facilitate commission of further offences (Computer Misuse Act 1990)
- Unauthorised acts with intent to impair, or with recklessness as to impairing, operation of computer, etc (Computer Misuse Act 1990)
- Unauthorised access to computer material
- Making, supplying or obtaining articles for use in offence under SS.1 or 3 (Computer Misuse Act 1990, S.3A)

The number of prosecutions and convictions can be found by searching the above offences in the 'Detailed offence' filter in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code' data tool available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx

Carla Lockhart:

[\[171777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times the Fraud Act 2006 has been used successfully to prosecute phishing offences in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

The number of prosecutions and convictions for phishing offences is not centrally held in the court proceedings database as this type of offence is not separately identified in legislation. Identifying these offences separately would require a manual search of court records, which would be at disproportionate costs.

■ Cybercrime: Research

Carla Lockhart:

[\[171778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what criteria his Department uses to determine good faith security research, as outlined in his Department's Vulnerability Disclosure Policy.

Chris Philp:

The intention behind the reference to 'in good faith' is to support a mechanism for cooperation with security researchers with the aim to identify and quickly remediate reported vulnerabilities. As such research and vulnerability disclosure must be carried out "in an honest and sincere way" without affecting the safety, security and continuity of any data or service in accordance with the disclosure policy and consistent with the law. Each situation is different and thus must be judged on its own merits, but the MoJ would consider whether the individual's approach has been proportionate to the problem they are trying to uncover, has been limited to simply proving the existence of the problem, and has protected confidentiality of data within the systems concerned.

■ Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences: Administration of Justice

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[170670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking with the Attorney General to speed up justice for vulnerable people who are victims of (a) domestic violence, (b) rape and (c) sexual assault.

Kit Malthouse:

The pandemic has significantly impacted many vulnerable victims of crimes. Hard-working judiciary, staff and professionals have worked tirelessly to continue to deliver justice for victims, but despite this, victims and other court users are having to wait too long for their cases to be heard.

Throughout the pandemic, the courts have continued to prioritise cases of the utmost seriousness, where the safety of the public and individuals is a concern. This includes the judiciary prioritising hearings involving vulnerable victims and witnesses and urgent applications for matters such as domestic violence. We were among the first of comparable international jurisdictions to re-start jury trials, and cases are now being disposed of at around pre-pandemic levels in the Crown Court, and the outstanding caseload has reduced in the magistrates' court from its COVID peak last summer. We have spent over £250m on measures to tackle the impact of COVID, opened 56 Nightingale courtrooms so far, and are using more remote hearings, with over 20,000 hearings each week.

But we know that there is more to do to support vulnerable victims. In 2021-22, we will provide just under £151m for victim and witness support services. This includes an extra £51m to increase support for rape and domestic abuse victims, building on the emergency funding from 2020-2021 to help domestic abuse and sexual violence services meet Covid-driven demand. £27 million will go to creating more than 700

new posts for Independent Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse Advisers. Research shows if a victim is supported, they are around 50% more likely to stay in engaged in the criminal justice system.

We are also looking at longer term measures we can take to improve the justice process for vulnerable victims. The government's end-to-end review of rape, which is due to publish this Spring, is working with partners across the Criminal Justice System to improve the way rape cases are dealt with throughout the system.

■ Domestic Abuse: Coronavirus

Sam Tarry:

[171754]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with representatives of charities that specialise in support for victims of domestic violence since March 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recognises the important role domestic abuse charities play in providing vital support to victims and sharing their expertise to help improve our response to this horrific crime. This is why ministers meet regularly with a range of sector organisations, as well as with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, who works to ensure that views of victims and the support sector are conveyed to the Government.

Details of ministerial meetings, including with domestic abuse charities, are published proactively on gov.uk. The most recent release for the Ministry of Justice can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?parent=%2Fgovernment%2Fgovernment-efficiency-transparency-and-accountability&topic=f3f4b5d3-49c4-487b-bd5b-be75f11ec8c5&organisations%5B%5D=ministry-of-justice&order=updated-newest>. Updated information will be published shortly.

In March 2020, the Ministry of Justice also established the Victim and Witness Silver Command Group as a Covid-19 crisis management group to identify and respond to developing risks and issues likely to impact on victim and witness strategy, policy or operational effectiveness. The Group includes representatives from a range of domestic abuse organisations and continues to meet on a fortnightly basis.

We are determined to do more to protect victims and recently announced £40m for specialist rape and domestic abuse support services, on top of an extra £125m for local authorities to help provide safe accommodation for victims and their children. On 15th March, the government announced an additional £11m to recruit more Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors over the next two years.

■ Ministry of Justice: Chief Scientific Advisers**Greg Clark:** [\[170586\]](#)

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

Chris Philp:

The responsibilities of a Chief Scientific Advisor are performed by the Director of Analysis in the Ministry of Justice. The Director of Analysis has had the following meetings with the Secretary of State for Justice:

a) 1 Mar 2020– 31 May 2020 = one, b) 1 Jun 2020– 31 Aug 2020 = three, c) 1 Sept 2020 – 30 Nov 2020 = seven, and d) 1 Dec 2020– 28 Feb 2021 = zero.

■ Prisoners' Release**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[170587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A Process Evaluation of the Enhanced Through the Gate Specification, published on 1 October 2020, what steps he plans to take to learn further lessons from the roll-out of the Enhanced Through The Gate specification, following the cancellation of Phase 2 of the evaluation as a result of covid-19 restrictions.

Alex Chalk:

The resettlement design team has retained the best practice learnt from the Enhanced Through The Gate evaluation, and is driving further improvements such as better outcomes for those serving short prison sentences.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[170589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A Process Evaluation of the Enhanced Through the Gate Specification, published on 1 October 2020, what steps he is taking to tackle the lack of specificity to service user needs identified in the personal, relationships, and community resettlement pathway.

Alex Chalk:

The newly commissioned Personal Well-Being Services are designed to ensure a holistic service which meets a range of frequently co-occurring needs. This service identifies the activities and interventions that providers will deliver as a minimum. Providers are expected to liaise with statutory and other agencies and to invest time in supporting Service Users to access and sustain engagement with existing services, including those which address substance misuse.

The Personal Wellbeing category includes Family and Significant others, Social Inclusion which contains mentoring and Emotional Well-being with outcomes for each service. Commissioning for Dependency and Recovery is separate and will be the responsibility of Regional Probation Directors building on local partnerships.

The Community Probation Practitioner will be responsible for pre-release activities including completing a comprehensive pre-release assessment drawing upon assessments completed in prison and at least 3 pre-release meetings. This enables a more focused resettlement plan based on individual needs. They will co-ordinate with providers to ensure multiple and interacting needs are addressed in a planned way.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[170590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A Process Evaluation of the Enhanced Through the Gate Specification, published on 1 October 2020, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Enhanced Through the Gate specification is able to achieve its goals; and what steps he is taking to tackle the challenges noted on pages 11 and 12 of that report with reference to (a) funding for the prison service, (b) loss of long-term staff, (c) the increase in prisoner caseloads, (d) suitability of housing stock available to prison leavers and (e) access to social care.

Alex Chalk:

(a) As part of the probation reform programme funding has been secured for additional Prison Offender Managers and Community Probation Practitioners to ensure delivery of a new resettlement approach giving enhanced levels of contact as part of pre-release work. The approach includes new resettlement services procured via Commissioned Rehabilitative Services which ensures the needs of individuals are met.

(b/c) The approach considers comments raised in the Evaluation and has through a role assignment process, transferred between 70-80 % of Through the Gate (ETTG) staff into the Probation Service as sentence management staff. As the resettlement approach is aligned further with offender management in custody, the Programme has committed funding for the addition of extra Prison Offender Managers and Community Offender Managers to ensure enough staff are available to better manage caseloads.

(d) The probation reform programme has built and learnt from the success of ETTG and a £70m investment programme was announced on Friday 29th January to provide stable accommodation for prison leavers. The investment will bring together the work of Approved Premises and the Bail Accommodation and Support Service with a new tier of provision for prison leavers at risk of homelessness.

(e) To help reduce re-offending and provide health and well-being support, MoJ is launching a new accommodation service, providing up to 12 weeks of basic temporary accommodation for prison leavers who would otherwise be homeless.

(e) As part of the resettlement approach access to social care will be assisted by the sharing of assessments completed within prison with community Probation Practitioners which will enable work to continue to support individuals with social care requirements into those services. The additional time provided to Community Probation Practitioners provides a longer timescale to refer individuals into appropriate services.

■ Prisoners' Release: Females

Jim Shannon: [\[170642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring that women are not released from prison into homelessness.

Jim Shannon: [\[170643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with the Minister for Women and Equalities and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on support for women leaving prison.

Jim Shannon: [\[171601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring that vulnerable women leaving prison are offered effective support.

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.

Janet Daby:

[\[171719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the money given to women leaving prison in line with inflation.

Alex Chalk:

HMPPS recognises the importance of addressing issues around female offending and supporting women when they are leaving prison to deliver effective rehabilitation and better protect the public. This commitment is underpinned by the Female Offender Strategy published by the Government in June 2018 and more recently, reinforced by the Concordat on Women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System published in January 2021.

More widely, all eligible prison leavers are provided with a Discharge Grant of £46 and all prison leavers are given a travel warrant or fares paid to their destination within the UK. An additional payment of up to £50 may also be paid directly to a genuine accommodation provider to help the prison leaver secure a release address.

The Government is reviewing the discharge policy to make sure prison leavers receive adequate financial support in the first few days after release and before they might reasonably be able to access other legal sources of income such as applying for state benefits.

■ Prisoners: Bank Services and Proof of Identity

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[170588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A Process Evaluation of the Enhanced Through the Gate Specification, published on 1 October 2020, what steps he is taking to ensure that all prisons from which regular releases take place provide support for prison leavers to (a) open bank accounts and (b) obtain identity documents before release.

Alex Chalk:

We are aware of the importance of these issues for successful resettlement, as well as the co-dependency between them.

In order to support those prisoners who do not have a bank account, the HMPPS Prisoner Banking Programme, previously known as the Offender Banking Programme, was set up in 2010 in partnership with the charity UNLOCK. Around

6,000 accounts per year are opened under the programme. We continue to work with UK Finance and banking partners to improve the service and increase the number of successful applicants.

We know that lack of ID is a substantial problem for the prison population. This is significant as ID is normally required to claim benefits, move into work and obtain accommodation. The Enhanced Through the Gate Specification makes Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) clearly responsible for support with acquiring identification documents and opening bank accounts, and they have previously received additional funding to improve current service delivery. We are exploring ways to increase the number of individuals leaving custody with appropriate ID following the expiry of the current CRC contracts.

■ Prisoners: Literacy

Colleen Fletcher: [\[170674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of trends in the literacy levels of prisoners in England in each of the last five years.

Alex Chalk:

Supporting prisoners to improve their literacy is an important part of prison education.

Assessment data from the previous Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS 4) contracts that show that in 2015/16, 57% of English assessments were assessed at entry level 1-3, this figure was 54% in the year 2016/17 and 62% in 2017/18.

Data for new prison education contracts has been collected from April 2019 and will be validated and published later this year.

As we develop the approach to prison education in the future, this will remain a key priority to support offenders into employment.

■ Prisoners: Suicide

Colleen Fletcher: [\[170675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of self-inflicted deaths in prisons in England.

Alex Chalk:

The death of any prisoner is a tragedy and we are focussing our efforts on supporting those at risk of suicide in prisons in England and Wales and keeping them safe.

Vulnerable prisoners are supported through the ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork) case management and we are currently rolling out further improvements to this framework. We have also given 25,000 new and existing staff self-harm and suicide prevention training to help them better support prisoners with complex needs and refreshed our partnership with the Samaritans who provide the excellent Listeners scheme, which trains selected prisoners to provide emotional support to their fellow prisoners.

We are under no illusions about the impact of the measures which were put in place to protect lives during the Covid-19 pandemic and we have made prisoners' safety and wellbeing our priority. For this reason we have enabled continued family contact through more than 1,500 secure mobile phones and rolled out secure video call technology into every single prison in the male, female and youth estate. Each prisoner is also given £5 PIN credit per week to keep in touch with their loved ones. We are also delivering more in cell-activities such as distraction packs, supplementary food packs, and additional educational materials to mitigate the impact of isolation.

■ Prisoners: Travellers

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[170591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Women in Prison, published by the Traveller Movement on 17 March 2021, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the recommendations made in that report.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[170592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Women in Prison, published by the Traveller Movement on 17 March 2021, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of that report.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice is in active contact with the Traveller Movement, among other advocacy groups, and is examining the use of community sentences for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. The findings of the Traveller Movement's report on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women are valuable to inform policy and practice changes. The Ministry of Justice published new guidance in 2020 for frontline staff working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals. This provides information and advice, alongside an explanation of intersectionality and inter-related disadvantage, including a specific section on women.

■ Road Traffic Offences: Fixed Penalties

Stephanie Peacock: [\[170699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how the Government spends income generated through fixed penalty notices issued for speeding offences.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[170701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much was spent in each region of the UK from income generated through fixed penalty notices in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Chris Philp:

Receipts from fixed penalty notices (FPNs) including those issued for speeding offences and penalty notices for disorder (PNDs) are collected by Her Majesty's

Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and accounted for in the annual HMCTS Trust Statement. By statute these receipts are due to the Consolidated Fund, however, HM Treasury have agreed that annually £30m of the receipts from paid FPNs plus an additional £10 per paid PND should be ring fenced for use by victim services. The remaining receipts, under the latest HM Treasury spending review, are to be retained by MoJ and form part of their overall funding settlement.

In 2019-20 HMCTS collected £105.2m from FPNs and PNDs of which £30.088m was ring fenced to victim services and the remaining £75m was retained by MoJ. The ring-fenced victim services receipts from FPNs and PNDs form part of the overall MoJ budget for victims and witnesses, and thus it is not possible to quantify funding arising from fixed penalty notices relation to speeding or by region.

In 2019-20, the overall victims and witnesses budget was £96m, including the provision of annual victims service grants to 42 Police and Crime Commissioners across England and Wales and funding to commission emotional and practical support to help victims cope and recover from the effects of crime.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Prime Minister: Chief Scientific Advisers

Greg Clark:

[\[170570\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, how many meetings he had with the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser from (a) 1 March 2020 to 31 May 2020, (b) 1 June 2020 to 31 August 2020, (c) 1 September 2020 to 30 November 2020 and (d) 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021.

Boris Johnson:

I have regular meetings with ministerial colleagues, officials and others including the Government Chief Scientific Adviser.

SCOTLAND

■ DNACPR Decisions: Scotland

Andrew Bowie:

[\[174225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, following on from the Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) review by the Care Quality Commission in England, which found 508 cases where decisions had been taken which may have broken the Equality Act 2010, if he will order a similar review into DNACPR decisions in Scotland.

Mr Alister Jack:

DHSC has been clear that blanket application of DNACPRs is unacceptable and that standards and quality of care should be maintained even in pressurised circumstances.

It is important that we work across the health and care system, throughout the whole of the UK, to build understanding of the role DNACPR decisions play in high quality personalised care. Any advanced care decisions, including DNACPRs, must be discussed with patients and families, who must be given all the relevant information and any critical decisions must be made on an individual basis.

As Public Health is a devolved matter, I would call on the incoming Scottish Government, following Scottish elections in May, to listen to patients, families and care organisations who have serious concerns about the use of DNACPR orders during the covid pandemic.

TRANSPORT

■ Cycling: Accidents

Jim Shannon:

[\[170634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what is steps he is taking to protect cyclists from risk of injury as a result of potholes.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On the local road network, local highway authorities have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highways network in their area. It is important that local highway authorities consider the needs of all road users, especially vulnerable groups such as cyclists, motorcyclists, and pedestrians, when planning their highway maintenance.

In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland responsibility for maintaining the highway rests with the respective devolved administration.

■ Railways: Finance

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[171707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2021 to Question 158165, for what reason he has not provided the same level of financial support to Open Access Operators as to other rail operators.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Open Access Operators (OAOs) do not have any contractual relationship with Government. Rail Operators who held franchises prior to the pandemic, have an on-going contractual relationship with Government and are now party to Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs). These measures were necessary for franchised operators to enable the Government to continue meeting its Section 30 legal obligations to ensure the provision of rail services. These obligations do not apply to OAOs.

The Government has provided support to OAOs through the wider comprehensive package of support measures to businesses across the economy. OAOs have drawn on these measures, particularly the furlough scheme.

Officials will continue to monitor this situation and engage with all open access operators during the pandemic.

■ **Transport: West Yorkshire**

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[171757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve transport infrastructure between Wakefield and Leeds.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[171758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve transport infrastructure between Wakefield and Huddersfield.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[171759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve transport infrastructure between Wakefield and Dewsbury.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[171760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve transport infrastructure between Wakefield and Manchester.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[171761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve transport infrastructure between Wakefield and Sheffield.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed, as part of its Levelling Up agenda, to improving transport connectivity both within and between, the towns and cities of the North. In West Yorkshire, we are providing £317m from our Transforming Cities Fund and access to the £4.2bn Intra-City Transport Fund to improve transport infrastructure between Wakefield, Leeds, Dewsbury and Huddersfield alongside £49.6m to maintain local highways and improve local transport infrastructure. In addition, local authorities in West Yorkshire will be able to bid for transport projects for the £4.8bn Levelling Up Fund, launched at the Budget 2021.

The Government's Road and Rail Investment Strategies are improving strategic infrastructure between Wakefield, Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester through our £589m commitment to upgrade and electrify the Transpennine main line between Leeds, Huddersfield and Manchester, and investment on the M1 between Junctions 39-42 between Wakefield and Leeds, now open to traffic. The second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2), published in 2020, also included funding for Highways England to develop proposals to upgrade M1 Junctions 35A-39. If funded for construction by the next RIS (starting in 2025), this would provide extra capacity on this stretch of the M1 and would allow more drivers to travel between Wakefield and Sheffield.

TREASURY■ **Babies**

Munira Wilson: [\[171730\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to improve support for babies in their first 1001 days.

Steve Barclay:

The government remains committed to improving health outcomes during the first 1001 days and early childhood.

At the Spending Review, we confirmed an additional £25.8m to increase the value of Healthy Start Vouchers to £4.25, in line with the recommendation of the National Food Strategy, to help combat child food poverty and give children the best start in life.

This year the public health grant to local authorities in England will increase to £3.324 billion in 2021/22, an increase of 1% in cash terms, enabling local authorities to invest in important public services such as child health visits.

■ **Boats: Northern Ireland**

Stephen Farry: [\[171774\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the effect on leisure boats moving between Northern Ireland and Great Britain arising from different rules on red diesel from 1 July 2021.

Jesse Norman:

Budget 2021 announced that private pleasure craft users in Northern Ireland will no longer be able to use red diesel to propel their craft. The change will take effect later this year, with the specific date to be confirmed in due course. Red diesel will continue to be used by private pleasure craft in the rest of the UK.

This change will achieve consistency with a 2018 judgment by the Court of Justice of the European Union, and ensure the UK meets its international obligations under the Northern Ireland Protocol. It will also align the rules with those governing fuel used by private pleasure craft in the Republic of Ireland, which should make it simpler for craft users to get the fuel they need if they travel between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

The Government is engaging with representative groups covering private pleasure craft as well as fuel suppliers over any implementation issues. Further details will be announced in due course, including in relation to craft travelling from Northern Ireland to Great Britain.

■ Child Benefit

Martyn Day:

[\[170688\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 155212, on Child Benefit, how his Department will reconcile basic rate taxpayers being affected by the High Income Child Benefit Charge in the upcoming tax year.

Jesse Norman:

The High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC) is a tax charge which applies to anyone with an income of over £50,000 who gets Child Benefit, or whose partner gets it. The charge increases gradually for those with incomes between £50,000 and £60,000 and is equal to one per cent of a family's Child Benefit for every extra £100 of income that is over £50,000 each year. Where income exceeds £60,000, the tax charge is equal to the amount payable in Child Benefit.

In order to ensure that people pay the correct tax charge, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) need to know both the amount of Child Benefit received and the total taxable income. A Self-Assessment tax return is the only means of establishing this, and avoids using estimates of income which could result in too little, or too much, tax being paid.

HMRC have taken considerable steps to raise awareness of HICBC. They use a wide array of channels to reach those who may be liable to pay HICBC and there is a prominent message about HICBC on the Child Benefit claim form.

In addition, where HMRC hold all the relevant information, they write to parents who may have become liable for HICBC, explaining what they need to do to pay the charge when it is due and avoid penalties.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Employment

Emma Hardy:

[\[170725\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on levels of employment.

Jesse Norman:

The OBR produces independent forecasts for the Government, and in its Economic and Fiscal Outlook published in March 2021 it estimated that "unemployment would have been about 300,000 higher in the fourth quarter of 2021 in the absence of fiscal stimulus and the extension of the CJRS".

■ Holiday Accommodation: Non-domestic Rates

James Wild:

[\[170751\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Valuation Office Agency takes to confirm that furnished holiday lets that are registered for business rates meet the requirement for the property to be available for letting for at least 140 days a year.

Jesse Norman:

The VOA uses information provided by the taxpayer to show their intention to let for 140 days. The VOA issues questionnaires to new properties, and where necessary, carries out online searches. Following this, the VOA issues requests for rental information on a targeted basis.

On 23 March, the Government announced that it will legislate to change the criteria determining whether a holiday let is valued for business rates to account for actual days the property was rented. This will ensure that owners of properties cannot reduce their tax liability by declaring that a property is available for let while making little or no actual effort to do so. Further details of the change and implementation will be included in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) response to the consultation on the business rates treatment of self-catering accommodation which will be published shortly.

■ Premium Bonds**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[170618\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people held at least one Premium Bond, in each of the last 30 months.

John Glen:

Approximately 21.9 million people have held at least £1 in Premium Bonds in each of the last 30 months between September 2018 and March 2021. This figure includes customers that held Premium Bonds in September 2018 and have maintained a positive balance of £1 or more up to March 2021.

■ Public Houses and Small Businesses: Insurance**Clive Lewis:**[\[170690\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department taking to ensure that (a) pubs and (b) other SME's can claim business interruption insurance policies for extended periods of closure and financial loss due to the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly and settle claims quickly once settlement terms are agreed. The FCA has said that, in light of COVID-19, insurers must consider very carefully the needs of their customers and show flexibility in their treatment of them.

The Government is pleased that a final judgment has been reached by the Supreme Court in the FCA Business Interruption test case and trust that this will provide the legal clarity urgently sought by policyholders. The FCA has set out its expectation that insurers should communicate to all impacted policyholders what this judgment means for their claim and should move quickly to resolve claims as determined by the judgment, making interim payments wherever possible.

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

Bridget Phillipson: [\[170614\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls to HMRC's telephone advice lines for people completing a self assessment form were abandoned by the caller before reaching an HMRC call handling agent on (a) 29 January 2019, (b) 30 January 2019, (c) 31 January 2019, (d) 29 January 2020, (e) 30 January 2020, (f) 31 January 2020, (g) 29 January 2021, (h) 30 January 2021 and (i) 31 January 2021.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[170615\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls to HMRC's telephone advice lines for people completing a self assessment form were not answered by an HMRC call agent within five minutes on (a) 29 January 2019, (b) 30 January 2019, (c) 31 January 2019, (d) 29 January 2020, (e) 30 January 2020, (f) 31 January 2020, (g) 29 January 2021, (h) 30 January 2021 and (i) 31 January 2021.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[170616\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls to HMRC's telephone advice lines for people completing a self assessment form were not answered by an HMRC call agent within 10 minutes on (a) 29 January 2019, (b) 30 January 2019, (c) 31 January 2019, (d) 29 January 2020, (e) 30 January 2020, (f) 31 January 2020, (g) 29 January 2021, (h) 30 January 2021 and (i) 31 January 2021.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[170617\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls to HMRC's telephone advice lines for people completing a self assessment form were not answered by an HMRC call agent within 20 minutes on (a) 29 January 2019, (b) 30 January 2019, (c) 31 January 2019, (d) 29 January 2020, (e) 30 January 2020, (f) 31 January 2020, (g) 29 January 2021, (h) 30 January 2021 and (i) 31 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested is provided in the table below.

	DATE ANSWERED WITHIN			ABANDONED IN QUEUE	
	0 - 5 Mins	5.01 - 10 Mins	10.01 - 20 Mins	20+ Mins	
30-Jan-19	23,354	10,109	10,400	1,681	4,656
29-Jan-19	19,290	9,615	9,986	1,119	4,041
31-Jan-19	27,841	13,178	6,309	738	4,241
29-Jan-20	27,407	7,504	1,986	1,119	2,714

DATE ANSWERED WITHIN				ABANDONED IN QUEUE	
30-Jan-20	25,365	3,164	8,497	1,873	4,363
31-Jan-20	13,395	10,252	11,302	3,923	7,305
29-Jan-21	8,619	3,440	5,799	8,671	5,904
30-Jan-21	1,032	1,941	2,637	4,568	2,154
31-Jan-21	724	665	820	3,591	1,608

■ Taxation: Electronic Government

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[170619\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on how many occasions guidance on the taxation of (a) individuals and (b) businesses on the Government website has been updated in each of the last 30 months.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested is not recorded in the format requested and it is not possible to calculate the requested figures from the data that is held.

Guidance on gov.uk is regularly updated, including in relation to covid support schemes.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[170620\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the process is for updating guidance on the taxation of (a) individuals and (b) businesses on the Government website; and if he will outline the respective roles of (i) HMRC and (ii) the Government Digital Service.

Jesse Norman:

The process for updating guidance on the taxation of individuals and businesses on the Government website (GOV.UK) is the same. Specialist content designers from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and Government Digital Services (GDS) work with HMRC's policy, technical and operational specialists to take the technical and policy intent and present it as guidance that meets the needs of GOV.UK users.

HMRC own the factual accuracy of all of their guidance and can update independently, without consulting GDS, the vast majority of their guidance on GOV.UK.

A small proportion of HMRC's guidance on GOV.UK is administered by GDS directly. This is generally the most commonly used guidance, designed for members of the public (or small to medium-sized businesses) who may have little or no experience on a given topic. GDS follow strict guidelines to make sure that Government information is consistent across departments, accessible and understandable to all. GDS own the

words and user experience of the guidance they directly administer and HMRC own and assure the factual accuracy.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Cold Weather Payments: West Yorkshire

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[173200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department has disbursed in cold weather payments to the residents of (a) Wakefield constituency and (b) West Yorkshire in the most recent period for which that information is available.

Guy Opperman:

The Cold Weather Payment scheme is administered at weather station level rather than at a constituency or regional level. The coverage area for each weather station is determined by the Met Office, which assesses the most appropriate weather station for each postcode area. Cold weather payments are triggered when the average temperature recorded at the weather station has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, 0°C or below over seven consecutive days, during the Cold Weather season (November to March).

The constituency of Wakefield covers all or part of the following postcode areas: S75, WF1, WF12, WF2, WF3, WF4 and WF5. These postcode areas are covered by the weather station Sheffield. Sheffield weather station covers the postcode areas, in **Table 1**, which include constituencies other than Wakefield.

There are twenty-two constituencies in West Yorkshire. Postcodes within these constituencies are linked to one of four weather stations: Sheffield, Bramham, Bingley and Rochdale. **Table 1** shows the weather stations linked to West Yorkshire postcodes, and also includes postcodes in constituencies other than West Yorkshire.

TABLE 1 POSTCODE SECTORS MAPPED TO WEATHER STATIONS

Weather station	Postcode Sectors Covered
Sheffield	DN1-8, DN11-12, HD1-2, HD4-6, S1-14, S17-18, S20-21, S25-26, S35, S40-45, S60-66, S70-75, S80-81, WF1-17.
Bramham	HG1-5, LS1-20, LS22-28, YO1, YO8, YO10, YO19, YO23-24, YO26, YO30-32, YO41-43, YO51, YO60-61.
Bingley	BB4, BB8-12, BB18, BD1-22, HD3, HD7-9, HX1-7, LS21, LS29, OL13-14, S36.
Rochdale	BL0-9, M24, M26, OL1-12, OL15-16, SK15.

TABLE 2 ESTIMATED NUMBER OF COLD WEATHER RECIPIENTS

Weather station	2020/21	Number of triggers
Sheffield	156,000	1
Bramham	60,000	1
Bingley	73,000	2
Rochdale	69,000	1

Qualifying individuals living in this area will have received a £25 payment in respect of a seven-day period of Cold Weather. Expenditure can be estimated by multiplying the number of payments by £25.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Iron and Steel**

Lucy Powell:

[\[173046\]](#)

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

Guy Opperman:

The Department and its public bodies have not procured any steel in 2019-21, with the exception of the Health and Safety Executive which has procured a minor quantity of steel for specific projects and experiments. The quantity involved was small and not related to delivery of a major project so no records were kept regarding production location.

■ **Disability: Surveys**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[174178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the UK Disability Survey includes a question on whether the respondent would be willing to have a physical relationship with a disabled person.

Justin Tomlinson:

The content of the survey was informed by research conducted by the Cabinet Office's Disability Unit and tested with disabled people and organisations prior to launch.

This question was included in the survey to improve our understanding of perceptions and attitudes towards disability and disabled people.

Insights from the UK Disability Survey - alongside our wider engagement and evidence gathering programme - will inform the National Strategy for Disabled People, including action to challenge negative perceptions of disabled people.

■ Flexible Support Fund

David Linden:

[\[153350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much expenditure was allocated from the Flexible Support Fund in (a) Scotland and (b) the UK on (i) childcare and (ii) other categories of activity in (A) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Mims Davies:

The information is not available in the format requested. Such information as is available is in the table below.

Flexible Support Fund – Budget allocations (£m)

	2019/20
Scotland	3.4
Total	37.8

The total figure shown is the allocation for England, Scotland & Wales.

Source : Hyperion

Numbers are rounded to the nearest £0.1m

Eligibility criteria is the same in all areas however Fair Start Scotland, Scottish Governments employability programme, may impact on expenditure. There are also other competing programmes with significant investment in Scotland which may impact on expenditure, as customers would not be eligible for FSF whilst participating on other programmes.

Flexible Support Fund – Expenditure breakdown (£'000)

CATEGORY	2019/20
Partnerships	(15)
Removing Barriers	1,517
Training	1,279
Childcare *	60
Other	55
Total	2,896

Source: Hyperion

Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Negative numbers are in () and may reflect accounting adjustments.

* Childcare is only reported as a separate category from October 2019. Childcare expenditure between April 19 – September 19 cannot be separately identified and is reported within the Removing Barriers category.

■ Funeral Payments

Carolyn Harris: [\[172096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2021 to Question 162619, what plans she has to improve (a) awareness of and (b) access to the funeral expenses payment scheme.

Guy Opperman:

We regularly review and take action to improve the awareness and accessibility of the Funeral Expenses Payment scheme, working with a range of stakeholders.

This includes refreshing the 'Get help with funeral costs' information on GOV.UK. We have also revised the Department leaflet 'What to do when someone dies' to provide a clear step-by-step guide that signposts to available financial support including Funeral Expenses Payment. This has been shared extensively. We also plan to attend a number of funeral industry events in 2021 to raise awareness and understanding of the Funeral Expenses Payment scheme.

We have taken steps to improve access to the Funeral Expenses Payment scheme. The Bereavement Service helpline operates a Freephone service to report a death and to initiate a Funeral Expenses Payment claim. The Department has worked closely with voluntary groups, hospitals, Registrars and Funeral Directors to ensure that the bereaved are signposted to the helpline for further support. Funeral Directors are able to submit evidence electronically to support a Funeral Expenses Payment claim and we continue to work on identifying a secure digital solution to extend this option to applicants.

Telephone: 0800 731 0469 Welsh language: 0800 731 0453

Textphone: 0800 731 0464 Welsh language: 0800 731 0456

■ Self-employed

Sir George Howarth: [\[171520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what representations she has received on the potential merits of reforming self-employment.

Mims Davies:

The Department welcomes representations from stakeholders and incorporates these into policy development and implementation where possible. Many policies relating to self-employment, fall within the ambit of other Government Departments and representations may have been made to them on these matters.

■ Social Security Benefits

Caroline Nokes:

[174108]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the current average waiting time is for an application for limited capacity to work benefit to be considered.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department publishes Employment Support Allowance (ESA) Work Capability Assessment (WCA) statistics online and the latest clearance time statistics available to June 2020 can be accessed in Table 8 here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments-including-mandatory-reconsiderations-and-appeals-january-2021>

Statistics on Work Capability Assessments for Universal Credit are currently under development for future publication and have not previously been published as official statistics. We will issue them in due course as an official statistics release in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Whilst the initial statistics will not have median clearance times, these will be developed for publication in due course.

■ Universal Credit: Severe Disability Premium

Ruth Cadbury:

[174148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many new claims for universal claims were made between 2016 and 2019 by claimants already receiving the severe disability premium before their assessment period came up.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.