

**Daily Report****Tuesday, 20 April 2021**

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 April 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:26 P.M., 20 April 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: West Yorkshire

Tracy Brabin:

[\[181367\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many West Yorkshire based organisations he has met in the last 12 months.

Michael Ellis:

The Attorney General has not visited any West Yorkshire based organisations in the last 12 months.

■ Trials

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[178563\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what estimate she has made of the number of CPS prosecutions that have been classified as no longer in the public interest as a result of delays in criminal trials beginning in each of the last five years.

Lucy Frazer:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) case outcome records compiled in the Case Management System include an allocation of a principal reason for finalised prosecutions not resulting in a conviction (non-conviction outcomes), including the numbers which failed for public interest reasons.

The CPS does not have a specific reason accounting for delays in criminal trials. However, the category 'Other charge/indictment; loss/harm minor from single incident; delay between offence/charge and trial' may be allocated. This can apply where there has been a delay since the commission of the offence, or since the defendant was charged, leading either to the case being dropped by the CPS, or stopped by the court on the grounds of abuse of process. It is not possible to further disaggregate these reasons.

The table below shows the number of defendants allocated this reason in each of the last five years, and the six months April to September 2020

	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020	APRIL - SEPT 2020	
2015-2016						
Other charge/indictment, loss/harm minor from single incident, delay between offence/charge and trial	5,706	4,711	4,011	4,194	4,417	6,107
% Other charge/indictment, loss/harm minor from single incident, delay between	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	1.0%	4.3%

	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020	APRIL - SEPT 2020	
2015-2016						
offence/charge and trial						
Total Non-Conviction Outcomes	107,579	94,692	84,834	80,474	70,816	21,857
% Non-Conviction Outcomes	16.9%	16.1%	15.9%	16.3%	15.7%	15.4%
Total Completed Prosecution Outcomes	637,778	588,021	533,161	494,811	451,046	141,885

Data Source: CPS Case Management
Information System

Between April and September 2020, the volume of completed prosecution outcomes reduced due to court closures and social distancing. However, the volume of cases dropped by the CPS are not as reliant on court hearings and were less impacted.

In response to COVID-19 the CPS introduced an *Interim Case Review Guidance on the Application of the Public Interest*, as part of the COVID-19 crisis response. The guidance is to be applied for charging decisions, including decisions on whether to continue or discontinue a case that has already been charged. The guidance advises that when considering the question of whether a prosecution is a proportionate response, prosecutors should do so in the context of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the potential delay to criminal proceedings. Application of the principles set out in this guidance may have contributed to an increase in the proportion of cases dropped under the category of 'Other charge/indictment; loss/harm minor from single incident; delay between offence/charge and trial'.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Africa: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[179110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 30 March 2021 to Question 173012 on Africa: Research, how many early career researchers in Africa will lose funding as a result of changes to the Official Development Assistance allocation to the Future Leaders - African Independent Research (FLAIR) programme.

Amanda Solloway:

I refer the Hon. Member to the reply I gave on 30th March 2021 to Question 173012.

■ Consumer Goods: Counterfeit Manufacturing

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[178536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress the Government has made on tackling the availability of counterfeit electrical goods on online platforms.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government takes the issue of IP infringement seriously, including counterfeit electrical goods. The Intellectual Property Office works closely with law enforcement and government partners such as Trading Standards and Border Force to prevent counterfeit electrical goods from being sold in the UK. Industry initiatives such as the Real Deal have also reduced the availability of counterfeit electrical goods at local markets and online marketplaces.

The Police IP Crime Unit, launched in September 2013, has had a significant impact having investigated intellectual property crime worth more than £100 million and suspended over 30,000 internet domains. Ongoing enforcement initiatives include Operation Beorma tackling counterfeits and organised crime groups, and work by National Trading Standards and the Intellectual Property Office to deal with the risks posed by sellers who use self-storage units to distribute counterfeit items.

BEIS officials have also met online retailers to discuss the availability of counterfeits on their platforms and to help co-ordinate law enforcement action against sellers.

CABINET OFFICE

■ 10 Downing Street: Construction

Zarah Sultana:

[\[179607\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what information the Government holds on the breakdown of costs in the construction of the briefing room in 10 Downing Street.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has established facilities within 9 Downing Street, rather than 10 Downing Street, which are being used for daily broadcasting by a number of news organisations, therefore I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ 169917](#) on 22 March 2021.

■ 10 Downing Street: Facilities

Hilary Benn:

[\[178821\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the names of the companies contracted to work on the new press briefing room at 10 Downing Street.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has established facilities within 9 Downing Street, rather than 10 Downing Street, which are being used for daily broadcasting by a number of news organisations, therefore I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ 169917](#) on 22 March 2021.

■ Blood: Contamination**Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[178558\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Written Statement of 25 March 2021, HCWS895 on infected blood update, what the planned timescale is for his Department to (a) publish and (b) implement the framework for compensation for victims of the Infected Blood tragedy.

Andrea Jenkyns:[\[179266\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he plans to take to ensure the impartiality of the choice of independent reviewer who will be appointed to carry out the compensation study for victims of the Infected Blood tragedy.

Penny Mordaunt:

The timetable for the compensation study will be finalised after the terms of reference have been agreed, but we expect the study to be completed and published before the Inquiry concludes its work.

The independent reviewer will be selected from a shortlist of candidates with the professional standing, skills, and expertise to undertake the study. The shortlist of candidates will be proposed by the Civil Service. The name of the reviewer will be announced shortly.

■ Cabinet Office: Equality**Rachel Hopkins:**[\[179741\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has met the equality objectives set out in its single departmental plan; what assessment he has made of his Department's performance against those objectives; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Hopkins:[\[179742\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to Regulation 2 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, whether his Department has published at the required intervals information to demonstrate its compliance with that regulation; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[179743\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason diversity data for his Department on publishing.service.gov.uk has not been updated since 2018.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[179744\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he has taken to ensure that the equality objectives set out in his Department's single departmental plan are (a) specific, (b) measurable, (c) achievable, (d) realistic and (e) timely.

Julia Lopez:

Information on Cabinet Office's diversity and inclusion record, and performance against its Equalities Objectives, are set out in the Annual Report and Accounts.

The Cabinet Office will ensure its departmental Equality Objectives continue to be of the highest standard when updated.

■ **Census: Forms**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[178560\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that people who requested large print Census 2021 forms received them.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ178560 [UKSA's final response to PQ178560 .pdf]

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Darren Jones:

[\[179365\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the international interoperability of a proposed covid-19 vaccination certification or passport for the UK in order to facilitate international travel.

Darren Henry:

[\[179629\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on publishing a roadmap out of the covid-19 lockdown for people who have been separated from families and partners who live outside of the UK.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK is working with other countries who have programmes to allow vaccinated people to travel more freely, to lead global efforts to adopt a clear international

framework with standards that provide consistency for passengers and industry alike. The Government is working closely with the World Health Organisation and other multilateral organisations like ICAO to help shape an internationally interoperable certification system. Additionally, we have been working with like-minded partners, to ensure people can prove their health status when travelling abroad, once international travel resumes from 17 May at the earliest.

On 9 April, a framework to chart the safe return of international travel was set out by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps. The report, produced by the Global Travel Taskforce shows how international travel could resume from 17 May 2021 at the earliest, and commits to working with industry to do so in a safe, accessible and affordable way. This report shows how the UK will once again allow people with families and partners outside the UK to see their loved ones again.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[181188\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people have died in each week since 1 February 2021 within (a) 28 days and (b) 14 days of having received a vaccination against covid-19.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ181188 [UKSA's final response to PQ181188.pdf]

■ **Government Departments: Epilepsy**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[178557\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of employees with epilepsy working for Government departments.

Julia Lopez:

Data on the number of staff across the Civil Service with epilepsy is not held centrally. The Annual Civil Service Employment Survey which is used to produce Civil Service Statistics, collects diversity information on Civil Servants including disability status but does not specify the type of disability.

■ **Greensill**

Dan Carden:

[\[179449\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the review into Greensill lobbying led by Nigel Boardman will be supported by an independent advisory board.

Dan Carden:

[179450]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the review into Greensill lobbying led by Nigel Boardman will hold public hearings.

Dan Carden:

[180584]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the scope of the review into Greensill lobbying led by Nigel Boardman will include (a) corporate lobbying of Government more broadly, (b) the revolving door between Government and the private sector, (c) enforcement of the Ministerial Code and (d) other issues of (i) transparency and (ii) accountability.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to the [answer](#) given by the Prime Minister on 14 April at Prime Minister's Questions [col312] setting out the Government's initiation of the Boardman Review.

The review's Terms of Reference were published on 16 April and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/review-into-the-development-and-use-of-supply-chain-finance-in-government-terms-of-reference>.

Dan Carden:

[181409]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish full details of communications or meetings held between (a) Ministers, (b) No.10 special advisors and (c) senior staff and (i) David Cameron and (ii) wider representatives of Greensill Capital since August 2018.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to the [answer](#) given by the Prime Minister on 14 April at Prime Minister's Questions [col312] setting out the Government's initiation of the Boardman Review.

The review's Terms of Reference were published on 16 April and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/review-into-the-development-and-use-of-supply-chain-finance-in-government-terms-of-reference>.

■ Honours: Forfeiture

Dr Matthew Offord:

[179048]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many individual honours were forfeited in each of the last five years.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[179049]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reasons individual honours were forfeited in each of the last five years.

Chloe Smith:

The names of those who have had honours revoked are usually published in the London Gazette and can be found at: <https://www.thegazette.co.uk>. Any exceptions to this reflect broader duty of care considerations.

The reasoning behind individual forfeiture decisions is not published and we do not comment on individual cases. Honours are forfeited where there is clear evidence of action or inaction that is not in keeping with the values of the honours system, that could bring it into disrepute.

We have increased transparency in the forfeiture system, including making more information about the process available publicly, increasing engagement with complainants and appointing independent members to the Committee.

Internet: Elderly**Darren Jones:**[\[179367\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the potential discretionary effect of the requirement by many online services for a mobile telephone number on elderly people using those services who rely on a landline telephone.

Julia Lopez:

The Service Standard requires all government services to only ask for a phone number or mobile phone number if essential, and that there should always be an alternative channel available to the user who does not have a computer, mobile phone, or access to the internet.

Members: Correspondence**Rosie Cooper:**[\[178953\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. member for West Lancashire of 5 February 2021 on EU parcels, reference ZA55434.

Julia Lopez:

This letter was received on 20 April 2021. We will respond as soon as possible.

Students: Absent Voting**Olivia Blake:**[\[181470\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's recent announcement that students will not be permitted to return to their term time address until 17 May 2021, what plans he has to ensure that students register for postal votes at their term time accommodation; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the deadline for students to register for postal votes.

Chloe Smith:

There are three ways to vote at elections in the UK: in person at a polling station; by postal vote; or by proxy vote. These will all be available to voters at the elections in May 2021 and it is for individual electors to decide the appropriate method of voting for themselves, depending on their circumstances.

The Government has no plans to change the deadline for postal vote applications. Moving the deadline closer to polling day would reduce the time for postal ballot papers to be issued to and returned by postal voters, and could lead to the votes of some postal voters not being received in time to be counted.

Trade Promotion**Emily Thornberry:**[\[178922\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to review the (a) funding, (b) objectives and (c) targeting of the Government's GREAT campaign.

Julia Lopez:

As the Cabinet Office has now assumed responsibility for the GREAT campaign there will be a review of the funding, objectives and targeting of the GREAT campaign.

The GREAT campaign has been very successful at promoting the UK abroad since 2012 and is formally governed via a Programme Board of ministers from relevant government departments, plus officials from departments which fund the campaign. The Board meets quarterly and agrees to budget the campaign's priorities, strategic direction, budget allocations and ensures value for money on behalf of the taxpayer.

UK Trade with EU**Sir Robert Neill:**[\[178976\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the provisions agreed in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement are reciprocal and include a binding non-discrimination clause covering all current and future EU member states.

Sir Robert Neill:[\[178977\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether provisions in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement allow for (a) a short supplementing agreement or a Joint Declaration and (b) other bilateral agreements.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) imposes reciprocal obligations on the Parties to the Agreement. The TCA also includes some provisions – common in international agreements of this kind – which impose specific obligations on a particular Party.

There is no general non-discrimination provision applicable to all current and future EU Member States in the TCA.

The TCA does not prohibit either the UK or EU from entering into future agreements with each other. Article COMPROV.2 of the TCA includes information on how to treat future UK-EU agreements. The UK and EU Member States are free to make bilateral agreements with each other in principle. However, whether the EU Member States can enter into an agreement with the UK depends on the subject matter and the competence position under EU law.

■ UK Trade with EU: Exports

Hywel Williams:

[\[175730\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the number of SMEs in Wales that have been unable to export goods to the EU since 1 January 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

Further to my [answer](#) to PQ 160771 on 11 March 2021, the Government does not hold information on the number of businesses, if any, who have been unable to export goods to the EU since 1 January 2021. However, as the Office for National Statistics trade statistics to February, released this week, have shown, goods exports to the EU are now getting close to their average 2020 monthly levels once again. We continue to offer a wide range of support to businesses exporting to the EU. This includes the £20m SME Brexit Support Fund, which provides access to grants and practical support.

■ Veterans: Charities

Stephen Morgan:

[\[178562\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the closure of the Help for Heroes recovery centres in (a) Yorkshire, (b) Devon and (c) Essex on the adequacy of support available to veterans; and what steps his Department is taking to maintain services for veterans during a period of falling charity income.

Johnny Mercer:

The MoD is continuing to work closely with Help for Heroes to transfer management responsibilities for the Personnel Recovery Centres whilst Help for Heroes' introduce a new community based support model. Remote services will continue to be offered to veterans and the Government is continuing to monitor the situation, to ensure veterans can continue to access the support they need, whether via the NHS or the charitable sector.

This Government has provided unprecedented support to the service charity sector throughout the pandemic. As well as being able to access broader charity sector support, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the sector has benefitted from a £6million COVID Impact Fund. In addition to the £10million per annum that the Government provides to the sector through the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust,

in this year's budget, the Trust has been allocated a further £10million to deliver charitable projects supporting veterans mental health needs.

■ Voting Behaviour: Travellers

Cat Smith:

[\[179210\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March 2021 to Question 171645 on Electoral Register: Travellers, what meetings (a) the Minister for the Constitution and Devolution has had and (b) officials of his Department have had with members of the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma community on improving voter turnout at elections of members of the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma community.

Chloe Smith:

Ministerial meetings are published regularly. Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) have the statutory responsibility for maintaining complete and accurate electoral registers for their areas. They are required to consider the presence of any gypsy or travelling communities in their area and to decide on the best approach to take locally. The Electoral Commission runs campaigns to raise awareness of how people can register to vote, and how to cast their vote.

DEFENCE

■ A400M Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[178865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Military Aviation Authority has certified that it is safe to conduct parachute operations from A400M aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The Military Aviation Authority has certified aerial delivery of certain categories of cargo on the ATLAS C Mk1.

Aerial delivery of personnel has not currently been certified, however, trials to support this activity are planned.

■ Afghanistan: Immigration

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[181176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan (a) present and (b) former (i) interpreters (ii) other locally employed civilians have applied for resettlement to the UK and are currently awaiting a decision; whether all such applications will be fully decided before 11 September 2021; what arrangements will exist after that date to enable further applications to be made in the event that the security situation deteriorates; and if he will take immediate steps to ensure that applications to resettle in the UK made by bona fide former employees of UK armed forces receive positive responses.

Johnny Mercer:

Her Majesty's Government has so far relocated 1,358 locally employed Afghan staff and their families to the UK. A total of 532 eligible locally employed staff have applied for relocation to the UK, of which 84 are currently awaiting a decision. Of these, all but six are interpreters and all are former locally employed staff. These applications will be fully decided before 11 September 2021. I cannot comment on arrangements to enable further applications to be made after that date in the event that the security situation deteriorates, as doing so would require me to reveal the details of live operational planning. I have tasked my officials to work in concert with partners across government to explore all options to ensure that current and former locally employed staff who are eligible for relocation under the terms of the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and the Ex-Gratia Scheme are relocated.

■ **Africa: Islamic State****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[178890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the increased threat from ISIS in Africa.

James Heapey:

We are concerned about the continuing threat posed by Daesh and its affiliates in Africa. In the recent Defence Command Paper, we committed to working closely with others to tackle the threat and strengthen stabilisation. In the Sahel, we are contributing UK military assets both to the French counter-terrorism operations and to the UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA). In the Lake Chad Basin, we are working with our Nigerian and Cameroonian partners to develop their counter-terrorism capabilities. We are also continuing to contribute actively to the work of the Global Coalition Against Daesh. In East Africa, we are focusing on the countering the terrorist threat posed by Al Shabaab.

■ **Armed Forces Covenant: Scottish Borders****John Lamont:**[\[179352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding has been provided to organisations in the Scottish Borders Council area as part of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund.

Johnny Mercer:

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has made two grants, totalling £44,900, to a charity registered in the Scottish Borders Council area. First Light Trust, was awarded a grant of £9,900 in August 2020 under the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's small grants programme 'Forces Communities Together', and an additional £35,000 in November 2020 under the Trust's 'Positive Pathways' programme. There has been considerable further funding awarded to organisations with registered offices in Edinburgh, which have a wider remit for the delivery of services across Scotland, including in the Scottish Borders.

■ Armed Forces: Autism

Luke Pollard:

[\[178576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the implications of the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and the Army having different medical discharge policies in relation to autism and Asperger's syndrome on the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant's principle that armed forces personnel should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.

Johnny Mercer:

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

The delegation of medical discharge policy causes no disadvantage to our personnel (serving or veteran) in relation to other citizens and has no implications for our ongoing commitment to the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Iron and Steel

Chris Evans:

[\[181257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much UK-produced steel has been used in the manufacturing of Boxer Armoured Fighting Vehicles procured by his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

While UK steel may be used at component level, the BOXER vehicles being developed and qualified are likely to require significant quantities of specialist steel not available in the UK.

Chris Evans:

[\[181258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much UK-produced steel has been used in the manufacturing of Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicles procured by his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

The majority of the steel for the hull and armour of Ajax being smelted and rolled to create a high hardness specification required for the ballistic properties needed to ensure survivability. This steel being produced is low volume and not available in the UK.

■ Army: Recruitment

John Healey:

[\[180393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many British Army recruits have been enlisted from each region since 2010.

James Heappey:

The attached spreadsheet contains information detailing intake to the UK Regulars by Region for the British Army between 2013-14 and 2019-20 inclusive. Information to cover the period prior to that is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Attachments:

1. British Army [Copy of 20210416-PQ Intake by Region 2013-14 to 2019-20 AMENDED FINAL.xlsx]

■ **Bahrain: Defence**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[178702\]](#)

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

James Heappey:

The cost of upgrading the UK's defence footprint in Bahrain over the past five years has been £12.72 million. This figure does not cover running and maintenance costs.

■ **Cyprus: Military Bases**

Alec Shelbrooke: [\[179031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has plans to provide covid-19 vaccinations for British Nationals that are working overseas under defence infrastructure organisation contracts as part of the vaccination programme for armed forces personnel at UK sovereign bases.

James Heappey:

COVID-19 vaccinations have been and will be offered to eligible UK Defence contractors across our overseas network, in line with UK timelines.

■ **Oman: Defence**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[178700\]](#)

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

James Heappey:

The cost of upgrading the UK's defence footprint in Oman over the past five years has been £22.87 million. This figure does not cover running and maintenance costs.

■ **Qatar: Defence**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[178704\]](#)

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

James Heappey:

There have been no UK-funded upgrades to the UK's defence footprint in Qatar over the past five years. This does not include running and maintenance costs.

■ Service Pupil Premium**Stephen Morgan:**[\[179457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many schools in receipt of the Service Pupil Premium are using the self-review tool as at 12 April 2021.

Johnny Mercer:

Following research led by the Service Children's Progression Alliance (SCiP Alliance), the 'Thriving Lives Toolkit' was developed which identified seven principles for effective school practice in supporting Service children and a framework to help schools undertake evidence-based reflection, identifying their improvement priorities for this cohort. A central aspect of one of the principles is school transparency and how a school supports Service children through the targeted deployment of resources, including dedicated funding where available, i.e. the Service Pupil Premium. The SCiP Alliance 'Thriving Lives Toolkit' was launched in mid-2020 with an editable version of the toolkit made available in November 2020 and an online version being presently developed.

Information held by the SCiP Alliance indicates there have been a total of 345 downloads of the editable version since November 2020. Comparable information for the non-editable version is not held. When the online version has been launched, fuller management information will be available.

■ Type 31 Frigates: Iron and Steel**Chris Evans:**[\[181255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much UK-produced steel has been used in the manufacturing of Type 31 Frigates procured by his Department.

Chris Evans:[\[181256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much UK-produced steel has been used in the manufacturing of Astute-class Submarines procured by his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

No steel has yet been procured for the Type 31 frigates.

There are no UK suppliers of the specialised steel required in the manufacture of submarine pressure hulls. Other grades of steel used in the manufacture of Astute Class submarines were sourced from a range of suppliers, including a number of UK companies. Owing to the complexity of the Astute programme supply chain and the time that has elapsed since steel for the programme was procured, it is not possible to provide reliable information on the tonnages of steel provided by each supplier.

Steel for our major defence programmes is generally sourced by our prime contractors from a range of UK and international suppliers and that remains the case.

This Government is committed to creating the right conditions in the UK for a competitive and sustainable steel industry. It publishes its future pipeline for steel requirements, together with data on how Departments are complying with steel procurement guidance. This enables UK steel manufacturers to better plan and bid for Government contracts.

■ **USA: Arms Trade**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[178854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the new initiatives set out in the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy published on 23 March 2021, whether single source, non-competitive foreign military sales contracts with the US Administration will come under the regulation of the Single Source Regulations Office.

Jeremy Quin:

Regulation 7 of the Single Source Contract Regulations excludes contracts to with Governments of any country other than the United Kingdom. This includes contracts made under foreign military sales agreements. The regulations do apply to contracts with other overseas suppliers, providing they meet the other criteria set out in the legislation.

The Regulations are currently being reviewed as part of the changes set out in the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy. Once completed, the conclusions of the review and proposed reforms to the Regulations will be published in a Command Paper.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **David Cameron**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[179273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, on how many occasions officials in his Department met with David Cameron since July 2016; and what the (a) subject, (b) dates, (c) times and (d) durations of those meetings were.

Oliver Dowden:

Our records show officials from my Department have not had any meetings with the Rt. Hon David Cameron within this period.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: West Yorkshire**

Tracy Brabin:

[\[181370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many West Yorkshire based organisations he has met in the last 12 months.

Oliver Dowden:

Ministers routinely meet with a range of organisations. Details of Ministerial meetings are published on a quarterly basis on Gov.uk

■ Digital Technology: Older People

Munira Wilson:

[\[178654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he has taken to help ensure that elderly people are not excluded as a result of the digital divide.

Caroline Dinenage:

To tackle the digital divide and support connectivity, we have worked closely with providers to ensure social tariffs are in place that provide low cost landline and broadband services for those on means-tested state benefits. Wider commitments by the telecoms industry to support vulnerable consumers have included the removal of data caps on fixed broadband packages, and free or low cost data boosts on mobile services.

Training is available for elderly people wishing to acquire essential digital skills. The Government has introduced a digital entitlement for adults with no or low digital skills to undertake specified digital qualifications, up to level 1, free of charge. Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQs), introduced alongside the digital entitlement, are based on new national standards which set out the digital skills people need to get on in life and work. We also support the provision of essential digital skills training in community settings through the Adult Education Budget.

Public libraries play an important role in tackling digital inclusion. Around 2900 public libraries in England provide a trusted network of accessible locations with staff, volunteers, free wifi and assisted digital access to a wide range of digital services. The volunteers and library staff have been trained in digital skills so that they can provide library users with support in using digital applications and services.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[179596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to support county-based test events across the UK to monitor the rate of covid-19 transmission as covid-19 restrictions are eased to enable the events industry to reopen.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Events Research Programme aims to examine the risk of transmission of Covid-19 from attendance at events and explore ways to enable people to attend a range of events safely. To achieve this, the programme will explore how a combination of testing and non-pharmaceutical interventions (actions that people can take to mitigate the spread of coronavirus) can inform decisions on safely lifting restrictions at events.

We have confirmed 8 events that will run as ERP pilots to inform the safe removal of social distancing from Step 4 of the Roadmap. The pilots will be run across a range of settings, venue types, and activity types so that findings could support the full reopening of similar settings across multiple sectors.

These pilots will be held in locations across England, including Liverpool, London, and Sheffield. All events will be subject to national and local approvals (including the

Directors for Public Health and local authorities), and further events may be announced in due course.

■ Gambling: Advertising

Paul Blomfield:

[\[179071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what directions he has issued to the Advertising Standards Authority on limiting the number of children that are exposed to gambling advertising.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Advertising Standards Authority is an independent body. The Government works closely with them across a wide range of areas, including gambling advertising.

All gambling advertising, wherever it appears, is subject to strict controls on content and placement. Adverts must never be targeted at children or vulnerable people. The Advertising Standards Authority independently administers these standards through the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) which covers online and non-broadcast spaces and the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) for TV. If an advert for gambling holds particular appeal to children and is freely accessible then it will break the rules.

The Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP) recently concluded a consultation on proposals to amend their advertising codes to further limit the potential for gambling adverts to appeal to children. The broadcast advertising codes make clear that adverts for commercial gambling must not be shown during or adjacent to television programmes directed at or likely to appeal particularly to children.

The Industry Code for Socially Responsible Gambling Advertising also prohibits gambling advertising on television before 9pm, except for adverts promoting bingo or lotteries, and sports betting in limited circumstances (not immediately around or during live sport).

■ Government Departments: Data Protection

Daisy Cooper:

[\[179577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which of the 139 recommendations identified in the Information Commissioner's Office audit of Government departments will be included as part of the National Data Strategy.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The audit referred to in the question was a specific audit by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) of the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE has been working closely with the ICO since the audit was undertaken in February 2020 to address all the recommendations and published its formal response in January 2021 in the House Library, paper reference DEP2021-0072.

The work being done by DfE in partnership with the ICO to address the audit recommendations, particularly around data sharing policy and strategy, will support

good practice across the public, private and third sectors, in line with the aims of the National Data Strategy.

■ Horse Riding: Coronavirus

Sir Alan Campbell:

[\[178837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if the Government will review the reopening date for indoor riding schools as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity providers and facilities are at the heart of our communities, and play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active.

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. Across four steps, the roadmap sets out the sequencing and indicative timing for easing restrictions. This is a cautious and gradual approach, led by data, not dates.

Indoor leisure facilities including indoor riding centres are now able to reopen for individual and household use so long as they adhere to relevant government guidance. All children are also able to attend any organised indoor children's activity.

■ Leisure: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[179598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support the participation of non-smartphone users without access to specific apps to take part in forthcoming covid-19 test events in the culture, media and sport sectors.

Caroline Dineneage:

Attendees will take a LFD test at an assisted testing site the day before an Events Research Programme pilot event. A smartphone is not required to receive this test result, though some event organisers may require text confirmation of a negative LFD test result.

Ticketing arrangements are managed by individual event organisers, and will vary from event to event. Further details on the ticketing requirements will be made available by individual event organisers, and may include app-based tickets, print-at-home tickets, or text confirmations. Individual event organisers will confirm ticketing and test requirements with attendees ahead of each event. We will continue to engage with stakeholders, and the scientific community to help shape these plans.

■ Listed Events

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[179633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make it his policy to ensure that all sports played by UK national teams are available live for free on non-subscription services.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government recognises that sporting events of national significance have the ability to bring the nation together through shared moments and therefore it is important that they are made available to as wide an audience as possible.

Under the current listed events regime national sporting events including matches for the FIFA Football World Cup finals tournament, the Rugby World Cup finals and events in the Olympics are made available to free to air broadcasters. In January 2020 the Government added the Paralympic Games to the list, recognising that it is an event of national significance on par with the Olympic Games.

The listed events regime works well to strike an appropriate balance between retaining free-to-air sports events for the public while allowing rights holders to negotiate agreements in the best interests of their sport. Therefore, the Government does not have plans to review the listed events regime at this time.

■ Swimming: Ethnic Groups

Catherine West:

[\[181363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to increase participation in swimming and aquatics for black swimmers.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in sport and physical activity, including swimming. Our strategy 'Sporting Future' sets out a clear ambition to increase levels of physical activity amongst under-represented groups, working closely with the sector to achieve this. We support the efforts of groups helping to promote diversity and inclusion in sport, including the Black Swimming Association who are working to increase swimming participation levels for black swimmers.

Sport England, DCMS's arm's length body for grassroots sport in England, recently launched their new ten year strategy, Uniting the Movement. This reinforced their commitment to diversifying participation and tackling inequalities in sport and physical activity. Sport England have invested £12.6 million in Swim England to promote participation in swimming, including support for people from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Recently Swim England and the Black Swimming Association have announced a partnership to further increase numbers of participation in aquatic activity, which we welcome.

■ Tourism: Greater London

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[178891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage tourism in London in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Department is taking a number of steps to encourage tourism in city destinations such as London.

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

We are working with VisitBritain, VisitEngland and local partners to champion the UK's diverse tourism offer through the Escape the Everyday campaign, which will have a focus on encouraging visitors to return to cities.

We will continue to work with industry to provide assurance regarding when people can safely visit attractions - as demonstrated through the We're Good to Go industry standard, which has been used by over 45,000 businesses.

The March Budget included £700m of extra funding to support our world-leading arts, culture and sporting institutions - protecting the venues which make London and the UK an attractive destination to visit.

In total, over £25bn has been provided to the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors in the form of grants, loans and tax breaks.

■ UK Youth Parliament

Cat Smith:

[\[179207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment the Government has made of whether obtaining commercial sponsorship for the UK Youth Parliament is (a) achievable and (b) desirable.

Matt Warman:

DCMS did not seek commercial sponsorship for the UK Youth Parliament. The grant competition for the 2021/22 UK Youth Parliament programme was open to charitable, benevolent and philanthropic organisations.

For DCMS grant competitions, an organisation's ability to bring in additional resources, for example by creating delivery efficiencies with partner organisations or through match funding may be considered as part of the assessment criteria. In the 2021/22 UK Youth Parliament grant competition, an organisation's ability to bring in additional resource was considered. Applicants to the grant competition were invited to demonstrate how they would be able to secure external funding and partnerships to supplement the DCMS grant.

■ UK Youth Parliament: Operating Costs

Cat Smith:

[\[179206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how his Department calculated the running costs of the UK Youth Parliament in preparation for the 2021-22 Grant.

Matt Warman:

HM Government's core funding for the UK Youth Parliament in 2021/22 remains at the same level as the previous two years. Additional funding has been made available in 2021/22 to continue enabling UK-wide participation in this programme.

■ Writers

Sarah Olney:

[\[181372\]](#)

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

Caroline Dinenage:

A thriving UK publishing industry is crucial to support the development of professional writers. We know that the Covid-19 pandemic presents a significant challenge to the publishing industry. The Government's response has been one of the most generous and comprehensive in the world, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Bounceback Loan Scheme and business rates reliefs. The publishing sector has also benefited from the government's introduction of a zero rate of VAT to e-publications, which will make it clear e-publications are entitled to the same VAT treatment as their physical counterparts.

In terms of direct support for authors, Arts Council England's (ACE) 'time-to-write' grants are a vital source of funding that allow authors to dedicate time to the completion of manuscripts. Authors also receive support via ACE's Developing Your Creative Practice Fund, which was designed with the expectation that writers would be among the beneficiaries.

In addition, over the course of the pandemic, ACE contributed £400,000 to the Society of Authors' 'Authors Emergency Fund', in order to ensure that authors whose income had been decimated by the pandemic were able to remain active in their discipline.

The Government also maintains a strong legal framework to protect the rights and interests of writers, including through copyright and the Public Lending Right.

EDUCATION

■ Adult Education: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[179246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support colleges to offer an increased capacity for adult skills as part of a covid-19 recovery package.

Gillian Keegan:

We know that adults, aged 19 and over, are being adversely impacted by disruptions to their learning. Adult Education Budget (AEB) funded learners, aged 19 and over, do have the ability to pause their learning and return to it later. Students aged 19 to 24 with an education health and care plan will continue to access catch up support from the Tuition Fund.

For adults aged 19 and over we introduced a change to the AEB funding rules for the 2020-21 academic year to enable providers to use learner support funds to purchase IT devices and/or internet access for disadvantaged students to help them meet technology costs. In areas where the AEB budget is devolved, mayoral authorities determine adult student support arrangements.

We are also investing £95 million from the National Skills Fund in the free courses for jobs offer over the current Spending Review period. This offer gives an estimated 11 million adults in England who are 24 and over and do not yet have A levels or equivalent qualifications the opportunity to take their first level 3 qualification for free.

This £95 million includes a funding uplift for qualifications included in this offer, to support providers to scale up their level 3 provision for adults and meet the needs of adult learners as we build back better from the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Catering: Lifetime Skills Guarantee

Neil Parish:

[\[179087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if the Government will reconsider including food and drink qualifications in the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

Gillian Keegan:

Through the free courses for jobs offer, we are making courses available that address skills needs in the economy, offer good wage outcomes, and empower adults with the tools they need to secure a better job.

We have identified hundreds of courses that can give adults the skills they need in the labour market. These qualifications include those that can support employers regardless of their sector, including those in the food and drink industry, with courses in business, accountancy, engineering, marketing and a variety of digital qualifications. We are keeping the list of qualifications and the sector subject areas in scope under review and will consider requests for including courses that meet the

published criteria. We have already added more qualifications to the original list. Those qualifications met all the criteria published on gov.uk.

Qualifications not included in this offer will still be eligible for Advanced Learner Loans (ALL). ALL are income contingent loans that provide extensive coverage of regulated qualifications from level 3 to level 6, helping to meet the up-front tuition fees. In the 2019/20 academic year there were applications to study at nearly 450 training providers, and over 3000 qualifications are currently in scope.

In addition to this, there a variety of high quality apprenticeship standards in food and drink manufacturing available for employers to use. They include, but are not limited to, food and drink advanced engineer, baker, and senior culinary chef.

■ Cerebral Palsy: Children

Greg Smith:

[\[178658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the all-party Parliamentary group on cerebral palsy's report, Early identification, intervention and pathways of care of infants and young children with cerebral palsy: The case for reform and investment, published in March 2021, what plans he has to review how personal budgets in the Local Offer under the Children and Families Act 2014 can be used to enable access to early support for families with babies with or at risk of cerebral palsy.

Vicky Ford:

Currently, any parent or carer of a child or a young person, including those with cerebral palsy, may request a personal budget as part of their education, health and care (EHC) plan as a means of delivering the outcomes specified in the plan. The scope of that budget will vary depending on the needs of the individual, the eligibility criteria for the different components and the mechanism for delivery. This means that decisions need to be taken on an individual basis, including for children with cerebral palsy. Decisions about the provision of personal budgets and other operational matters are for local authorities. Local authorities and their health partners remain responsible for securing the provision specified in an EHC plan, funded where necessary through joint commissioning arrangements.

More broadly, a review regarding special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was announced in September 2019. The SEND review is looking at ways of making sure that the SEND system is consistent, high-quality and integrated across education, health and care. It is also considering measures to make sure that money is being spent fairly, efficiently and effectively, and that the support available to children and young people is sustainable in the future.

■ Children: Day Care

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[179347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of providing 15 hours free childcare for three and four year olds to people who are out of work on the ability of unemployed people with children to find work; and what

comparative assessment he has made of the effect of (a) that policy and (b) the provision of 30 hours free childcare for people who are in work on levels of educational attainment of the children of households with (i) higher and (ii) lower rates of unemployment.

Vicky Ford:

The department offers universal 15 hours free childcare to all three- and four-year-olds in England for 38 weeks per year, regardless of parental income or employment status. The purpose of this entitlement is to provide free, high-quality early education, helping children to develop social skills and preparing them for school, with 93% of three- and four-year-olds benefitting in January 2020. 15 hours free childcare is also available for disadvantaged two-year-olds, including those from low-income households or those with special education needs or disabilities. In January 2020, approximately 143,000 children benefitted from this entitlement.

As the 15 hours policy was introduced with the primary aim of improving children's outcomes, no evaluation has been undertaken of the impact of this policy on the ability of unemployed people with children to find work.

The 30 hours free childcare policy was introduced in September 2017 and is an entitlement for working parents of three- and four-year-olds, benefitting around 345,700 children in January 2020. It aims to help working parents with the costs of childcare so they can take up paid work if they want to or can work additional hours. To be eligible, parents must earn the equivalent of 16 hours a week at national minimum wage and less than £100,000 per year.

The evaluation of the national rollout of 30 hours free childcare, published in 2018, found that 27% of those using 30 hours at the time reported they were working more hours as a result of the policy. Further detail is available in the report here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/30-hours-free-childcare-final-evaluation-of-the-national-rollout>.

The government is tracking the impact of early education on children's outcomes via the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED). There is mixed evidence from SEED on how the number of childcare hours used by children at ages three to four impacts their educational attainment. There is no clear evidence of an optimal number of hours for child development as the type of setting used, the quality of the setting, the starting age in childcare and the child's home learning environment are also important factors influencing the child's educational development.

■ **Children: Disability**

Ian Mearns:

[178639]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing a COVID-19 recovery plan for disabled children and their families.

Ian Mearns:**[179032]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support disabled children and their families to recover from effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

Marsha De Cordova:**[179527]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support disabled children and their families in the recovery from covid-19.

Vicky Ford:

Supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families is a priority for this government, and their educational, physical and mental wellbeing remains central to our cross-government response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

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

We have published guidance for children's social care services, making clear that parents or carers of disabled children and young people may continue to access respite care, and have communicated best practice to Directors of Children's Services and local authorities to ensure that as many disabled children and young people as possible can continue to access these services during the COVID-19 outbreak. This guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care>.

The government has provided £4.6 billion of additional funding in financial year 2020-21 to support councils through the COVID-19 outbreak to respond to local needs, including to deliver services to support vulnerable children.

We have and continue to develop plans for COVID-19 recovery. As part of this, both special schools and alternative provision will be able to access funding to provide summer schools and the National Tutoring Programme, and we recognise the additional costs associated with offering provision to pupils in specialist settings. This means that eligible pupils in special schools, special units in mainstream primary and secondary schools and alternative provision settings will attract a higher rate of the new one-off Recovery Premium funding worth £302 million, as well as funding for summer schools. We have consistently prioritised children who attend specialist settings in our Recovery Premiums to schools by providing additional uplifts both in 2020 and in 2021.

Young people with SEND aged 19 to 24 who have an education, health and care plan will be eligible for support via the 16 to 19 Tuition Fund, where they meet the fund criteria. Providers are asked to have regard to the needs of students with SEND when prioritising students that would benefit most from small group tuition.

Furthermore, the proposals to support early language and literacy recovery will benefit all children, including those with SEND.

£200 million will be available to all secondary schools, including specialist settings, to deliver face-to-face summer schools. Schools will be able to target provision based on pupils' needs. The size and shape of the summer schools will be decided by school leaders who know best what the most effective summer school will look like for their pupils, allowing them to tailor support for pupils, including those with SEND.

Sir Kevan Collins has also been appointed as the Education Recovery Commissioner and is considering how schools and the system can more effectively target resources and support at pupils in greatest need.

The department will continue to assess the impact of the outbreak and its subsequent COVID-19 recovery plans on all pupils, including those with SEND, to ensure it targets support across the system most effectively.

Ian Mearns:

[178648]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle social isolation in disabled children and their families.

Wera Hobhouse:

[179332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Disabled Children's Partnership's Report entitled The Loneliest Lockdown, what plans his Department has to tackle social isolation among disabled children.

Vicky Ford:

Supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families is a priority for this government, and their educational, physical and mental wellbeing remains central to our cross-government response to the COVID-19 outbreak. That is why education settings have remained open for children and young people with an education, health and care plan throughout periods of national lockdown.

The return to school for all pupils was prioritised due to the significant and proven impact caused by being out of school, including on wellbeing. The support schools provide to their pupils as they return to face-to-face education should include time devoted to supporting wellbeing, which will play a fundamental part in supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing recovery. The expectations for schools in this regard are set out clearly in the main Department for Education guidance to schools, which also signposts further support, available here:

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

We have worked with our partners, including the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), Health Education England, Public Health England and other key voluntary sector organisations to deliver the Wellbeing for Education Return programme, which has provided training and resources to help school staff respond to the wellbeing and mental health needs of pupils. This £8 million government

backed programme provided schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and access to resources they need to support children and young people, teachers and parents.

The return to school on 8 March 2021 has been supported with a new £700 million package, which includes a Recovery Premium for state primary, secondary and special schools to use as they see best to support disadvantaged students. This will help schools to provide academic and pastoral support for disadvantaged pupils that has been proven most effective in helping them recover from the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

£200 million will be available to all secondary schools, including specialist settings, to deliver face-to-face summer schools. Schools will be able to target provision based on pupils' needs. The size and shape of the summer schools will be decided by school leaders who know best what the most effective summer school will look like for their pupils, allowing them to tailor support for pupils, including those with SEND.

Additionally, we have expanded the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018. From 2021, the programme will cover the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays at a cost of up to £220 million. It will be available to children in every local authority in England, building on previous programmes and we are working to ensure that the programme is fully inclusive and accessible for children with SEND.

Sir Kevan Collins has been appointed as the Education Recovery Commissioner and is considering how schools and the system can more effectively target resources and support at pupils in greatest need. Additionally, Dr Alex George was appointed on 4 February as Youth Mental Health Ambassador to advise government and raise the profile of mental health education and wellbeing in schools, colleges and universities. He will use his clinical expertise and personal experience to champion government's work on children's and young people's mental health and shape policy on improving support for young people in schools, colleges and universities.

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

The department will continue to assess the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and its subsequent COVID-19 recovery plans on all pupils, including those with SEND, to ensure it targets support across the system most effectively.

■ Children: Health

Zarah Sultana:

[179616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to (a) implement the recommendations of the Children Society's report entitled The Good Childhood Report

2020 and (b) widen the scope of the education recovery package announced in February 2021 to include children's wellbeing.

Vicky Ford:

The government appreciates the concerns raised from the findings of the Children Society's Good Childhood Report 2020. We believe that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is of fundamental importance, and the government is supporting the education sector to identify and respond to children and young people's individual needs. It is crucial that children and young people are able to access the help and support they require to keep them healthy and safe.

We look at the range of data that is available on children's wellbeing. On World Mental Health Day 2019, we published the first annual 'State of the Nation' report to highlight the trends and issues in young people's mental wellbeing. The report brought together existing data to improve understanding and help to inform the support we provide to children and young people. We published a second report in 2020, which focused on the experiences of children and young people during the COVID outbreak. It is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2020-children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing>.

To support this work, we are working with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England to deliver our joint green paper delivery programme. The government's 3 core commitments are to incentivise and support all schools and colleges to identify and train a senior mental health lead, to fund new Mental Health Support Teams supervised by NHS mental health staff and to pilot a 4 week waiting time for accessing specialist NHS mental health services.

We are supplementing this with other support, including a randomised control trial of a range of different school approaches to promoting good mental wellbeing which is one of the largest of its kind in the world. This sits alongside guidance on mental health and behaviour and offering effective school-based counselling.

The government has made children's mental health and wellbeing a central part of our response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The return to school for all pupils on 8 March was prioritised due to the significant and proven impact caused by being out of school, including on wellbeing.

We have been clear that schools can use their existing additional COVID-19 catch-up funding for pastoral support for mental wellbeing where pupils need it, and many schools are doing so. In addition to this, the return to school for all pupils on 8 March has been supported with a new £700 million package, which includes a new one-off Recovery Premium for state primary, secondary and special schools to use as they see best to support disadvantaged students. This will help schools to provide their disadvantaged pupils with a one-off boost to the support, both academic and pastoral, that has been proved most effective in helping them recover from the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Climate Change: Education

Munira Wilson:

[180616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on climate emergency education to improve climate change education.

Nick Gibb:

The National Curriculum already includes content on environmental and sustainability issues such as climate change, in both the science and geography curricula and GCSEs. From primary onwards, there is coverage of environmental matters in both the science and geography curricula.

Under the Key Stage 2 non-statutory guidance for citizenship, pupils are taught about the wider world and the interdependence of communities within it. Pupils are taught that resources can be allocated in different ways and that these economic choices affect individuals, communities, and the sustainability of the environment.

As the National Curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject, teachers have the flexibility and freedom to determine how they deliver the content in the way that best meets the needs of their pupils. They can choose to cover particular topics in greater depth if they wish and as knowledge of sustainability develops, teachers can adapt their school curricula for these subjects.

We have not brought forward further proposals as there is scope to cover these issues within existing teaching.

■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[179092]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to assist schools in securing refunds for school trips that have been cancelled as a result of covid-19 restrictions.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has updated its advice to schools and other educational settings on the planning and booking of educational day and residential visits:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-coronavirus-covid-19-operational-guidance#educational-visits>.

Any disputes regarding travel provider and/or travel insurer performance or behaviour should be resolved in line with the contractual arrangements and in line with the relevant industry and sector representative body disputes process.

The Association of British Insurers provide information and support at:

<https://www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/topics-and-issues/coronavirus-hub/travel-insurance/>.

■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

Mick Whitley:

[179559]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department made an assessment of the potential merits of incorporating the £15 voucher scheme for local shops and supermarkets into the Healthy Start voucher scheme prior to the recent re-opening of schools during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

During the period of school opening restrictions, schools continued to provide free school meal support to pupils eligible for benefits related free school meals and who were learning at home. Extra funding was provided to support schools to provide lunch parcels or meals to eligible children. Schools were free to decide the best approach for their free school meal pupils. They could provide lunch parcels, locally arranged vouchers for local shops or supermarkets, or they could use the national voucher scheme.

The Healthy Start scheme helps to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies and young children from low income households. Vouchers are available for pregnant women and mothers with young children that meet the eligibility criteria, with further information available here: <https://www.gov.uk/healthy-start/eligibility>. In contrast, free school meals are available for eligible school age children. Further information on this is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>.

At the time, Healthy Start vouchers could be used to purchase fruit, vegetables, milk and infant formula, in order to support a healthy diet, but not the full range of foods needed to provide a balanced meal for a child at lunch time.

A range of options were considered, including using the Department of Health and Social Care's Healthy Start vouchers. However, these are aimed at different eligibility groups and were not designed to offer the full range of foods necessary to support a healthy, nutritious meal to learn, concentrate and achieve.

Given the pace required to set up support for free school meal pupils learning at home, this would not be considered a feasible option for delivery.

■ Further Education and Universities: Children in Care

Dan Jarvis:

[181278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many Looked After Children attend (a) university and (b) further education from (i) Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and (ii) the UK in the latest period for which data is available.

Vicky Ford:

The information is not held centrally in the form requested. The department does not collect information on the educational activity of all looked after children. Information is held on the number of care leavers aged 17 to 21 years old who are in higher education or other types of education on or around their birthday.

The number of care leavers (full-time and part-time) aged 17 to 21, who were in higher education in Barnsley local authority and England in the year ending 31 March 2020 or in 'education other than higher education' are shown in the table.

Number of care leavers aged 17 to 21 in education ¹²

Care leavers in Barnsley and England

Year ending 31 March 2020

	ALL CARE LEAVERS	HIGHER EDUCATION	OTHER THAN HIGHER EDUCATION
Barnsley Local Authority	90	C ³	30
England	42,960	2,230	11,530

1. Education 'other than higher education' refers to all studies excluding degrees, diplomas in higher education, teaching and nursing qualifications, HNDs, ONDs, and BTEC levels 4-5, all of which fall under the category of higher education.
2. The definition of a care leaver is a young person who has been 'looked after' at some point since they were 14 years old, and were in care on or after their 16th birthday. Care leavers are entitled to some ongoing help and support from Children's Services after they leave care. The leaving care age in England is 18 years old, however some young people do leave care aged 16 or 17.
3. c = suppressed to protect confidentiality

The latest information on children looked after in England, including the number of care leavers in education on 31 March 2020, is contained in the Children looked after in England statistics release, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>.

Figures on children looked after outside England is a matter for the devolved administrations.

■ **GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments**

Paul Blomfield:

[179073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March 2021 to Question 168889, on GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments, what specific guidance his Department has issued to schools and colleges on taking into account the mitigating circumstances faced by young carers when determining GCSE and A level grades.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to ensuring that all those who were due to take exams in 2021 have the best possible chance to show what they know and can do, enabling

them to progress to the next stage of their education, training, or employment, no matter their background.

Following the Department's response on 23 March 2021, the Joint Council for Qualifications has published guidance on the determination of grades in Summer 2021: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/summer-2021-arrangements/>. As the guidance states, the range of evidence teachers can use to determine the grades of their pupils is flexible and they should only be assessed on what they have been taught.

Mitigating circumstances and access to reasonable adjustments should be taken into account by teachers when deciding which evidence to use, with flexibility to substitute or discount evidence. Where a pupil's performance in assessments is impaired through an event outside of the pupil's control and may have affected their performance in assessments which will be used to determine a grade, this should be taken into account by teachers. Centres must be satisfied that the issue or event has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a pupil's ability to demonstrate their normal level of attainment in an assessment. Pupils must be reminded to raise any mitigating circumstances which warrant special consideration as soon as possible, ideally at the time of the assessment and prior to the submission of the teacher assessed grade.

We want to make sure that young carers get the support they need and are able to take advantage of opportunities beyond their caring responsibilities. The 'Schools Coronavirus (COVID-19) Operational Guidance' recognises that some young people, including some young carers, might feel anxious about attending school. The Government has published guidance for both schools and local authorities on how best to support families and protect vulnerable children during COVID-19, alongside guidance for young people with caring responsibilities, which includes information on how and where they can get help and support.

We remain committed to supporting young carers, and will continue to work closely with schools, stakeholders, care organisations and the wider sector. The Government continues to fund projects to support vulnerable children and young people whose usual support networks have been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, including young carers as a target group. The provision includes a range of support, including online counselling and helping children and young people stay connected with school.

■ Higher Education: Remote Education

Afzal Khan:

[179508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with (a) universities and (b) higher education providers on the continuation of online teaching in the academic year 2021-22.

Michelle Donelan:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and I have regular discussions with the higher education (HE) sector on a range of issues. I also

continue to engage closely with HE representative bodies and mission groups through the HE Taskforce to identify emerging issues as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and to work with the sector to address these.

HE providers are autonomous institutions responsible for their own teaching and assessment but should be delivering teaching in line with the latest HE guidance and public health advice.

The government's clear and stated expectation is that universities 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 Office for Students (OfS), as regulator for English HE providers, has made it clear that HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and academic standards, which set out requirements to ensure that courses are high-quality, that students are supported and achieve good outcomes and that standards are protected. The OfS has published guidance which sets out expectations for providers in maintaining quality and standards and how it will assess compliance with these conditions in the light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

In June 2020, the Secretary of State commissioned Sir Michael Barber to conduct a review into the shift toward digital teaching and learning in HE since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. The report, published on 25 February 2021, builds on lessons learned through the outbreak and sets out recommendations to help providers to seize opportunities for the medium to long term future and includes 'six actions' HE providers can take for next academic year. We welcome the publication of the report which will be important in supporting HE providers to prepare for the next academic year and to realise the opportunities presented by digital teaching and learning in the medium to long term.

The full report can be found here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/gravity-assist-propelling-higher-education-towards-a-brighter-future/>.

■ Languages: GCE A-level

Gareth Thomas:

[178775]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March 2021 to Question 168825 on Languages: GCE A-level and GCSE and with reference to the data in provided in the Other modern languages category for each of the years from 2015-16 to 2019-20, how many entries there were for pupils studying (a) Arabic, (b) Bengali, (c) Chinese, (d) Gujarati, (e) Japanese, (f) Punjabi, (g) Persian and (h) Urdu at A-level; and if he will make a statement.

Due to the complexity of the accompanying table, the link below is to the web version of the answer:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/178775>

■ Languages: GCSE

Gareth Thomas:

[178730]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March 2021 to Question 168825 on Languages: GCE A-level and GCSE and with reference to the data in provided in the Other modern languages category for each of the years from 2015-16 to 2019-20, how many entries there were for pupils studying (a) Arabic, (b) Bengali, (c) Chinese, (d) Gujarati, (e) Japanese, (f) Punjabi, (g) Persian and (h) Urdu at GCSE level; and if he will make a statement.

Due to the complexity of the accompanying table, the link below is to the web version of the answer:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/178730>

■ National School Breakfast Programme

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[181284]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the National School Breakfast Programme, what selection process his Department plans to implement in the event that all of the schools that qualified for funding apply.

Vicky Ford:

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

Our new breakfast clubs programme will target schools which are eligible through our criteria for disadvantage, prioritising schools in Opportunity Areas. For the new programme, we are aiming to provide funding to around 2,500 schools as a minimum.

This approach to eligibility is per the current programme, which is supporting up to 2,450 schools. We have worked with the current supplier to recruit these schools, and not all schools eligible for breakfast provision have signed up to receive support.

It is unlikely that all eligible schools will sign up, because many already have breakfast clubs in place that are funded through other sources, and some choose not to offer a breakfast club.

■ National Tutoring Programme

Sajid Javid:

[179011]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase awareness of the National Tutoring Programme among (a) schools and (b) parents in (i) Bromsgrove District and (b) England.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to ensuring that there continues to be a good take-up and engagement with the programme. We are undertaking a range of communications and engagement activities to ensure that schools are aware of the support offered by the National Tutoring Programme (NTP).

We are working directly with multi-academy trusts and local authorities to target schools in particular need of support and increasing our engagement with local and regional school networks. The NTP is also providing regular newsletters and blogs direct to schools, alongside targeted social media activity. Since the programme's launch in November 2020, the Department has continued to share case studies and good practice to show how tuition can support pupils effectively, including guidance on making the most of tutoring during the recent lockdown period.

We will continue to monitor how many schools in different regions are accessing the NTP so we can bolster our efforts in areas where schools would benefit from the programme.

Over 4,000 schools are now participating in the programme. It is estimated over 250,000 pupils will benefit from tuition provided by Tuition Partners this academic year. This is in addition to the 1,000 Academic Mentors have been placed in our most disadvantaged schools this academic year.

We are continuing to focus on regions with the most disadvantaged pupils who have yet to take advantage of NTP, including the Bromsgrove District. We are engaging directly with head teachers, local networks of schools and national stakeholders to ensure that NTP support reaches as many disadvantaged pupils in these areas as possible. We have also attended local network meetings, including the Handforth Heads Forum in the West Midlands, and have delivered a number of webinars to schools in the regional Midland areas with high levels of disadvantage to highlight the benefits and the support being offered through the programme.

■ Outdoor Education: Finance

Stephen Morgan:

[178723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2020 to Question 97703, on Outdoor Education: Finance, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report prepared for Ministers by civil servants following that meeting with campaigners.

Vicky Ford:

The government is continuing to prioritise mental health and wellbeing support for children, young people, and staff following the return to education on 8 March. The Department for Education has convened a Mental Health in Education Action Group. The action group will look at the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities. It will consider how to support mental wellbeing as children and young people are returning to education settings, with transitions between education settings in September, and in the longer term. As we consider how best to support the education sector moving forward, we will consider access to outdoor spaces in that context.

In the first instance the group are engaging with health experts to bring together the evidence of impact on children and young people. The group will identify the existing range of support available and will examine how to ensure support is easy to access and has the greatest possible impact. They are also engaging with education stakeholders, including staff and leadership unions, to ensure that we understand the issues that are facing staff in nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities and how they can be supported in the coming months.

This year, we will invest up to £220 million in our Holiday Activities and Food programme. Delivery began at Easter and will run during the summer and Christmas holidays in 2021, supporting disadvantaged pupils and their families with enriching activities, providing them with healthy food, helping them to learn new things and improving socialisation.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[179331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions officials in his Department have had with officials in the Department for Health and Social Care on the guidance on false positive lateral flow tests that have been administered by students in a controlled environment; and what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the receipt of those false positive tests on the education of those students.

Michelle Donelan:

The Department for Education has been working with the Department of Health and Social Care to support higher education (HE) providers to deliver twice-weekly asymptomatic testing of students and staff using lateral flow device (LFD) tests.

LFD tests are a vital tool in helping to identify cases of COVID-19 and to stop the spread of the virus. With up to a third of individuals who have COVID-19 showing no symptoms and potentially spreading it without knowing, rapid LFD tests enable us to find these cases and prevent the spread of infection.

LFD tests used by the UK government have gone through a rigorous evaluation by the country's leading scientists. Published analysis shows that LFD tests have a very

high specificity, possibly as high as 99.97%. This means fewer than one false positive in every 1,000 lateral flow tests carried out.

No test is perfect, and to minimise the chance of false positives, confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing was introduced for positive lateral flow tests when the level of prevalence of the virus is low. Confirmatory PCR tests were re-introduced on 31 March, having been temporarily paused in January, for positive LFD tests conducted at an assisted testing site, such as those at universities. Where a PCR test is taken within 2 days of a positive LFD test result and the result is negative, students and their household can stop self-isolating.

We are working closely with the HE sector in delivering asymptomatic testing, and we understand the impact that self-isolation can have on students. For those students who do need to self-isolate at university, we are asking HE providers to ensure their students are safe and well looked after during their self-isolation period. Universities UK has also produced a checklist for HE providers to support students who are required to self-isolate. They have also produced bespoke guidance for HE providers on how to prepare for and care for students who are required to self-isolate on arrival in the UK, and we encourage HE providers to use this guidance.

■ Pupils: Mental Health Services

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[178808]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that schools have sufficient resources to support students who are suffering from poor mental health as a result of covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Vicky Ford:

The support schools provide to their pupils as they return to face-to-face education should include time devoted to supporting mental health and wellbeing, which will play a fundamental part in supporting children and young people's recovery. The return to education settings is being supported by a £700 million package, which includes a new one-off Recovery Premium for state primary, secondary and special schools to use as they see best to support disadvantaged students. This will help schools to provide their disadvantaged pupils with a one-off boost to the support, both academic and pastoral, that has been proved most effective in helping them recover from the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and can be used for mental health and wellbeing support.

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

In addition to this, the department worked with our partners including, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Health Education England and Public Health England to deliver the £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return project, which

helped education staff to support the wellbeing and resilience of pupils, students, staff, parents and carers, responding to the immediate pressures of the COVID-19 outbreak. Over 90% of local authority areas have told us how they are delivering additional training and support as a result of Wellbeing for Education Return resources and funding.

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

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

On 4 February, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, appointed Dr Alex George as Youth Mental Health Ambassador to advise the government and raise the profile of mental health education and wellbeing in schools, colleges and universities. As Youth Mental Health Ambassador, he will use his clinical expertise as an A&E doctor, as well as personal experience, to champion the government's work on children's and young people's mental health.

We also remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with DHSC and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams for all schools and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges, and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.

■ Qualifications

Peter Aldous:

[\[179084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of adults have Level 2 as their highest qualification; and how many of those people are (a) in employment, (b) unemployed and (c) claiming benefits.

Gillian Keegan:

The latest estimate as of the end of 2019 for the proportion of adults, aged between 19 and 64 years, who have level 2 as their highest qualification is 18%, as estimated by the Labour Force Survey and reported in the publication education and training statistics for the UK.

Data on employment, unemployment, pay and income, and benefits by highest qualification level for the wider age group of 16 to 64 year olds in the UK is estimated using the Annual Population Survey of 2019.

The table below shows the percentage and number of working age people, aged 16 to 64 years old, in the UK who are and not in full time education and either employed, economically inactive or unemployed who reported their highest qualification as level 2 in 2019. Those claiming benefits would either be classified as unemployed or economically inactive in the table below.

	PERCENTAGE WITH LEVEL 2 AS HIGHEST QUALIFICATION	NUMBER WITH LEVEL 2 AS HIGHEST QUALIFICATION
Employed	76%	4,640,000
Unemployed	3%	210,000
Economically Inactive	21%	1,277,000
Total	100%	6,128,000

Percentages in tables are rounded to whole numbers and figures are rounded to the nearest 1000.

■ Sex and Relationship Education

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[180388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is his Department's policy that schools retain discretion as to the use of the resources recommended within the Relationships and sex education statutory guidelines including the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare's Abortion Care Factsheet.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not comment on individual resources and schools retain discretion over the resources they use. Schools must have in place a written policy for Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), and they must consult with parents in developing and reviewing their policy.

The Department expects schools to make reasonable decisions about the content of their curriculum and use of resources. The implementation guidance for the RSE and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum, which came into force in September 2020, sets out clear advice for schools in choosing resources. It states that schools should assess all resources carefully to ensure they are age appropriate, meet the outcome of the relevant part of the curriculum, and are in line with the school's legal duties in relation to impartiality. The list at annex B of the statutory guidance for RSHE illustrates some of the free resources that are available to schools.

The Department does not have a role in reviewing the content of the resources listed and cannot advise schools on which resources will be the most suitable to use.

Schools operate in a variety of different contexts and have both the expertise and knowledge that makes them best placed to make these decisions.

The statutory guidance makes clear that by the end of secondary education young people should know the facts relating to pregnancy and states that there should be medically and legally impartial information on all options. Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when particular topics are being taught. It is for schools to decide how best to comply with this in order to meet the needs of their pupils.

To support teachers to deliver these topics safely and with confidence the Department has produced RSHE Teacher Training Modules which are available for all schools. The intimate and sexual relationships training, including a sexual health teacher training module, covers pregnancy specifically. Each training module covers safeguarding to make sure teachers, pastoral staff, and the designated safeguarding lead are equipped to deal with sensitive discussions and disclosures.

■ Students: Assessments

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[178709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of no detriment policies implemented by universities on the future employment prospects of students; and what steps he is taking to ensure that those employment prospects are not negatively affected by those policies.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[179334\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of universities that have implemented no detriment policies in each of the academic years (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21; and what estimate he has made of the number of students that have been affected by those policies.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[179335\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the average number of credits not taken per student as a result of no detriment policies implemented by universities in the 2019-20 academic year.

Michelle Donelan:

As autonomous institutions, higher education (HE) providers are responsible for the administration of their own exams and assessments. HE students and providers have faced unique challenges as providers have had to adapt teaching, learning and assessment methods in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Some providers have put in place policies stating that students should not be awarded a degree classification below their level of academic performance prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. A 'No detriment policy' is designed by providers as a safety net for students to help ensure they are not unfairly impacted by these challenging circumstances. This approach may not be appropriate for all providers and we

recognise that there are a number of ways to assess students which will lead to a wide variety of measures being put in place.

The government continues to work closely with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, professional bodies and the Office for Students to ensure students continue to leave university with qualifications that have real value, reflect their hard work and allow people to progress. The professional bodies have put alternative requirements in place for graduation to maintain standards, building on similar arrangements which were made for graduation last year.

I am aware that the majority of universities adopted 'No detriment' policies last year. We have not made a detailed assessment, or estimate, of the extent of these policies in terms of student numbers, credits not undertaken or the impact on future employment prospects.

However, I have been clear that I expect providers to make all reasonable efforts for student achievement to be reliably assessed and for qualifications to be awarded securely. It is vital that a fair approach to exams and assessment is in place and understood by students. Any policies universities put in place to ensure students are not unfairly affected by the circumstances should continue to maintain standards – and awarding powers must be used responsibly to preserve the world-class reputation of our HE.

Providers should seek to ensure this and last years' students are not disadvantaged in the labour market by whatever measures are taken and should provide assurances as appropriate to enable employers to have confidence in qualifications awarded.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Olivia Blake:

[181469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the scientific basis is for students returning to term time accommodation on 17 May 2021 rather than prior to that date.

Michelle Donelan:

Whilst we recognise the positive social and economic benefits students bring to the towns and cities they live in whilst at university, the government roadmap is designed to maintain a cautious approach to the easing of restrictions, to reduce public health risks and help ensure that we can maintain progress towards full reopening.

Any return of the remaining students is not considered in isolation but as part of the government's overall roadmap. All areas included in the roadmap, as well as higher education, are informed by advice from the scientific and medical experts, where data and evidence is considered regularly. This includes the Joint Biosecurity Centre, Public Health England, and the Chief Medical Officers.

It is important that we continue to take a cautious, but irreversible, approach to reopening. Moving too fast, too soon, risks a resurgence in infections, hospitalisations, and deaths. Our careful approach to relaxing restrictions gives time

to assess the impact of each step and to reduce the risk of having to reimpose restrictions at a later date.

We have worked extremely closely with scientists and SAGE to understand and model various scenarios to inform our plan that seeks to enable us to re-open the country without putting unsustainable pressure on the NHS. We have also examined economic and social data to get a balanced understanding of the impacts of carefully easing restrictions. The government has also carefully considered data on the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown on ethnic minority communities, the vulnerable, the young, and low income groups.

A wealth of data, papers and evidence is being published at the same time as the roadmap to ensure transparency on the information that the government has made available in reaching its decisions. This includes the following information from Public Health England:

- Information on vaccine effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccination
- A surveillance report with a more detailed summary of the findings so far from Siren and Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI)- Watch
- A technical paper on the SIREN analysis as a pre-print by the Lancet

Papers from SAGE include:

- Minutes from the last four SAGE meetings
- Children and Task force Children's Task and Finish Group (TFC) paper: COVID-19 in higher education settings, 10 February 2021
- Three papers from the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M) with a summary of modelling on scenarios for easing restrictions, together with the supporting papers from modellers at Warwick and Imperial universities
- A collection of papers from SPI-M on "relaxation of NPIs and the re-opening of schools" and the Independent Scientific Pandemic Insights Group on Behaviours (the behavioural experts' sub-group of SAGE) on return to campus for the spring term and the risk of increased transmission from student migration

■ Universities: Antisemitism

Nickie Aiken:

[\[179553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of universities that have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism.

Nickie Aiken:

[\[179554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to encourage a higher number of universities to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism.

Michelle Donelan:

This government abhors antisemitism and has been clear that we expect universities to be at the forefront of tackling the challenge of antisemitism, making sure that higher education is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience for everyone.

The government has asked all English higher education providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS) to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. The IHRA definition is an important tool in tackling antisemitism. Adopting this widely recognised definition sends a strong signal that higher education providers take these issues seriously. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to higher education leaders most recently in October 2020 to reiterate the importance of the definition and to urge all providers to consider adopting it.

The government is pleased to report that at least 91 providers have now adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism, with many more preparing to adopt. The decision on adoption of the definition rests with individual providers, but the government will continue to urge them to adopt the definition, and ensure that higher education is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience for everyone.

I am proud that so many providers have taken a positive step towards eradicating antisemitism by adopting the IHRA definition, but further progress is still needed to stamp it out. This is why, in the Secretary of State's most recent strategic guidance letter to the OfS, the government asked the OfS to undertake a scoping exercise, to identify providers which are reluctant to adopt the definition. The letter asked them to consider introducing mandatory reporting of antisemitic incident numbers by providers, with the aim of ensuring a robust evidence base, which the OfS can then use to effectively regulate in this area.

The Secretary of State also asked the OfS to ensure that, if antisemitic incidents do occur at a provider, they should consider if it is relevant in a particular case whether the provider has adopted the IHRA definition when considering what sanctions, including monetary penalties, would be appropriate to apply.

We will continue to work across government to ensure that racism and religious hatred of any kind is not tolerated anywhere, including in our world-leading universities.

Universities: Coronavirus**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[178711\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the provision of course modules at universities being delivered as advertised.

Michelle Donelan:

I have been clear throughout the COVID-19 outbreak that consumer law continues to apply, and statements by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) confirm this.

Providers need to ensure they have regard to guidance about their consumer protection obligations.

This has been a very difficult time for students, and the government is working with the sector to make sure that all reasonable efforts are being made to enable students to continue their studies. The sector has put in significant resources and worked hard to provide and prepare learning materials for this academic year and there have been some fantastic and innovative approaches to delivering high-quality learning.

I welcome the huge amount of resource universities and higher education (HE) providers have given to ensuring blended teaching is of the high-quality expected by the government and the Office for Students (OfS). The government's clear and stated expectation is that universities 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.

I wrote to the OfS on 13 January, outlining the government's expectations of the HE sector following the new national lockdown. Following this, the OfS wrote to providers' Accountable Officers, setting out the actions that they are taking in connection with providers' compliance with existing regulatory requirements. We expect providers to ensure that continuing and prospective students receive the clear, accurate and timely information needed to make informed decisions. This letter is available here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/928ddbfc-7d48-4a7b-853e-411c34d6202f/ao-letter-regulation-during-the-current-phase-of-pandemic-14-jan-2021.pdf>.

Whether or not an individual student is entitled to a refund of fees will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between the provider and student. If students have concerns, there is a process in place. They should first raise their concerns with their university. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education to consider their complaint. Due to the individualised nature of student contracts and student circumstances, the process which is in place ensures that institutions have the opportunity to consider student complaints effectively and offers them an opportunity for early resolution of complaints with students. This is particularly important in situations where remedies other than refunds would be more helpful or beneficial to a student.

If there are concerns, the OfS has the powers to act. It is an OfS registration condition that providers must deliver well-designed courses that provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.

The OfS does not get involved in individual student complaints, that is for the relevant HE provider and potentially the OIA. Students can, however, notify the OfS of issues that may be of regulatory interest to it. These are called 'notifications'. The OfS uses this information as part of its regulatory monitoring activity and keeps HE providers under review to ensure that they comply with the ongoing conditions of registration.

The OfS has produced a guide for students to support them in this process. This is available via the following link: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/ofs-and-students/notifications/>. The OIA website is available via the following link: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

The CMA has published guidance on consumer contracts, cancellation and refunds affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. This sets out the CMA's view on how the law operates to help consumers understand their rights and help businesses treat their customers fairly. This is available via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/cma-cases/consumer-protection-review-of-higher-education>. This includes publishing a restatement on 30 November 2020 on their views on Consumer Protection Law. This is available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5fc4bab98fa8f5474e63ab0b/HE_restatement .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5fc4bab98fa8f5474e63ab0b/HE_restatement.pdf).

The OfS has also published guidance on student consumer protection during the COVID-19 outbreak, which is available via the following link: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus/provider-guide-to-coronavirus/student-and-consumer-protection/>.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[179336]

To the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect on graduate teaching assistants of reductions in university funding as a result of the covid-19 outbreak in the academic year 2020-21.

Michelle Donelan:

This continues to be an incredibly difficult time, and our entire higher education (HE) sector has a key role to play during these unprecedented times. I wrote to HE providers on 26 March 2020, asking that they pay particular attention to the additional financial hardships that are being faced by hourly paid and student staff who have been reliant on income from campus-based jobs at this time.

In the letter, I was clear that I expected that in most circumstances universities would continue paying staff as usual but, where this is not the case, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) had been developed as part of a package of support from Her Majesty's Treasury to help pay staff wages and keep people in employment.

However, HE providers are independent, autonomous bodies and are responsible for decisions about who they employ and the terms and conditions of employment they offer. HE providers should make decisions according to their own operational needs and the needs of their wider staff and student community. This includes decisions about whether to access the range of government support on offer, including the CJRS. We expect universities to comply with their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the way their employment practices affect different sections of their communities and staff at different stages of their careers.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Sustainable Development****Deidre Brock:**[\[178632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that organic and similar agroecological farm systems are included as nature-based solutions to achieving net-zero.

Deidre Brock:[\[178636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish any assessment he has made of the potential for organic and other agroecological farm systems to achieve the UK's nature-based climate change targets.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to take action to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impact. Environmentally sustainable farming is fundamental to our new approach to England's agricultural system. We are introducing three schemes that reward the delivery of environmental benefits: The Sustainable Farming Incentive, the Local Nature Recovery scheme and the Landscape Recovery scheme.

The three schemes are being designed collaboratively with stakeholders. We are considering how more environmentally sustainable farming approaches, including organic farming and agro-ecological approaches, may fit within the schemes where these contribute towards the delivery of environmental public goods. While designing the three schemes, we are running tests and trials. The tests and trials will co-design the component parts of the schemes, while the scheme pilots will test the whole end-to-end process. Two of the tests and trials are looking at organic farming. While we do not use tests and trials to validate if specific delivery methods achieve particular environmental outcomes, the pilots will pay farmers and land managers for delivering environmental outcomes.

Defra plays a key role in supporting emissions reduction by providing scientific advice and evidence and all our publicly funded research is published as standard practice. Systems assessments of the role of organic and other extensified farming approaches in reducing greenhouse gas emissions have concluded that although such practices can reduce emissions at farm level, comparatively lower typical yields mean that, for a given level of demand, such systems do not consistently lead to reduced emissions compared to more conventional systems. Despite this, these systems can provide wider welfare and environmental benefits, for example through increasing biodiversity. The Government believes farmers are best placed to determine the best method of farming for their land and specific circumstances. While this is a private business decision, we encourage environmentally friendly farming through numerous routes which includes organics.

■ Animal Products: Imports

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[179188]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many (a) meetings, (b) telephone calls, (c) emails, (d) letters and (e) other communications have taken place between his Department and officials of the Government of the Netherlands on implementing a ban on hunting trophy imports similar to the ban introduced in that country in 2017.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra officials have engaged with a range of stakeholders to inform our policy on hunting trophy imports, including officials from other governments. As part of this work we have spoken to officials from the Government of the Netherlands. As we develop our policy, we are looking at how other countries have approached this issue, alongside the wide range of views and evidence we have received through our consultation and call for evidence.

■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control

Luke Pollard:

[178580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the date beyond 5 April 2021 on which Avian flu restrictions end for farmers and smallholders.

Victoria Prentis:

The rules of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) in England have been amended. The part requiring all birds to be housed was revoked at 23:59 on the 31 March 2021.

All other biosecurity measures set out in the AIPZ remain a legal requirement until further notice. Bird gatherings also remain prohibited.

Similar steps have been taken in Scotland and Wales.

Our disease control and prevention decisions are based on risk assessments containing the latest scientific and ornithological evidence and veterinary advice and can be found on the gov.uk link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-bird-flu-in-europe>

■ Badgers: Conservation

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[178815]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect the wild badger population in England.

Rebecca Pow:

In England, The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 restricts the killing, injuring or taking of badgers or interference with their setts. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides protection against certain methods of killing or taking.

This domestic legislation fulfils our obligations under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) to protect badgers and their populations.

Badger persecution is also one of seven UK wildlife crime priorities. Priority areas are those which are assessed as posing the greatest current threat to either the conservation status of a species or which show the highest volume of crime and therefore they are assessed as requiring an immediate UK-wide tactical response. Each priority area has an implementation plan with plan owners and with leads identified for the prevention of, and enforcement action against crimes.

■ **Bees: Imports**

Stephen Farry:

[\[179693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the risks to the existing honey bee population in Great Britain from the importation of honey bees from the EU via Northern Ireland.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government recognises that some beekeepers are concerned about the new trading arrangements and the risks of exotic pests entering Great Britain, in particular Small hive beetle.

Small hive beetle would present a serious threat to our honey bees if it were to arrive in the UK. This invasive pest has only been detected in one part of Europe, namely southern Italy, and exports of bees from the affected region into either Great Britain or Northern Ireland are not permitted.

Imports of honey bees into any part of the UK are only accepted from approved countries, and are subject to rules relating to notification and health certification to ensure that imports are free of key pests and diseases.

Movements of honey bee queens, packages and colonies from Northern Ireland to Great Britain remain permitted. There is, and will remain, unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods including honey bees to the rest of the UK market.

We continue to work with colleagues in the Devolved Administrations as part of our monitoring of the new trading arrangements.

■ **Bomb Disposal: Marine Environment**

Julian Sturdy:

[\[179095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the risk to the marine environment from the clearance of unexploded ordnance; and what steps his Department is taking to mitigate that risk.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra recognises the significant impact underwater noise from ordnance clearance and other activities can have on vulnerable marine species. We are working closely

with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), other Government departments, Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs) and marine industries to manage and reduce underwater noise but must ensure any clearance method for the removal of unexploded ordnance is both safe and effective.

The Government is currently investigating low order techniques as alternatives to detonation in the removal of unexploded ordnance (UXO) from the seabed. Defra welcomed controlled quarry testing of deflagration, a specific low order technique which burns out the explosive material in a controlled manner, funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which showed positive noise reductions.

Defra's recently formed Offshore Wind Enabling Actions Programme includes a dedicated team focusing on reducing, monitoring and managing the impacts of underwater noise, including from UXO clearance, to reduce harm and enable the sustainable and responsible growth of the offshore wind sector. This team will be working with BEIS through its Strategic Environmental Assessment programme to collect the further evidence needed on low order techniques for the clearance of UXO, to ensure safety and efficacy as well as confirming if findings are transferable to the offshore marine environment. Our aim is to commence further research this summer.

Additionally, any removal of UXO must be individually assessed in accordance with our Habitats Regulations. As the relevant marine regulator, the MMO considers all forms of potential mitigation to effectively manage underwater noise prior to issuing a marine licence under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009). A marine species licence is also required if the activity is likely to negatively affect a protected species, which includes all dolphins, whales and porpoises. Further, marine mammal specialists are deployed to ensure there are no marine mammals in the vicinity and where appropriate bubble curtains are used to limit the sound travelling through the water.

■ Bread: Marketing

Grahame Morris:

[\[181242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that false marketing of fresh, wholegrain, artisan and sourdough bread will be prohibited by law in order to protect the customer and prevent SME Real Bread bakeries from being undercut by large manufacturers using such descriptors to market fundamentally different products.

Victoria Prentis:

Consumers are already protected from false and misleading marketing by both general consumer protection law and specifically by food information law. The rules on the provision of food information to consumers, taken together with requirements on the control of additives in food production, ensure that food is produced safely and

labelled effectively in order for consumers to make informed choices on the food they buy and consume.

Bakers, including traditional and artisan bakers of high-quality bread, have the ability to effectively market their products on their own merits and legislation supports such marketing so long as it is not misleading. Any information provided with food, whether in words, pictures or symbols, must not be misleading to consumers.

Officials have had extensive discussions with the Real Bread Campaign over a number of years, have taken their views fully into account and will continue to do so.

■ Catering: Regulation

Martyn Day:

[\[179265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to extend the Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations to cover all food prepared by food businesses.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has no plans at present to extend the Food Information (Amendment)(England) Regulations 2019 to cover all food prepared by business. The Regulations were consulted on widely and a range of options considered. The option that was decided upon provides a higher level of protection for people living with food hypersensitivity. The amendment Regulations mean that food known as 'prepacked for direct sale' food must be labelled with the name of the food and a full ingredients list, with allergens emphasised, from 1 October 2021.

All businesses supplying food, whether prepacked, prepacked for direct sale or sold loose, must be able to provide accurate information on allergens to customers .

■ Dogs: Animal Breeding

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[178886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the overbreeding of (a) pugs, (b) French bulldogs and (c) other dog breeds.

Victoria Prentis:

The law on the breeding of dogs was updated and improved in 2018. One of the reasons for updating the laws on dog breeding was to crack down on unscrupulous breeders who breed dogs purely for financial greed at the expense of the welfare of the dogs.

Under The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 (the 2018 Regulations) anyone in the business of breeding and selling dogs and/or who breeds three or more litters in a twelve month period needs to have a valid licence from their local authority. This prevents breeders claiming they are non-commercial in order to avoid being licensed.

Under the 2018 Regulations local authorities have powers to grant, refuse or revoke a licence. Licencees must achieve and maintain statutory minimum animal welfare standards, linked to the welfare needs of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and licensed breeders are prevented from breeding dogs if it can be reasonably expected that on the basis of their genotype, phenotype or health, this would lead to welfare problems for the mother or the puppies.

Additionally, the commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens was banned in England from 6 April 2020. This prevents pet shops, pet dealers and other commercial outlets from selling these animals in England unless they themselves have bred them. It means anyone looking to get a puppy or kitten must buy direct from a breeder or consider adopting from a rescue centre instead.

In addition to, and ahead of, the ban coming into force, my Department launched a national communications campaign (Petfished) to raise awareness of issues associated with low-welfare and illegal supply of pets. This includes providing clear signposting on where responsible breeders and rehoming centres can be found and encouraging prospective buyers to research the seller thoroughly before they visit and decide to purchase. The campaign provides a list of red flags for buyers to look out for when searching for a pet online.

Together, the legislative changes and Petfished campaign, are helping to raise awareness for and tackle issues of poor quality breeding practices. This is particularly relevant for Pugs, French Bulldogs and other brachycephalic or flat faced breeds which have become increasingly popular in the UK but whose conformation is associated with several health issues including breathing difficulties, skin fold infections and difficulty giving birth.

Meanwhile my Department continues to follow closely the work of the Brachycephalic Working Group which aims to raise awareness of the health problems relating to brachycephalic breeds and identify ways in which their health and welfare can be improved.

■ Fish: Conservation

Virginia Crosbie:

[179703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) help prevent the depletion of fish stocks and (b) reduce the amount of bycatch discarded back into the sea; and how the amount of that discarded bycatch is monitored.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government's ambition is for world-class fisheries management to achieve sustainable fisheries, safeguarding stocks and the marine environment. This commitment is clearly set out in the Fisheries Act 2020 objectives and the 25 Year Environment Plan.

The bycatch objective in the Fisheries Act underlines the UK's commitment to avoid or reduce bycatch and the wasteful practice of discarding. It also sets out a

commitment to ensure that any unavoidable bycatch is recorded and accounted for. There are rules in force (commonly referred to as the 'landing obligation') that prohibit the discarding of fish.

We also manage other bycatch through a comprehensive and well-respected bycatch monitoring programme which helps to protect sensitive marine species and to monitor and reduce any potential fisheries impacts on these species. The UK has an additional observer programme that collects data on fisheries catch and bycatch for scientific advice and management. Additionally, the Government funds Clean Catch UK which is a collaborative research programme dedicated to better monitoring, reducing, and, where possible, eliminating the bycatch of sensitive marine species in UK fisheries.

■ Fishing Catches

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[178816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce overfishing in UK waters.

Victoria Prentis:

Our ambition is world-class fisheries management to achieve sustainable fisheries, safeguarding stocks and the environment for the long term.

The Government is fully committed to sustainable fishing and the principle of Maximum Sustainable Yield as set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan and our Fisheries White Paper. The objectives in the Fisheries Act, the Joint Fisheries Statement and Fisheries Management Plans collectively reaffirm our commitment to achieving sustainable fishing and protecting the marine environment while tailoring our approach to our unique seas and the needs of our fishing industry.

In our international negotiations, we continue to encourage other coastal States to agree quotas within sustainable limits. We will work closely with neighbouring countries to ensure our seas are managed sustainably, to secure a fair share of quota for UK fishers, and to enable a thriving industry for current and future generations.

■ Fishing Catches: Cetaceans

Luke Pollard:

[\[179534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2021 given to Question 167317, which 10 fisheries have had the highest rates of (a) dolphin, (b) porpoise and (c) whale bycatch in each year since 2010 to date.

Luke Pollard:

[\[179535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2021 to Question 167317, what assessment he has made of the (a)

adequacy and (b) accuracy of the population level assessments of porpoise and dolphins upon which the assessments he refers to in his Answer are made.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK Government funds a comprehensive and well-respected bycatch monitoring programme which provides essential observer data on incidents of cetacean (dolphins, porpoises and whales) bycatch. Information on bycatch rates, broken down by gear type and area are publicly available:

2011 – 2016:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=18535&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=ME6004&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description>

2017 & 2018:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=19943&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=ME6004&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description>

In addition, we also fund the Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP), which annually reports upon threats facing cetaceans through carrying out post-mortems on stranded animals:

2011-2017:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=17835&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=ME6008&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description>

& 2018:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=20101&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=ME6008&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description>)

As of 1 April 2021, we let a new 10-year contract for this programme, which demonstrates our long-term commitment to monitoring and mitigating such threats, including bycatch.

■ **Food: West Yorkshire**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[178814]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support his Department is providing to organisations that aim to tackle food (a) waste and (b) poverty in West Yorkshire.

Rebecca Pow:

(a) Waste

Since 2018, over £11 million of grants have been awarded to the surplus food redistribution sector to make sure more surplus food goes to those who have a need

in the months and the years to come. In Yorkshire alone, sixteen projects worth over £2.3 million were funded. Hundreds of the grants that make up the £11 million are providing the infrastructure such as vehicles, freezers and fridges to redistributors both large and small across the country.

Through the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) we continue to work closely with the redistribution sector and the across the food chain to tackle any barriers to increasing redistribution including through the provision of tools and guidance.

(b) Poverty in West Yorkshire

The Government has built on the significant support given to the most vulnerable during the initial months of the pandemic, by delivering a winter support package to help the economically vulnerable. This package included increasing the value of Healthy Start Vouchers, the national rollout of the Holiday Activities and Food programme, and a £170 million Covid Winter Support Grant to local authorities which started in December to support households with food and other essential costs.

The winter package also included £16 million of funding for Defra to support food charities with the purchasing and distribution of food to the vulnerable over a 16-week period starting from the beginning of December. This funding stream was managed by the food redistributor FareShare and helped to support a number of areas across England, including West Yorkshire.

■ **Glass: Landfill Tax**

Bob Blackman:

[179045]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason glass is classed as a qualifying material for the lower rate of landfill tax; and what plans he has to review that classification as part of plans to move towards circular economies.

Rebecca Pow:

Materials liable for the lower rate of landfill tax, including glass, are listed in the 2011 Qualifying Materials Order. When assessing which materials are liable for the lower rate, the Government considers whether they are non-hazardous, have low potential for greenhouse gas emissions and have low polluting potential in the landfill environment. Further information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/excise-notice-lft1-a-general-guide-to-landfill-tax/excise-notice-lft1-a-general-guide-to-landfill-tax#lower-rate-qualifying-material> .

The Government has no plans to change the landfill tax rate for glass, though HM Treasury continues to keep tax policy under review.

■ Glass: Recycling

Bob Blackman:

[\[179047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the quantities of flat glass currently recycled through end-of-life vehicle authorised treatment facilities.

Rebecca Pow:

For 2018, some 1.4 million end-of-life vehicles passed through authorised treatment facilities (ATFs). It is estimated that around 10,000 tonnes of glass were recycled. Processing of this glass occurred further down the treatment chain after initial depollution of vehicles at ATFs.

■ Horse Racing: Animal Welfare

Julian Sturdy:

[\[179097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the animal welfare evidence for prohibiting the use of whips during horseracing.

Victoria Prentis:

The Horse Welfare Board's five-year Horse Welfare Strategy (HWS) "a life well-lived" was published on 20 February 2020. The HWS contains 20 recommendations for improving the welfare of horses bred for racing. The HWS recommends that, as a minimum, the penalties for misuse of the whip need to increase and that the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) should conduct a consultation on the use of the whip. The Strategy also recommends that this consultation should gather views on future restrictions on whip use and on a possible ban. The opening of this consultation has been delayed due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Defra officials will remain engaged with the BHA on the progress being made with the consultation. I would encourage anyone with evidence that a racehorse has suffered unnecessarily from being whipped to get in touch with the BHA and share their concerns. In the most severe cases of misuse, an individual may be investigated under the 2006 Animal Welfare Act, as well as receiving significant sanctions from the sport.

■ Hunting

Luke Pollard:

[\[178570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent of trail hunting on privately-owned land; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

This Government has not made any assessment of the extent of trail hunting on privately owned land. The Hunting Act 2004 bans hunting of wild mammals with dogs, except where it is carried out in accordance with the exemptions in the Act.

This Government will not amend the Hunting Act. Trail hunting should not involve the pursuit of a live mammal, and if hounds do pick up the scent of a live fox during a trail hunt, it is the responsibility of the hunt staff to control the hounds and if necessary to stop them.

■ **Keep Britain Tidy: Finance**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[178625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding his Department has allocated to Keep Britain Tidy in each of the last five years.

Rebecca Pow:

In the last five years, no funding has been specifically allocated to Keep Britain Tidy, but it has successfully bid for a number of litter-related contracts:

YEAR	PROJECT	CONTRACT VALUE AWARDED
2017-18	Survey of roadside litter on trunk roads other than motorways	£79,000
2017-18	Research into packaging design to reduce litter and littering	£8,993
2017-18	Waterside Care community engagement project	£5,833
2018-19	Economic valuation of the non-market benefits of dealing with specific types of litter that a Deposit Return Scheme in England would help to overcome	£41,525
2019-20	Research into litter composition, including composition of dropped versus binned litter and brands of littered items	£92,320
2020-21	North West bathing waters programme	£30,000
2021-22	Macro plastic North West	£74,240

Keep Britain Tidy has also been awarded the following grant funding towards delivery of national clear-up days and campaigns:

YEAR	GRANT
2016 (Clean for the Queen)	£9,500
2017 (Great British Spring Clean)	£10,000
2020 (Love Parks / Respect the Outdoors)	£30,000

Defra has an annual contract with Keep Britain Tidy to host the National Fly-tipping Prevention Group's (NFTPG) website: <http://www.tacklingflytipping.com/>

YEAR	CONTRACT VALUE AWARDED
2016/17	£3,828
2017/18	£3,828
2018/19	£3,828
2019/20	£3,903.60
2020/21	£3,903.60*

*Awarded but not yet paid

In 2017, under the £450,000 Litter Innovation Fund, Keep Britain Tidy was awarded £39,717 across 4 grants. Full details are available at: <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/litter-innovation-fund>

■ Litter: Rural Areas

Alberto Costa: [\[179215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support community groups and local authorities to tackle the increase in littering in rural communities.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the Rt Hon Member for East Yorkshire on 19 April 2021, [PQ UIN 180413](#).

■ National Parks

Tim Farron: [\[178735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to strengthen the role that local communities have in National Parks.

Tim Farron:

[\[178973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Landscapes Review, published September 2019, what plans his Department has to increase funding for National Park Authorities.

Tim Farron:

[\[178974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to increase the (a) resources and (b) powers available to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Rebecca Pow:

The Landscapes Review set out a compelling vision for more beautiful, more biodiverse and more accessible National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). We welcome this ambition, as the Government is committed to ensuring that our protected landscapes flourish as havens for nature and are places that everyone can visit and enjoy.

The review set out proposals to strengthen the role of National Parks and AONBs in connecting all people with nature and in building vibrant communities. Protected landscapes already work very closely with their local communities and have a good track record of working with businesses. We recognise, however, that they could do more, and we will continue to work with them to explore how we can support that objective.

Defra has recently informed all protected landscapes that their grant settlement for 2021/22 will be maintained at the same level as 2020/21. Through the new Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme, we are also providing additional investment to allow farmers and land managers to work in partnership with our National Park Authorities and AONB teams to deliver more impact.

The Landscapes Review also recommended that a new financial model is needed for protected landscapes, and proposed strengthening the purposes, powers and resources for AONBs in particular. We are currently working with partner organisations to inform and develop our response to the review, which we will publish in due course.

■ National Wildlife Crime Unit

Daisy Cooper:

[\[179568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding allocated to the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government takes wildlife crime seriously. Since 2016 Defra and the Home Office have committed £300k (roughly £165k each) a year to funding the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) until 2020/21. Decisions on the future funding of the NWCU are being taken as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The UK is currently undergoing assessment under the UN-led International Consortium for Combatting Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit. This assessment will comprise a comprehensive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of our preventive and criminal justice responses, which are crucial to curtailing wildlife and forest crime nationally and internationally. The toolkit will also review UK wildlife crime policing structures, including the NWCU and Border Force. We expect the report to be finalised in six months.

■ Organic Farming: Certification

Neil Parish:

[\[179088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve governance of organic certification.

Victoria Prentis:

Now that the UK has left the European Union we have the opportunity to chart our own course in organic regulation, setting rules around organic production and certification that suit the needs of our domestic organics industry.

We are working to streamline bureaucratic processes inherited from the EU regulatory system to allow for a more flexible and responsive way to handle our regulatory obligations while reducing costs for producers and the burden on the public purse.

The Agriculture Act 2020 gives us powers to amend the organics regime to support organic farmers further, benefit the environment, maintain consumer confidence, promote research and innovation in the sector, and reflect future trade agreements. In due course we will consult with organic producers and industry bodies on how to boost innovation, improve governance of organic certification, group certification and making entry into organic production appealing for new entrants.

■ Pigs: Animal Housing

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[179268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic effect of banning farrowing crates on the pig farming industry.

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[179269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has plans to diverge from EU standards to pursue higher animal welfare standards for the pig farming industry.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government shares the public's high regard for animal welfare and we are currently examining the evidence around the use of cages for farm animals.

We introduced a new pig welfare code of practice, which came into force in March last year, and this provides guidance to keepers and farmers on legal requirements

and encourages high standards of husbandry. The pig code states that the aim is for farrowing crates to no longer be necessary and for any new system to protect the welfare of the sow, as well as her piglets. We are continuing to discuss and work with the industry on this issue.

We are co-designing an Animal Health and Welfare Pathway with industry, to promote the production of healthier, higher-welfare animals at a level beyond compliance with current regulations, underpinning our high international reputation for health and welfare and future increases to regulatory standards.

We are committed to maintaining our position as world leaders in animal welfare and want to improve and build upon that record, working in partnership with farmers to support healthier, higher welfare animals.

■ Recycling

Zarah Sultana:

[\[179615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will assess the potential merits of implementing a deposit return scheme that includes containers of all sizes earlier than 2023.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government committed, in its 2019 manifesto, to introduce a deposit return scheme to incentivise people to recycle drinks containers.

On 24 March we published our second consultation on implementing a deposit return scheme for drinks containers. Further details of the proposed deposit return scheme, including the size of drinks containers being considered as part of the scope of the scheme, are presented in this second consultation.

Timelines have been reviewed to ensure we allow sufficient time for the roll out and implementation of a complex policy, and we therefore propose to implement the scheme in 2024, with views on this being taken in the consultation.

■ Slaughterhouses: Animal Welfare

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[179311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) regulating the number of animals that can be slaughtered without being stunned and (b) banning the export of meat from animals that have not been stunned before slaughter.

Victoria Prentis:

We would prefer all animals to be stunned before slaughter, but we respect the rights of Jews and Muslims to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs.

We have recently concluded a review of the welfare of animals at time of killing legislation and this identifies potential improvements that might be made. We are carefully considering the issues raised in the review.

■ Tree Planting

Sarah Jones:

[178574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Government's commitment to increase tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025 set out in the England Tree Strategy consultation document published in June 2020, how many trees have been planted to date; whether those trees are (a) whips or (b) adult trees; where he plans to plant trees in the future; whether he plans to plant trees in Croydon; who will be responsible for maintaining those trees; and which Minister is accountable for that programme.

Rebecca Pow:

The Forestry Commission produces statistics on new planting of woodland for the UK. These are Official Statistics produced to meet the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics and can be found on the Forest Research web site together with background information at: <https://www.forestryresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/forestry-statistics/>. The statistics are produced annually and show recorded new planting from administrative records and grant schemes with estimates for planting without grant aid. It is assumed nearly all the trees newly planted are whips with small stems or relatively small planting stock rather than larger trees.

The most recent statistics show there was 13,660 hectares of new planting (woodland creation) in the UK in 2019-20, of which 2,340 hectares were in England. At least a further 842 hectares have been reported as newly planted between 1 April 2020 and 31 December 2020 in England.

In addition, the Urban Tree Challenge Fund supports the planting of larger, 'standard', trees outside of woodlands in England. The Fund supported the planting of 7,630 standard trees in 2019-20 and 11,839 standard trees in 2020-21. Of these, 734 were planted in Croydon.

Grant schemes are demand led so it is not generally possible to state where the trees will be newly planted, although a range of sensitivities will prevent permission to plant being granted in some locations. We are aware of plans to plant a further 66 standards trees in 2021-22 in Croydon supported by the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. Additional planting will be dependent on future applications.

The maintenance of new trees and woodland is usually the responsibility of the grant agreement holder and the grant award includes a contribution to costs to ensure successful establishment of the newly planted trees.

The Minister who has forestry in his portfolio and is accountable for the programme is Lord Goldsmith.

Alan Brown:

[179238]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what tree planting targets were in place in each year since 2010; and how many hectares of tree planting took place in each of those years.

Rebecca Pow:

Between 2010 and 2015 there was no specific target for woodland creation. The 2015-17 Government committed to plant eleven million trees over the course of that Parliament, then assumed to run to 2020. The subsequent Government (2017-19) made the same commitment, together with another to plant one million trees in our towns and cities. The 2018 25 Year Environment Plan included an aspiration to increase woodland cover in England to 12% by 2060, through planting 180,000 hectares of new woodland by 2042. We have now committed to accelerate planting rates to 30,000 hectares per year across the UK by the end of this Parliament.

The Forestry Commission produces statistics on new planting of woodland for the UK. These are Official Statistics produced to meet the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics, and can be found on the Forest Research web site together with background information at: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/forestry-statistics/>

The area of new planting (woodland creation) for the UK and England in each year since 2010, taken from the published statistics is shown below.

New planting of woodland (thousands of hectares)

YEAR (ENDING 31 MARCH)	NEW PLANTING IN ENGLAND	NEW PLANTING IN THE UK
2010-11	2.53	9.10
2011-12	2.67	12.76
2012-13	2.59	10.79
2013-14	3.34	12.89
2014-15	2.43	10.30
2015-16	0.82	5.61
2016-17	1.15	6.52
2017-18	1.50	9.05
2018-19	1.42	13.54
2019-20	2.34	13.66

Source: Forestry Commission, Forestry England, Scottish Forestry, Forestry and Land Scotland, Natural Resources Wales, Forest Service, Welsh Government, grant schemes with estimates for areas newly planted without grant aid.

■ UK Trade with EU

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[179631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the reasons for the decrease in the export to the EU of (a) whisky, (b) cheese and (c) beef; and what steps her Department will take to tackle the decline in sales of those products to the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

A unique combination of factors, including Covid lockdowns across Europe, and businesses adjusting to a new trading relationship, made it inevitable that exports of cheese and beef to the EU, would be lower during the first quarter of this year compared to last year.

The Government has always been clear that there would be new processes to export to the EU from 1 January 2021. We continue to work closely with traders and have provided extensive advice to support businesses as they adjust to the new arrangements.

The reduction in the export value of whisky to the EU was principally due to Covid-19 restrictions limiting demand from the hospitality sector. Excluding non-EU Europe, which saw a slight increase in exports, the EU saw the lowest percentage decline in exports of Scotch Whisky compared to other global regions. However, as the largest export market for whisky, the Government is working with industry to mitigate other more recent factors which may hinder exports to the EU, such as where EU member states have been requesting additional certification for whisky and other food and drink products.

■ Waste Disposal: Water

Michael Fabricant:

[\[178790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the Australian practice of using drainage nets to collect plastic and other small objects to prevent them from entering rivers and seas.

Rebecca Pow:

Waste water treatment in the UK is largely determined by the requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment (England and Wales) Regulations 1994. The Regulations have the objective of protecting the environment from the adverse effects of wastewater by setting minimum treatment levels supplemented by additional requirements to limit pollution from discharges. All discharges to the water environment require a permit issued by the Environment Agency under the Environmental Permitting Regulations. The Environment Agency will include the necessary conditions in water company discharge permits to limit sewage-related debris from entering rivers and seas. In the UK, rather than the Australian practice of using drainage nets, this is achieved through engineering design and the use of screens at the point of discharge to the environment.

■ Water: Consumption

Luke Pollard:

[\[178715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to introduce a personal water consumption target for consumers based on (a) the amount abstracted for supply or (b) per capita consumption.

Rebecca Pow:

Protecting our water resources is a priority for this Government, which is why we have proposed setting a statutory target on overall demand for public water supply in our Environment Bill. This could encompass household use, non-household use and leakage.

As the 2017 Abstraction plan is currently being refreshed, we do not think it is appropriate to set a target on wider abstraction. Water companies are already making changes (both voluntary and at the request of the Environment Agency) to their abstraction licences in order to benefit the environment.

The 2019 Water conservation: measures to reduce personal water use consultation, is expected to be published this Spring. The consultation included a call for evidence on setting an ambitious target for personal water consumption, known as per capita consumption (PCC). We sought views on the policy options required to support a personal water consumption target. This included the labelling of water-using products, and the future role of metering.

Luke Pollard:

[\[179529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the results of his Department's Water conservation: measures to reduce personal water use consultation that concluded in October 2019.

Rebecca Pow:

Whilst good progress has been made in water efficiency policy development, we paused work in this area due to the Covid-19 pandemic and end of the transition period. We have recently recommenced our efficiency work and are committed to publishing the Government response this spring, which sets out our ambition and a package of policies to reduce household water consumption.

Protecting our water resources remains a priority for this Government, which is why we have proposed setting a statutory target on overall demand for public water supply in our Environment Bill. This could encompass household use, non-household use and leakage.

■ Water: Meters

Luke Pollard:

[\[178717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will remove restrictions to permit water companies to roll out universal water metering to areas beyond those designated as areas of serious water stress.

Luke Pollard:

[\[179530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a mandatory water efficiency label on all water consuming products.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra is committed to publishing the Government response to the 2019 public consultation on Water conservation: measures to reduce personal water use consultation, this spring. The response sets out our ambition and a package of policies to reduce household water consumption.

■ **Weedkillers: Exports**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[178627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning the export of (a) Gramoxone and (b) other paraquat based herbicides.

Victoria Prentis:

We take our international obligations for human health and the environment very seriously and continue to monitor action in other countries and learn from their experiences.

The export of paraquat is regulated under the Great Britain Prior Informed Consent (PIC) regulatory regime for the export and import of certain hazardous chemicals. Companies intending to export any of these chemicals from Great Britain must notify the importing country via the exporter's Designated National Authority. For Great Britain the Designated National Authority is the Health and Safety Executive.

Paraquat additionally requires the explicit consent of the importing country before export can take place. The exchange of information that PIC provides allows the importing countries to make informed decisions on the import of those chemicals and on how to handle and use them safely.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Afghanistan: Security**

Jessica Morden:

[\[914454\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the security situation in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

The security situation throughout Afghanistan remains uncertain, and could change rapidly. On 14 April, NATO announced that its forces would leave Afghanistan within a few months. The Afghan Security Forces have been leading security provision for Afghanistan since 2014. The UK is working closely with the US and other Allies and partners to support an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours. We urge all to seize the current opportunity to secure a political settlement, which is needed to

bring about the lasting peace and stability that the people of Afghanistan want and deserve.

■ **Baltic States: NATO**

Catherine West:

[\[181364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has been made of the level of threat of the recent Russian military mobilisation to NATO allies in the Baltic region.

Wendy Morton:

Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine, and provocative military activities are a source of regional instability. The enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland demonstrates NATO's steadfast commitment to collective defence and deterrence, making it clear that an attack on one Ally would be considered an attack on the whole Alliance. UK Armed Forces have a leading role in NATO's eFP in the Baltic States, in order to enhance Euro-Atlantic security, reassure our Allies and deter our adversaries.

We regularly discuss with NATO allies our responses to potential threats from Russia and as fellow Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, we engage directly with Russia on matters of international peace and security, including the Baltic Region.

■ **Bilateral Aid: HIV Infection**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[178981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will list the Department for International Development's bilateral expenditure directly targeting HIV and AIDS under input sector codes 13041 and 13042 in financial years (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19 and (c) 2019-20.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[178982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will list the Department for International Development's bilateral expenditure directly targeting reproductive health under input sector codes 13010, 13021, 13022, 13030 and 13081 in financial years (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19 and (c) 2019-20.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[178983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of the Department for International Development's Official Development Assistance budget was allocated to sexual and reproductive health and rights in (a) 2017, (b) 2018 and (c) 2019.

Wendy Morton:

Detailed reports on UK Official Development Assistance up until financial year 2017-18 were given in the Gross Public Expenditure (GPEx) publication which ceased in August 2020. For data covering 2018 onwards, UK Aid by sector and calendar year

has been published in the FCDO Statistics on International Development (SID) publication. 2020 data will be available in Autumn 2021.

FCDO official aid spend disaggregated by sector code for 2018 and 2019 can be found in the Statistics for International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2019 pilot table at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/967648/SID_Pilot_Tables.ods

For previous years please refer to the Statistics on International Development: UK Gross Public Expenditure (GPEX) publication at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-international-development-uk-gross-public-expenditure-gpex>

■ British Indian Ocean Territory

Andrew Rosindell:

[178888]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to hold discussions with the Government of Mauritius on the future of the Chagos Islands.

Nigel Adams:

There are no current plans for discussions with the Government of Mauritius on the future of the Chagos Islands. We remain open to dialogue with Mauritius on matters of shared interest, including BIOT and its Marine Protected Area (MPA).

■ British Red Cross

Scott Benton:

[178608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will review its relationship with the British Red Cross charity in response to that charity's recent criticisms of Government policy.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government's relationship with the British Red Cross is established under the BRC's Royal Charter. There are no current plans to review this relationship.

■ Caribbean: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[178879]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to assist Commonwealth members in the Caribbean to roll out covid-19 vaccines.

Wendy Morton:

Building on its £548 million commitment to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) for the 92 most vulnerable countries, which in the Caribbean includes Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines, the

UK will continue to make the case for Caribbean countries to benefit from all vaccination campaigns under COVAX.

There have been successful COVAX vaccine deliveries to 12 independent Caribbean Commonwealth countries - Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

■ China: Caribbean

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[179746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of attempts by China to extend the political and economic influence of that country to the Caribbean.

Nigel Adams:

The UK recognises China as a source of aid, trade and investment for many countries including in the Caribbean. Chinese investment can support jobs and growth, but this must be developed and delivered in line with the highest international standards, particularly with regard to environmental and social safeguards, transparency, and debt sustainability. It is precisely because we recognise China's role in the world that we expect China to live up to its international obligations and international responsibilities and we will hold China to account when it does not.

■ China: Human Rights

Meg Hillier:

[\[914457\]](#)

What recent diplomatic steps he has taken in response to human rights abuses against (a) the Uyghurs and (b) other minorities in China.

Nigel Adams:

On 22 March, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, the Foreign Secretary announced asset freezes and travel bans against four senior Chinese government officials and one entity responsible for the gross violations of human rights of Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang.

On 22 February, the Foreign Secretary delivered a Ministerial Statement at the UN Human Rights Council – the first time a UK Foreign Secretary has done so since 2010. He highlighted our deep concerns about the human rights violations being perpetrated against Tibetans, Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities in China, and underlined the need for urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The UK also led the first two joint statements on the persecution of the Uyghurs and other minorities at the UN, and we have worked tirelessly with partners to raise the issue up the international agenda.

On 12 January, the Foreign Secretary announced robust domestic measures in respect of UK supply chains to help ensure that British businesses are not complicit in human rights violations in Xinjiang.

The Foreign Secretary has personally raised our serious concerns with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on a number of occasions.

■ China: Politics and Government

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[178997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to make representations to the Government of China on the arrest of (a) Carol Ng and (b) 52 other pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

We remain deeply concerned about the targeting of politicians and activists in Hong Kong, and are following these cases closely. The apparent focus of the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities seems now to be retribution against political opposition and silencing of dissent. We continue to raise our concerns directly with the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities, including this week with senior members of the Hong Kong Government. We urge the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities to respect the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Joint Declaration. In addition, an official from the UK Consulate-General attended the Magistrates Court hearing on 1 March for Carole Ng and others.

■ China: Uighurs

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[178619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the UN and the international community on the treatment of Uighur women by the Chinese Government.

Nigel Adams:

We are deeply concerned by distressing testimony of the treatment of Uyghur women in Xinjiang detention centres. In February, the Foreign Secretary used a personal address at the UN Human Rights Council to draw attention to the plight of Uyghur women and call for China to allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, or another independent expert, urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang so that they are able to assess the situation first hand.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[179526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken on ending the maltreatment of Uyghur Muslims in China.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. We have led international efforts to hold China to account for its human rights violations, leading the first two statements on Xinjiang at the UN and utilising

our diplomatic network to raise the issue up the international agenda. In February, the Foreign Secretary used a personal address at the UN Human Rights Council to call for China to allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, or another independent expert, urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang.

The UK is also committed to taking robust domestic action. On 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK has imposed, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, asset freezes and travel bans against four senior Chinese Government officials, as well the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the organisation responsible for enforcing the repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang.

■ **Colombia: Armed Conflict**

Ellie Reeves:

[\[178638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of recent information released by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia that that the security forces of that country intentionally killed at least 6,402 civilians between 2002 and 2008.

Wendy Morton:

The ongoing work by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is vital for the transitional justice process agreed as part of the peace agreement. We have been clear that all actors being investigated, including the security services, must be held accountable for their actions, and any crimes thoroughly investigated. The UK has been a leading international advocate of Colombia's peace process, including mechanisms like the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and supporting the Colombian government in its commitment to implement the 2016 Peace Accords will remain our top priority.

We have contributed more than £60 million in support via the UK's Conflict, Security, and Stability Fund and are the largest donor to the UN Trust Fund for Colombia. We are proud to lead on the issue at the UN Security Council, and will continue to strengthen the international community's support and commitment to peace, stability, and justice in Colombia.

■ **Colombia: Civil Disorder**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[179625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Colombian counterpart on reports of Colombian police using live ammunition against protesters in Bogota on 9 and 10 September 2020.

Wendy Morton:

We are aware of concerning reports regarding the police response to protests in Colombia in September 2020. We are clear that we support the right of all Colombians to protest peacefully, and we look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully any reports of excessive use of force against protestors, and take

appropriate action against those responsible. Security services must be held accountable for their actions, and any complaints thoroughly investigated.

■ **Colombia: Police**

Fabian Hamilton: [\[178826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Colombian counterpart on the removal of the Colombian Police Force from that country's Ministry of Defence.

Wendy Morton:

The internal structures of the Colombian Government and state are a matter for that Government.

■ **Colombia: Trade Unions**

Fabian Hamilton: [\[178829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage the Colombian Government to tackle reported violence against trade unionists in that country.

Wendy Morton:

UK Ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights issues with their Colombian counterparts. Most recently, the UK's Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, raised our concerns around killings of human rights defenders, media freedom, and sexual violence, on a virtual visit to Colombia in February.

We continue to support efforts to improve the security and protection of human rights defenders, including through the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund.

■ **Colombia: Violence**

Fabian Hamilton: [\[181189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of reports of threats of violence made against human rights defenders and environmental organisations in Barrancabermeja and Magdalena Medio, Colombia.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government remains concerned about the persistent level of violence towards human rights defenders, and environmental activists in Colombia. Colombia is a UK Government 'Human Rights Priority Country' - UK ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights issues, as well as specific cases of concern, with the Colombian Government, and in multilateral fora. Most recently, the UK's Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, raised our concerns around killings of human rights defenders, as well as media freedom and sexual violence, on a virtual visit to Colombia in February. We will continue to raise our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia.

Through our CSSF programme, which has provided £63 million in support of peace agreement implementation, security and stability in Colombia since 2015, we continue to prioritise funding interventions to protect human rights defenders, social leaders, and ex-combatants. In Barrancabermeja and Magdalena Medio specifically, we are supporting the work of the Transitional Justice System and the Organisation of American States' Peace Process Support Mission. We are also funding civil society participation in the implementation of the peace agreement, and the development and implementation of rural development plans in conflict-affected territories .

■ Commonwealth Fund

Chris Law:

[\[179180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Commonwealth Fund will continue to support (a) the network of Women Mediators across the Commonwealth and (b) a programme to provide support to Commonwealth governments seeking to reform legislation that disproportionately affects women and girls and LGBT people.

Nigel Adams:

FCDO Ministers are currently working with officials to finalise ODA budget allocations for 2021/22. Final decisions have not yet been made, including on individual programmes.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[179634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that developing nations have access to a covid-19 vaccine.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, and has committed £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which is the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines, of which the UK is one of the largest bilateral donors. Our commitment has helped encourage other donors to commit \$1 billion by the end of 2020, and will contribute to the supply of at least 1.3 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 for up to 92 developing countries. Over 100 countries and territories have received COVAX deliveries. The Prime Minister has also said that the UK will share the majority of future vaccine doses surplus to domestic needs with COVAX.

The COVAX AMC aims to supply fully subsidised doses sufficient to vaccinate up to 20 per cent of country populations, initially prioritising healthcare workers, and then expanding to cover other priority groups. Countries will then be able to procure additional subsidised doses, subject to vaccine availability, to increase coverage further. COVAX is supporting countries to assess vaccine introduction readiness, and to develop detailed national deployment and vaccination plans, including support needed to strengthen delivery systems. Our network of health advisers in AMC

countries are working to support host governments to apply to the COVAX AMC and prepare for vaccine delivery.

Sam Tarry:

[\[179664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to roll out the AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine to the developing world.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, and has committed £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which is the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines, of which the UK is one of the largest bilateral donors. Our commitment helped encourage other donors to commit \$1 billion by the end of 2020, and will contribute to the supply of at least 1.3 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 for up to 92 developing countries.

We are proud that the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is in the COVAX portfolio. The UK invested over £88 million into its development, and it is a testament to the UK's global scientific leadership. The COVAX portfolio includes 170 million AstraZeneca doses. COVAX has now delivered more than 38 million doses across six continents, supplied by three manufacturers: AstraZeneca, Pfizer-BioNTech, and the Serum Institute of India (SII). Agreements with additional vaccine suppliers will be announced shortly. Of the over 100 economies reached, 61 are among the 92 lower-income economies receiving vaccines funded through the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC).

Layla Moran:

[\[181415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the World Health Organisation Director General's statement on 9 April 2021 on the imbalance in the global distribution of covid-19 vaccines.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. We are proud of our £548 million commitment to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which is the largest and most rapid global vaccine rollout in history. Our commitment helped encourage other donors to commit \$1 billion by the end of 2020, and our funding will contribute to the supply of at least 1.3 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 for up to 92 developing countries. Over 100 countries and economies have received COVAX deliveries. The Prime Minister has also said that the UK will share the majority of future vaccine doses surplus to domestic needs with COVAX.

COVAX partners have supported the fastest global roll-out of new vaccines in history, but more needs to be done. We are working with our partners, including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, WHO, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)

and others to accelerate the global production and supply of COVID-19 vaccines as a priority. On 15 April, I spoke at the AMC Investment Opportunity Launch supporting the COVAX Advance Market Commitment 2021 investment case. This will help secure a further \$2 billion from donors for procuring 500 million more doses to increase vaccine coverage from 20% to 30% in developing countries in 2021.

■ **Democracy: International Cooperation**

Bob Seely:

[\[914453\]](#)

What plans he has to develop a forum for the world's ten leading democracies.

Nigel Adams:

As set out in the Integrated Review, the Prime Minister's ambition is to work with like-minded democracies to support open societies and work together internationally. We will use our G7 Presidency to intensify this cooperation. The Prime Minister has invited Australia, India, the Republic of Korea, and South Africa to attend the G7 Summit as guest countries to deepen the expertise and experience around the table.

■ **Democratic Republic of Congo: Minority Groups**

Munira Wilson:

[\[179582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing for minority groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

James Duddridge:

The UK is concerned about the protection and safety of all communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), including minority groups. We continue to urge the DRC Government and the UN to work together to protect civilians from ongoing violence and address the root causes of conflict in the east. I [Mr Duddridge] discussed the importance of this with President Tshisekedi during my visit to DRC in November 2020 and again during a telephone call in March this year.

We are committed to ensuring the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO) has a mandate focused on the protection of civilians, and that supporting vulnerable communities remains central to the UN's work in DRC. In 2020/21 we provided approximately £52 million and three military staff officers to support MONUSCO. Our £70 million peace and stability programme is providing access to income-generation opportunities in conflict-affected communities, helping secure land access and supporting inclusive dialogue to address the drivers of conflict. Since 2017, the UK's humanitarian programme has helped over three million people with cash, emergency nutrition, water and healthcare. All UK-funded humanitarian aid is distributed on the basis of need to ensure that the most vulnerable are reached.

■ Developing Countries: Education**Nickie Aiken:**[\[178737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to announce a £600 million pledge to the 2021-25 replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education at the G7 Summit to encourage other donors to commit funds.

Nickie Aiken:[\[178739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to use its presidency of the G7 to ensure that the 2021-25 replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education is fully funded.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has placed girls' education, and broader gender equality at the heart of our G7 Presidency. We have set out two ambitious global objectives to get 40 million more girls into school, and 20 million more girls reading by age 10 in the next 5 years. We are using our G7 Presidency to rally others behind these objectives, and stand up for every girl's right to 12 years of quality education.

A well-funded Global Partnership for Education (GPE) will be central to delivering these global objectives, especially in securing education financing from developing countries' domestic budgets. We look forward to hosting the Global Education Summit to refinance GPE with the Government of Kenya in July. Details of the UK's next contribution to GPE will be announced in due course.

Dan Carden:[\[179427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will deliver the commitment made by the Prime Minister in September 2019 to 12 years of quality education for all girls by (a) protecting the ODA allocation for education from budget reductions, (b) increasing that allocation to 15 per cent of UK ODA and (c) allocating £600 million of funding from the public purse to the Global Partnership for Education.

Wendy Morton:

As set out in the Integrated Review, this Government's commitment to stand up for the right of every girl to 12 years of quality education is unwavering. The Foreign Secretary has set out seven core priorities for the UK's aid budget this year in the overarching pursuit of poverty reduction. Girls' education is one of these priorities.

The impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce how much we spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA). We will temporarily move to a target of spending 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA, rather than 0.7%. This is a temporary measure, and we will return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows. Details of the UK's next contribution to GPE will be announced in due course.

■ Developing Countries: Health Services

Dan Carden:

[\[179423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the allocation of funding from the public purse for global child and maternal health outcomes remains a priority for his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

As set out in the Integrated Review, global health is one of the most pressing issues for international collaboration. Global health remains a top priority for UK Official Development Assistance. The UK is committed to working with others to improve child and maternal health outcomes in order to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children by 2030. Our work to deliver this ambition includes our commitment of up to £1.65 billion to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to support Gavi's goal to immunise a further 300 million children.

■ Developing Countries: Maternity Services

Dan Carden:

[\[179422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to publish the Ending Preventable Deaths Action Plan.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to working with others to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns, and children by 2030. We hope to publish our approach to ending preventable deaths in due course.

Feryal Clark:

[\[179645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to publish the Government's Ending Preventable Deaths Action Plan.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to working with others to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns, and children by 2030. We hope to publish our approach to ending preventable deaths in due course.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[179710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the allocation of funding from the public purse for global child and maternal health outcomes remains a priority for his Department.

Wendy Morton:

As set out in the Integrated Review, global health is one of the most pressing issues for international collaboration. Global health remains a top priority for UK Official Development Assistance. The UK is committed to working with others to improve child and maternal health outcomes in order to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children by 2030. Our work to deliver this ambition includes

our commitment of up to £1.65 billion to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to support Gavi's goal to immunise a further 300 million children.

Alexander Stafford: [\[179711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to publish the Ending Preventable Deaths Action Plan.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to working with others to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns, and children by 2030. We hope to publish our approach to ending preventable deaths in due course.

■ Developing Countries: Poliomyelitis

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[179345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's budget for polio eradication under the Global Polio Eradication Initiative is in 2021-22.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has been a strong supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) for over 25 years. During this time polio cases have reduced by more than 99 per cent. We are proud to have contributed to this achievement. In the last financial year, we provided £70 million of funding to GPEI, which will continue this important work. However, the pandemic has forced us to take tough decisions, including temporarily reducing the aid budget. Ministers are currently working with department officials to finalise ODA budget allocations for 2021-22.

■ Developing Countries: Religious Freedom

Jim Shannon: [\[178603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to support marginalised religious and belief communities in developing countries that have been affected by the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

We are continuing to assess the impact of Covid-19 on members of all minority religious and belief communities. At a country level, Ministers and officials regularly raise specific cases of concern, and discuss practices and laws that discriminate on the basis of religion or belief. At a multilateral level, we work within the UN, International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance ('Alliance') and other international organisations to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief for all where it is threatened.

The Minister of State responsible for human rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, virtually attended the Ministerial to Advance Freedom of Religion or Belief in Warsaw in November 2020 and reaffirmed the UK's commitment to promoting FoRB, particularly during the pandemic. In August 2020, we issued a joint

statement with the Alliance calling for states to ensure that any restrictions to the right to freedom of religion or belief are necessary, proportionate and time-limited to protect public health.

■ Ethiopia: Dams

John Spellar:

[\[180917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential threat to regional stability posed by the time being taken to reach agreement on the operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

James Duddridge:

We welcome the resumption of talks between the Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt to work towards a peaceful resolution. We continue to urge all parties involved to come to an agreement and to avoid taking any unilateral action. The whole region has a shared interest in the peaceful utilization of its natural resources.

We note the recent talks held on the 4-5 April hosted by African Union (AU) Chairperson President Tshisekedi did not reach a conclusion and urge all parties to redouble efforts to reach an agreement, via the AU-led process.

■ EU Countries: Visas

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[179201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has plans to negotiate a six month tourist visa for travellers from the UK to the EU.

Wendy Morton:

During negotiations with the EU, the Government discussed arrangements for British Citizens travelling to the Schengen Area. Regrettably, the EU consistently maintained that British Citizens will be treated as third-country nationals under the Schengen Borders Code from 1 January 2021. This means that British Citizens are able to travel visa-free for short stays for up to 90 days in a rolling 180-day period. This is the standard length of stay that EU offers to nationals of eligible third countries that offer visa-free travel for EU citizens, in line with existing EU legislation.

British Citizens planning to stay longer will need permission from the relevant Member State(s). This may require applying for a visa and/or permit. Information about travel to Europe is available on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/visit-europe-1-january-2021>

The UK's Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU notes that both the UK and EU currently provide for visa-free travel for short-term visits for each other's nationals in accordance with their respective laws. The detail of those arrangements is set by domestic law, reflecting the UK's position as a non-Member State. Negotiations with the EU have concluded and the Government is focused on the smooth, robust and

effective implementation of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The Government does not typically enter into bilateral agreements on visa-free travel.

The ending of the free movement of persons between the UK and the EU is a consequence of the UK's exit from the EU. The Government made clear that free movement of persons would end once the UK ceased to be a Member State of the EU, and left the EU single market. This fulfilled the Government's commitment to the British public to take back control of our borders and introduce a single, global immigration system.

■ Global Partnership for Education: Finance

Dan Carden:

[\[179425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will meet the request by civil society to allocate £600 million of funding to the Global Partnership for Education for the 2021-25 replenishment in 2021.

Dan Carden:

[\[179426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to increase (a) political and (b) financial support for the forthcoming replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has placed girls' education and broader gender equality at the heart of our G7 Presidency. We have set out two ambitious global objectives to get 40 million more girls in school and 20 million more girls reading by age 10 in the next 5 years, and we are using our G7 Presidency to rally others behind these objectives and stand up for every girl's right to 12 years of quality education.

A well-funded GPE will be central to delivering these global objectives, especially in securing education financing from developing countries' domestic budgets. That is why we look forward to hosting the Global Education Summit to refinance GPE with the Government of Kenya in July. Details of the UK's next contribution to GPE will be announced in due course.

■ Global Travel Taskforce

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[181331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the (a) Secretary of State for Transport and (b) devolved Administrations on the Global Travel Taskforce and restarting cruises as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO continues to work closely with the Department for Transport about international cruise restart and the Global Travel Taskforce. On the domestic restart of cruises, officials from the Scottish and Welsh Governments and Northern Ireland

Executive liaison with the Department of Transport and are closely involved in the taskforce's work.

International cruises will restart alongside the wider restart of international travel, in line with the "traffic light" system. This will be subject to continued satisfactory evidence from the domestic restart and cruising in other countries. Travel advice will continue to be informed by the latest public health risk assessments.

For now, national restrictions on international travel remain in place, including only permitting travel abroad for a limited number of reasons set out in law. Holiday travel is not included.

■ Greece: Turkey

Alberto Costa:

[\[914458\]](#)

What diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help de-escalate tensions between Greece and Turkey.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is in regular contact with Turkish and Greek partners in support of their bilateral exploratory talks to reduce tensions in the Aegean. These talks were last held on 16 March, and we welcome the commitment from both sides to continue them.

We also welcome the constructive meeting between Greek Foreign Minister Dendias and Turkish President Erdogan and Foreign Minister Cavusoglu in Ankara on 15 April.

It is important that this dialogue continues, including through NATO military de-confliction talks between Turkey and Greece. The Foreign Secretary discussed this with the Greek Foreign Minister on 2 February, and with the Turkish Foreign Minister on 23 March.

In March, I discussed this with the Greek Foreign Minister and the Turkish Ambassador, and I plan to discuss this with Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Kaymakci in the coming weeks.

■ Haiti: Education

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[178827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to promote an educational partnership between academic institutions in Haiti and the UK.

Wendy Morton:

The United Kingdom has some of the best education providers in the world, and a reputation for excellence. We work with people globally through our Chevening Scholarships, and the newly launched Turing Scheme. These build links around the world, including between Haiti and the UK, and promote the UK as a partner in education. There have been 17 Haitian Chevening scholars in the past 5 years, and

we are working with the Chevening Alumni Community to promote the scheme in country. We have also shared information about the Turing scheme with the Haitian government. These schemes help to support the long-term prosperity and stability that is essential to reducing poverty in countries like Haiti, and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.2. Ultimately, individual institutions will make independent decisions on educational partnerships.

■ Hong Kong: British National (Overseas)

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[914448\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to support the citizens of Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

We are deeply concerned about ongoing events in Hong Kong. The UK has taken clear decisive action in response to China's violations of the Joint Declaration. We have

- Launched a bespoke immigration route for those with British National (Overseas) status and their family members.
- Extended the arms embargo on mainland China to include Hong Kong.
- and Suspended our Extradition Treaty with Hong Kong indefinitely.

We will continue to raise concerns our with the Chinese and Hong Kong governments, and bring together our international partners to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations.

■ Hong Kong: National Security

Layla Moran:

[\[181416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the National Security Curriculum in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

Article 10 of the Hong Kong National Security Law, requires the Hong Kong authorities to promote national security education in schools and universities and through social organisations, the media and the internet. As the Foreign Secretary made clear in his statement of 1 July 2020, this legislation constitutes a clear and serious breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, undermining Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and its rights and freedoms. Separately, in his Foreword to the UK Government's Six Monthly Report on Hong Kong covering the period 1 July to 31 December 2020, the Foreign Secretary noted that the chilling effects of the National Security Law were already being seen in Hong Kong, including damaging freedom of expression in academia and schools.

As a co-signatory to the Joint Declaration, we have a duty to speak out when we have concerns. We will continue to bring together our international partners to stand

up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations it freely assumed under international law.

■ India: Companies

Christine Jardine:

[\[181384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Indian counterpart on the effect of retrospective tax legislation on UK companies seeking to do business with that country.

Nigel Adams:

Supporting UK companies to do business in India is a priority for HMG. The UK is the second fastest growing investor in India over the last ten years and bilateral investments support over half a million jobs in each other's economies. Retrospective tax legislation is an internal matter for the Indian authorities.

■ International Criminal Court: Jerusalem and Occupied Territories

Jack Lopresti:

[\[174813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the International Criminal Court's determination that it has jurisdiction over East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza; and what assessment he has made of the potential legal implications of that determination for UK armed forces.

James Cleverly:

As the Prime Minister said in his letter to the Conservative Friends of Israel, the UK is a strong supporter of the ICC and we respect the independence of the Court. In this instance we do not consider that the ICC has jurisdiction. We continue to closely follow the ICC's work and are looking at the implications of this decision.

■ International Development

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[181249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the UK's new international development strategy will be published; and how civil society organisations will be able to contribute to the consultation process.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Secretary will lead on a new development strategy to ensure close alignment of UK aid and development aims with the objectives set out in the Integrated Review (IR). The Government has consulted widely on the IR and will be discussing the development strategy with partners and other stakeholders. The strategy will be published in due course.

■ International Development Association: Finance**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[179342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the reduction in funding allocated by the Government to the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA 19) on eradicating poverty in 2021-22.

James Duddridge:

The World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) plays a significant role in eradicating poverty and supporting progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals through its operations. The UK is highly supportive of IDA's work, and has been the largest donor to IDA since 2008. While we cannot yet confirm our specific funding allocations, we confirmed in the 2021/22 Spending Review that the UK would remain the largest donor to the latest replenishment of IDA.

■ International Law**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[178802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the UK meets its obligations under international law.

Nigel Adams:

International law and promotion of the rule of law are cornerstones of international relations. The UK Government is therefore committed to upholding the UK's international obligations and complying with the law, including international law. The UK is at the forefront of efforts to ensure the effective implementation of and, where appropriate, development of international law.

■ International Planned Parenthood Federation: Finance**Layla Moran:**[\[179479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the publication entitled Global Britain in a competitive age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, CP 403, published on 16 March 2021, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in Official Development Assistance funding to International Planned Parenthood Federation's women's integrated sexual health programmes on the Integrated Review's plans to improve global health.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is proud to defend universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights which is fundamental to the empowerment of women and girls. Global health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, is a top priority for the FCDO. The Integrated Review sets out UK priorities on global health, including support to health systems around the world.

The impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce how much we spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA). We will temporarily move to a target of spending 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA, rather than 0.7 per cent. This is a temporary measure and we will return to 0.7 per cent when the fiscal situation allows. We are now working through the implications of these changes for individual programmes, including on the Women's Integrated Sexual Health Programme (WISH). No decisions have yet been made on individual budget allocations.

Layla Moran:

[\[179480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the reduction to Official Development Assistance funding to International Planned Parenthood Federation's women's integrated sexual health programmes on cases of (a) HIV, (b) sexually transmitted diseases and (c) unintended pregnancies amongst women in conflict zones in (i) Ethiopia and (ii) Pakistan.

James Duddridge:

The UK is proud to defend universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights which is fundamental to the empowerment of women and girls. Global health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, is a top priority for the FCDO.

As announced last year, the impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce how much we spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA). We will temporarily move to a target of spending 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA, rather than 0.7%. This is a temporary measure and we will return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows. We are now working through the implications of these changes for individual programmes including on the Women's Integrated Sexual Health Programme (WISH). No decisions have yet been made on individual budget allocations.

■ Iran: Aviation

Jim Shannon:

[\[178601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help bring to justice the people responsible for the shooting down of Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 over Tehran in January 2020.

James Cleverly:

There must be justice for the victims of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752, and accountability for Iran. The UK is working closely with partners in the International Coordination and Response Group to achieve this, and to negotiate with Iran on providing reparations. The UK is also committed to supporting the safer skies initiative, of which we are a founding member.

■ Iran: BBC Persian Service

Fiona Bruce: [\[181234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Iranian counterpart on the reported targeting and harassment of BBC Persian staff in that country.

Fiona Bruce: [\[181235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Iranian counterpart on the reported harassment of families of BBC Persian staff.

Fiona Bruce: [\[181236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Iranian counterpart on the asset freeze affecting BBC Persian staff based in London.

James Cleverly:

We condemn the persecution of current and former BBC Persian employees and their family members, and the many individuals who have had their assets frozen or are banned from leaving Iran. We continue to regularly raise these issues directly with the Iranian government, as well as in multilateral fora, including the Human Rights Council.

At the UN Third Committee in October 2020, we urged Iran to cease their harassment of journalists and media organisations; and in March 2021, at the Human Rights Council, we made clear to Iran that their repeated violations of human rights are unacceptable.

The British Government is committed to the promotion of media freedom which is vital to functioning societies and that journalists must be able to investigate and report as they see fit. We regularly raise human rights with the Iranian authorities at all levels and we continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record on all human rights issues, including restrictions on media freedom.

■ Iran: Nuclear Power

Andrew Rosindell: [\[178875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the accuracy of recent reports that Iran is concealing the scale of its nuclear programme.

James Cleverly:

We remain committed to preserving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It remains the best, and currently the only, way to monitor and constrain Iran's nuclear programme.

Iran's continued systematic non-compliance with its JCPOA commitments is undermining the non-proliferation benefits of the deal and jeopardising our efforts to preserve it. The UK has repeatedly made clear in public and in private, both bilaterally and with the governments of France and Germany (as E3), that Iran must change its approach and co-operate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In his call with President Rouhani on 10 March, the Prime Minister stressed that while the UK remains committed to making the JCPOA a success, Iran must stop all nuclear activity that breaches the terms of the deal and come back into compliance.

We continue to work with the parties to the JCPOA and the new US Administration to find a diplomatic way forward that realises the benefits of the deal, and call upon Iran not to take any further steps which violate its JCPOA commitments and make a return to mutual compliance harder to achieve

■ **Japan: Travel**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[179313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support family visits between the UK and Japan under current covid-19 regulations.

Nigel Adams:

We understand the concerns of many British nationals looking to travel to Japan. The management of its borders, including entry restrictions such as those introduced following the discovery of new COVID variants, is a matter for the Government of Japan. We have raised border restrictions with the Government of Japan where appropriate and will continue to do so. We will publish any updates on our Travel Advice page for Japan.

■ **Jonathan Taylor**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[914455\]](#)

What diplomatic steps he is taking to secure the release of whistleblower Jonathan Taylor from detention in Croatia.

Wendy Morton:

We are providing ongoing support to Mr Taylor. Consular staff are in regular contact with him and continue to seek updates on his case from the Croatian courts.

Our priority is Mr Taylor's welfare and fair treatment, including the assurances of fair treatment which we have received from the Croatian and Monegasque authorities.

The FCDO cannot interfere to secure Mr Taylor's release. In accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, we must exercise our consular functions in foreign States in accordance with local laws and regulations and refrain from interfering in their internal affairs, which includes their judicial processes.

In December 2020 the British Ambassador in Zagreb met Mr Taylor to discuss his concerns and explain how the FCDO could assist him. The Acting Deputy Head of Mission spoke to Mr Taylor on 10 March, and the Ambassador spoke to him again on 16 April. The FCDO's Consular Director spoke to Mrs Taylor on 14 April.

The FCDO can, and does, raise concerns about individuals with other countries. I spoke to the Monegasque Foreign Secretary and the Croatian Secretary of State for European Affairs on 13 November 2020 and sought assurances that both authorities would treat Mr Taylor fairly.

I specifically asked for Mr Taylor to be treated in accordance with Croatia's obligations as a State Party to the Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption.

Monaco has provided assurances directly to Croatia since I raised Mr Taylor's case.

On 12 and 13 April, our Ambassador spoke to the Croatian authorities to understand the latest timelines for court action and to reiterate the importance of fair treatment.

■ Medical Treatments: Developing Countries

Clive Lewis: [\[179288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effect of draft World Health Assembly 74 resolution on Strengthening Local Production of Medicines and Other Health Technologies to Improve Access on expanding (a) production of and (b) access to essential medicines and vaccines.

Clive Lewis: [\[179289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government supports referencing the role of the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool in the draft World Health Assembly 74 resolution entitled Strengthening Local Production of Medicines and Other Health Technologies to Improve Access.

Clive Lewis: [\[179290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason the Government is recommending the deletion of text relating to generic competition in operative paragraph 2(8) of the draft World Health Assembly 74 resolution entitled Strengthening Local Production of Medicines and Other Health Technologies to Improve Access.

Clive Lewis: [\[179291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the draft World Health Assembly 74 resolution entitled Strengthening Local Production of Medicines and Other Health Technologies to Improve Access, what the Government's policy is on supporting an increase in covid-19 vaccine manufacturing capacity in developing countries; and what assessment the Government has made of the

potential contribution that an increase in covid-19 vaccine manufacturing capacity in developing countries might make to tackling the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is supportive of the World Health Assembly 74 Resolution on Strengthening Local Production of Medicines and Other Health Technologies to Improve Access. We are engaging in ongoing negotiations with 194 other member states to reach consensus, and it is not appropriate to comment on UK positions during this time.

The UK is supporting efforts to increase vaccine manufacturing capacity. We have facilitated engagement by industry and the research community to discuss the evolving WHO proposals for the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP). During our G7 presidency, we will continue this work with stakeholders and the WHO as it establishes the governance structures and refines the operating model for C-TAP. The UK is also providing technical assistance to catalyse private sector and development finance investment to in manufacturing capacity, particularly in Africa. We are working with the key international partners involved in vaccine manufacture and procurement. These include the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, the WHO and UNICEF for production of COVID-19 vaccines for the current pandemic.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

John Spellar:

[\[178745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when his Department plans to respond to the letters of 3 February 2021 and 13 August 2020 from the hon. Member for Warley on the report into the content of Palestinian Authority school textbooks.

James Cleverly:

A response was sent on 15 April 2021.

■ **Middle East: Armed Conflict**

Sarah Olney:

[\[181371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help end conflicts in the Middle East.

James Cleverly:

The UK is a leading diplomatic actor and humanitarian donor in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). As announced in the Integrated Review in March 2021, the UK will establish a more integrated approach to government work on conflict and instability, including in MENA. We will work with partners to manage the internal tensions that might lead to conflict, to increase their resilience to external interference, to mitigate the humanitarian and human rights impacts of existing conflicts, and to reduce the threats to our security that conflicts can cause - always in ways that are in concert with the international system and compliant with international humanitarian law. We use our UN Security Council seat and global partnerships to

push for resolution to conflict, including those in Yemen, Libya and Syria. The UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process is also clear: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

■ **Mozambique: Humanitarian Situation and Security**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[179405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the security and humanitarian situation in the Republic of Mozambique.

James Duddridge:

The UK is deeply concerned by the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in northern Mozambique and recent attacks by groups with links to Islamic extremism. As I said publicly on 26 and again on 28 March, we utterly condemn the recent attack in Palma, Cabo Delgado and we stand with the people of Mozambique.

The insurgency in northern Mozambique has claimed over 2,000 lives and displaced over 700,000 people. We are working with the Government of Mozambique to address the root drivers of conflict and instability in the region, and by providing targeted assistance under the framework of a Defence Memorandum of Understanding. The UK also co-chairs, with Ireland, the International Community Crisis Taskforce, which brings together the Mozambican government and the international community in high-level discussion about the crisis. We have provided £20m of humanitarian and development support to internally displaced people in northeast Mozambique through UN agencies, ensuring they have access to food, shelter and basic healthcare.

■ **Myanmar: Human Rights**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[178803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what further steps his Department is taking to (a) advocate for and (b) safeguard the human rights of people in Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is appalled at the actions of the military in killing its own people and the blatant disregard for human rights. We urge the military to exercise utmost restraint and respect human rights and international law. We continue to seek assurances that the safety, wellbeing, and rights of citizens are respected. We have used our Presidencies of both the G7 and the UN Security Council to secure strong statements which re-iterated these points.

The UK has also imposed sanctions on two key military linked conglomerates that fund the military's actions, and on nine senior military figures, including the Commander in Chief. We are clear that targeted sanctions send a clear message to the military that we react robustly to serious human rights violations.

■ Myanmar: Politics and Government

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[180515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government recognises Ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn as the legitimate representative of the Government of Myanmar in the UK.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: We pay tribute to Ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn for his bravery in standing up in support of democracy. The UK remains steadfast in our opposition to the coup, as demonstrated by our strong international leadership, including at the United Nations Security Council and G7, and through our imposition of targeted sanctions. It is the longstanding policy and practice of successive British Governments to accord recognition to States and not to Governments. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has received notification, in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, of the appointment of a chargé d'affaires ad interim to act provisionally as head of Myanmar's mission in the United Kingdom. The consent of the receiving State is not required when appointing a chargé d'affaires ad interim.

■ Nepal: Religious Freedom

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[\[178543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of freedom of religion or belief in Nepal.

Nigel Adams:

Nepal is a secular country, and the right to freedom of religion or belief is enshrined in Nepal's constitution. Although people may legally convert to a different religion, the constitution prohibits proselytisation, as well as religious behaviour that disturbs public order or is deemed contrary to public health, decency and morality. The British Embassy engages with members of faith and belief groups, civil society and other embassies to monitor trends.

■ Nigeria: Abduction

Jim Shannon:

[\[178594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Nigerian counterpart on helping to prevent the kidnap of children from school in that country.

James Duddridge:

We are deeply concerned by the kidnapping and continued captivity of schoolchildren by Boko Haram (BH) and Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) in North East Nigeria. Schoolgirl Leah Sharibu, who was abducted by ISWA in 2018, and a number of the Chibok schoolgirls, abducted by BH in 2014, are among those still missing. The British High Commission continues to raise these cases with the Nigerian Government, most recently in March 2021.

We are also concerned by the recent attacks on schools in Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna and Katsina States, conducted by criminal groups. I publicly condemned these attacks and stressed the importance of all children being able to access an education without fear. The UK Deputy National Security Advisor discussed the abduction of Nigerian schoolboys in Kankara in Katsina State with the President's Chief of Staff, Ibrahim Gambari, on 15 December 2020. Our High Commissioner in Abuja spoke to the Inspector General of the Nigerian Police on improving school safety and addressing kidnapping in March 2021. We have provided mentoring and capacity building for units of the Nigerian Police Force to improve their anti-kidnap capacity and response to organised crime groups in Nigeria.

■ North Korea: Guided Weapons

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[178881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions officials in his Department have had with officials in the US Administration on the threat caused by the recently reported launch of ballistic missiles from North Korea.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is deeply concerned by the launches last month of two short range ballistic missiles by North Korea which were in violation of UN Security Council resolutions and a threat to regional peace and security. I made clear our deep concern in a statement that day and called on North Korea to refrain from further provocations. The UK has regular conversations with the US Administration about the threat posed by North Korea. We work with the US and other partners in the UN Security Council to address North Korea's illicit missile launches and to uphold the rules-based international system. As set out in the Integrated Review, we will remain the most engaged non-regional partner on denuclearisation by North Korea and on sanctions enforcement.

■ Nuclear Weapons

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[178828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the US Administration on plans to increase the amount of nuclear warheads held by the UK.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary wrote to a number of his counterparts, including US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, on the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. Senior UK officials have also briefed a number of states, including the US, on the nuclear and counter-proliferation aspects of the Review. Nuclear cooperation remains an important element of the enduring Special Relationship between the US and the UK, enhancing trans-Atlantic security. We will continue to work closely with the US on nuclear matters, including nuclear deterrence policy.

■ Older People: Human Rights

Rachael Maskell:

[\[179243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he took to join other UN member states in calling for a convention on the rights of older persons at the Eleventh Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is clear that human rights are universal and is committed to protecting the human rights of all persons, including older persons. The UK recognises that there can be barriers to the enjoyment of human rights associated with certain characteristics, including age, and we know that older persons often face serious human rights issues in many parts of the world. We welcome the UN Open Ended Working Group on Ageing's efforts to help deepen understanding of these important issues.

At the Eleventh Session of the Working Group, we set out that the UK is supportive, in principle, of a multilateral instrument dedicated to the rights of older persons. We will continue to work closely with Parliamentarians, academia, civil society and national human rights institutions, to draw on their expertise and ensure that our approach to this issue takes account of their views.

■ Overseas Aid: British Indian Ocean Territory

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[178892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the £40 million Chagossian Support Package announced by the Government in November 2016 remains unspent.

Nigel Adams:

As of 1 April 2021 just over £39,228,000 remains unspent which is the majority of the Package. That which has been spent has directly assisted Chagossians both in the UK and abroad in various programmes and projects.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[178893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs,, what steps he is taking to help ensure that all Chagossians living in the UK are able to access support provided by the Government's Chagossian Support Package announced in November 2016.

Nigel Adams:

To encourage and enable access to this support package the FCDO has engaged with the UK Chagossian community by email, met Chagossian community groups and offered similar meetings to other Chagossian organisations. The FCDO has also engaged directly with the UK Chagossian community through expressions of interest for Heritage visits to the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) until these were suspended due to Covid-19. The last heritage visit to BIOT took place in February 2020.

Since November 2020 the FCDO has signed contracts with Crawley College, to provide English language courses, and with the UK National Information Centre for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills (UK ENIC) to provide statements of comparability to Chagossians for qualifications attained outside of the UK. Other programmes have been funded with implementing partners in Crawley and in the Manchester area: this mirrors the geographical spread of the main Chagossian diaspora communities in the UK, although the support package is available to Chagossians wherever they live.

■ Overseas Aid: Climate Change

Alexander Stafford:

[\[179713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to compensate poorer countries for the loss and damage incurred as a result of climate change.

James Duddridge:

The UK is prioritising action to support countries to adapt and build their resilience to the impacts of climate change and this includes action to avert, minimise and address loss and damage. This is reflected in the action we are taking through our COP26 and G7 Presidencies, where we will urge governments, the private sector, donors, and NGOs to scale up action and support, including in the areas of adaptation finance, disaster risk reduction and national planning. As COP26 President, our aim is to also operationalise the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage, which will help connect vulnerable countries with relevant technical assistance, knowledge and resources. We remain committed to doubling our International Climate Finance to £11.6 billion over the next five years and are the world's fourth largest humanitarian donor.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[179714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the \$100 billion climate finance goal, pledged by prosperous nations to help the poorest nations adapt to climate impacts, set in the Paris Agreement is (a) increased and (b) renewed at COP26.

James Duddridge:

The FCDO has made tackling climate change and biodiversity loss its number one international priority and delivering on our finance promises is a key part of this. In support of the Prime Minister's ambition for the G7 to demonstrate global leadership in responding to the climate crisis, the FCDO is calling for significantly increased action to support the most vulnerable to adapt and build resilience to the impacts of climate change. The UK has pledged to double its International Climate Finance to £11.6 billion from 2021-26 and we are urging the G7 and all other donors to be equally ambitious in their commitments.

■ Overseas Aid: Females

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[178617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what programmes run by his Department specifically support women and girls from marginalised religious or belief communities; and how much was spent by those programmes in 2020.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[179184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether supporting women and girls from marginalised religious and belief communities is a priority for his Department.

Wendy Morton:

We recognise that women and girls from religious minorities can often suffer because of both their gender and their faith. That is why we ensure our human rights policy work considers the intersectionality of human rights, for example the importance of addressing the specific vulnerabilities experienced by women and girls from religious minority communities. We have no programmes that specifically target women and girls from marginalised religious or belief communities but there are programmes that benefit these women and girls.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has publicly committed to retaining and building on the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/708116/Strategic-vision-gender-equality1.pdf) which sets out our commitment to leave no girl or woman behind, particularly those facing multiple exclusions including on the basis of their ethnicity, religion or belief.

■ Pakistan: Religious Freedom

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[\[178544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has prepared a written strategy for tackling freedom of religion or belief violations in Pakistan.

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[\[178545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to implement the recommendations of the all-party Parliamentary group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief's 2018 report on the treatment of different religious communities in Pakistan entitled Religious Minorities of Pakistan.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities around the globe. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the top priorities in our human rights strategy for Pakistan. The Government strongly condemns the persecution of all minorities, including the targeting of innocent people based on their beliefs.

We continue to urge the Government of Pakistan at senior levels to guarantee the fundamental rights of all its citizens, regardless of their religion or belief. Most recently my Ministerial colleague, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised the need to promote respect for all religions with Pakistan's Special Representative for Religious Harmony, Tahir Ashrafi, on 23 March 2021. He also raised our concerns on FoRB in Pakistan with the Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 20 February 2021.

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

Jim Shannon:

[\[179121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Pakistani counterpart on the introduction of legislation to tackle forced conversion.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls in Pakistan. We regularly raise our concerns on these issues with the Government of Pakistan. Most recently, the Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, with Pakistan's Special Representative for Religious Harmony, Tahir Ashrafi, on 23 March 2021. Lord Ahmad also raised these concerns with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 20 February 2021. Pakistan remains a FCDO Human Rights Priority Country.

■ **Palestinians: Coronavirus**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[178701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the use of covid-19 vaccinations that have been made available to the Palestinian Authority.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[178703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem that have received the covid-19 vaccination from the Government of Israel.

James Cleverly:

The UK is committed to global equitable access to effective vaccines as demonstrated by our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market

Commitment - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. We were pleased to note that the first shipment of over 60,000 doses from the COVAX scheme arrived in the OPTs on 17 March and that over 21,000 were sent to Gaza.

The British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem are in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively, and will continue to raise timely and appropriate access to COVID-19 vaccines.

■ **Palestinians: Detainees**

Layla Moran:

[\[179476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the reported detention of an eight-year-old and a ten-year-old by Israeli forces while the two children were playing near their house, what recent representations he has made to the Government of Israel about the detention of Palestinian children under the age of twelve.

Layla Moran:

[\[179477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports and video documentation of the arrest of five young Palestinian children aged 9-13 years who were reportedly interrogated and detained for approximately eight hours.

James Cleverly:

We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children. We remain concerned about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention which, according to international law, should be used only when security makes this absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children.

■ **Palestinians: Textbooks**

Marco Longhi:

[\[178714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress has been made on the international review of the content of Palestinian Authority school textbooks.

James Cleverly:

We understand the review is in the final stages and the final report is due to be completed shortly. We continue to engage with the EU at a senior level and push for timely publication. We will review the findings carefully before deciding on any next steps.

Papua New Guinea: Astrazeneca**Jim Shannon:**[\[178592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Australian counterpart on the effect of the EU's decision to apply export controls to the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine on the covid-19 situation in Papua New Guinea.

James Duddridge:

The Foreign Secretary has not discussed with his Australian counterpart the impact of the EU export control on the COVID-19 situation in Papua New Guinea. We will continue to work closely with Australia to ensure that COVAX remains as effective as possible in the Indo-Pacific region, including for Papua New Guinea. The first shipment of 132,000 AstraZeneca vaccine doses arrived in the country on 13 April.

Passenger Ships: Coronavirus**Royston Smith:**[\[179262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to revise the covid-19 travel advice on cruises.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO remains fully committed to working closely with the Department for Transport and key industry leaders following the publication of the second Global Travel Taskforce report. International cruises will restart alongside the wider restart of international travel, in line with the "traffic light" system. This will be subject to continued satisfactory evidence from the domestic restart and cruising in other countries. Travel advice will continue to be informed by the latest public health risk assessments.

For now, national restrictions on international travel remain in place, including only permitting travel abroad for a limited number of reasons set out in law. Holiday travel is not included.

Spain: British Nationals Abroad**Hilary Benn:**[\[178820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of UK citizens living in Spain who (a) have not applied for resident status and (b) may be required to return to the UK as result of not having obtained that status.

Wendy Morton:

Statistics from the Spanish government show that up to 31 December 2020, 381,448 UK nationals held a valid residence document in Spain. As Spain is operating a declaratory system under the Withdrawal Agreement, UK nationals and their family members who were lawfully resident before the end of the transition period do not need to apply for a new residence status to secure protection under the Withdrawal

Agreement. This is because their rights are conferred automatically by operation of the law.

While it is not a prerequisite to having status under the Withdrawal Agreement, UK nationals are encouraged to obtain the new residence document (Tarjeta de Identidad Extranjero) to evidence their rights. Pending the issuance of a new residence document, existing residence documents or other forms of proof can be used to evidence status under the Withdrawal Agreement. Up to 9 December 2020, 74,400 UK nationals in Spain had applied for the new resident document and 47,000 new residence documents had been issued.

The Spanish government has been clear that it has no plans to deport UK nationals who have made Spain their home. However, UK nationals present in Spain who do not fall within scope of the Withdrawal Agreement, EU law or Spain's domestic immigration rules will not have a legal basis to live in Spain. The Spanish government has confirmed they will take a pragmatic and proportionate approach towards ensuring that UK nationals who are required to return to the UK, do so in accordance with Spanish immigration rules.

■ Syria: Conflict Resolution

Claire Hanna:

[\[179653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent diplomatic steps his Department has taken in the effort to end the war in Syria.

James Cleverly:

The UK is committed to supporting efforts to bring an end to the Syria Conflict. The FCDO firmly believes that the only viable option for a lasting, inclusive peace in Syria is a political solution in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

The regime and its backers have obstructed the peace process thus far and the UK has played a key role in driving the international community to hold the Assad regime to account. In discussions with regional partners and in multilateral fora the UK stresses the primacy of the UN-led peace process and calls for coordinated pressure to bring the regime to the negotiating table.

On 15 March the UK coordinated a joint statement with the Foreign Ministers of Germany, France, Italy and the United States calling for the regime to seriously engage with the political process. Sanctions remain a key lever to bring the regime to the negotiating table too. On 15 March the UK, announced six new sanctions against members and supporters of the regime to hold them accountable. The UK will continue to build diplomatic pressure on the regime to drive engagement with the peace process and work to avoid another ten years of conflict.

■ Syria: Overseas Aid**Claire Hanna:**[\[179654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to announce the UK's allocation of 2021-22 overseas development assistance for Syria by the end of April 2021.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO is working to finalise ODA budget allocations for financial year 2021/22 and until that is done will not be able to confirm individual country allocations. Final decisions have not yet been made.

Dr Rupa Huq:[\[181075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what impact assessment he has undertaken on the reduction in Official Development Assistance to Syria in 2021; and if he will publish that assessment.

James Cleverly:

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the UK is facing its worst economic contraction in over 300 years. The UK government has taken the difficult, but temporary, decision to spend 0.5% of GNI on ODA in 2021. We are still working through what this means for individual programmes and no decisions have yet been made, however the provision of humanitarian support will continue to be a priority. This is why last month the UK pledged to provide at least £205 million to the Syria crisis in 2021, bringing our total commitment to the Syria conflict to £3.7 billion since 2012 - our largest ever response to a humanitarian crisis. The UK is proud of our role supporting millions of vulnerable Syrians with life-saving food, clean water, healthcare, education and livelihoods and our response so far is the UK's largest to a single humanitarian crisis.

■ Syria: Politics and Government**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[179015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the political and security situation in Syria.

James Cleverly:

Ten years of conflict has exacted a heavy toll on Syria and continues to have a destabilising impact on the region. Humanitarian access must be maintained through the renewal of UNSCR 2533, which provides vital cross-border aid access from Turkey into Syria, later this year.

We welcome that the ceasefires in the North East and North West are broadly holding, but are concerned by reports of Russian and regime airstrikes in the North West. Where the ceasefires are under pressure, we urge all parties to increase their efforts to adhere to them. There also remains a continued threat from Daesh and we will work the Global Coalition to counter further violent extremism.

We believe UNSCR 2254 offers a clear path out of the conflict. We must hold the regime accountable for its crimes, and we remain committed to alleviating the terrible cost of this war on Syrians.

■ Syria: War Crimes

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[179016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the people responsible for atrocities in Syria are held to account.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[179018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic or political pressure the Government is putting on the Syrian regime to reduce the atrocities committed in that country.

James Cleverly:

The UK remains steadfast in our pursuit for accountability for atrocities committed in Syria. We co-sponsored the UN General Assembly resolution which established the UN International Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), and we have contributed £1.2 million to support the mechanism so far.

We have supported the Commission for International Justice and Accountability to collect evidence and build cases for prosecution of perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity. These efforts have played a critical role in achieving the first conviction of a former member of Daesh, and the first court ruling worldwide over state-sponsored torture by the Assad regime in Koblenz, convicting Eyad al-Gharib for complicity in crimes against humanity in Syria.

We have contributed over £13 million since 2012 in support of Syrian and international efforts to gather evidence and assist victims of human rights abuses and violations. The UK drafts the UN Human Rights Council resolution on Syria, which was adopted in March, at the 46th Human Rights Council session. On 15 March, the UK announced six new sanctions; sending a clear message to the Assad regime: the UK will not stand by whilst the Regime and its backers continue to commit heinous crimes against the Syrian people.

■ Tigray: Armed Conflict

Felicity Buchan:

[\[179643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what further steps he plans to take to promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia prior to the forthcoming elections in that country.

James Duddridge:

We are deeply concerned about the fighting in Tigray and have consistently urged all parties to avoid conflict spill-over into neighbouring regions, prioritise the protection of civilians and security and allow unfettered humanitarian access. We have, and will

continue to advocate that a political process is essential to bring a full end to fighting and a sustainable settlement for Tigray. The Foreign Secretary raised these points when he met with Prime Minister Abiy on 22 January and pressed for a political dialogue to bring a lasting peace to Tigray. He also discussed the importance of credible elections in maintaining peace and stability. Ensuring security, freedom of the media and allowing political parties to organise and campaign are critical to credible elections. It is vital that the people of Tigray are represented by leadership which they consider to be legitimate. I also pressed for political dialogue to end the conflict when I spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador to the UK on 24 February.

Helen Hayes:

[181069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the validity of reports of starvation being used as a weapon of war in Tigray.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: The UK has been consistent in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights. We are concerned about the impact of the conflict on food security and nutrition in Tigray. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are delivering support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. A joint humanitarian and political team from the British Embassy in Addis Ababa visited Tigray 4-5 March and 4-7 April. They met with the provisional administration of Tigray, the Mayor of Mekelle, the Interim Head of Administration in Shire and with humanitarian agencies working in the region. They spoke directly to people displaced by violence and heard harrowing accounts of human rights violations. The team also saw UKAid work in action and learned of the challenges across Tigray.

Since the conflict started, the UK has consistently called for an end to fighting, and for all parties to the conflict to prioritise the protection of civilians. Currently 4.5 million are in need of food aid. I shared the UK's concerns on food security with the International Development Committee on 18 March. To date the UK has provided £19 million of badly needed support to people in Tigray.

■ Turkey: Politics and Government

Feryal Clark:

[179644]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Turkish counterpart on the undemocratic banning of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) for advocating for ethnic and religious minority rights in Turkey.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government expects Turkey, as a modern democracy, to undertake any legal processes against the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) transparently and with full respect for the rule of law. I raised these issues with the Turkish Ambassador on 30 March. Our Embassy in Ankara also engages regularly with the HDP to discuss

their concerns. We strongly support all minority groups in Turkey, and encourage the Turkish authorities to safeguard their welfare and respect their human rights.

■ **Ukraine: Russia**

Layla Moran:

[181414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions (a) he, (b) his Ministers and (c) his officials have had with representatives of (i) Ukraine and (ii) the Russian Federation on the escalating tensions on the border between those two countries.

Wendy Morton:

Russia's build-up of military forces near the Ukrainian border and within illegally annexed Crimea indicates a troubling escalation in its ongoing campaign of aggression towards Ukraine and its militarisation of the illegally annexed peninsula.

There has been regular Ministerial and senior official level engagement with the Government of Ukraine and with our allies on this issue. The Foreign Secretary and the Defence Secretary spoke to their Ukrainian counterparts on 2 April and the Prime Minister had discussions with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine on 5 April to assure them of the UK's unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

As a fellow Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, we engage directly with Russia on matters of international peace and security, including Ukraine. We continue to raise our concerns with the Russian government at every opportunity. On 15 April, the National Security Adviser spoke to his Russian counterpart, and the FCDO Permanent Under Secretary reiterated our concerns to the Russian Ambassador in London on the same day. Our Ambassador in Moscow has spoken to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, mostly recently on 16 April, to express our deep concern about the build-up of Russian troops and the Ukrainian border, to reiterate our call for Russia to de-escalate, and to underline our support for Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We will continue working closely with partners to monitor the situation, and consider all options.

■ **UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara**

Grahame Morris:

[181239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the UN Security Council to give MINURSO the legal mandate to monitor and report on human rights in the territories controlled by both the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Polisario and report the findings directly to the UN Security Council.

James Cleverly:

Human rights is a UK priority. We have consistently supported language in the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions which encourages the parties to continue

their efforts to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in Western Sahara.

■ **Western Sahara: Morocco**

Grahame Morris: [\[181240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the UN Security Council to send a fact finding mission to investigate the human rights of Saharawis in the (a) occupied territory and (b) prisons in Morocco.

James Cleverly:

Human rights is a UK priority. We have consistently supported language in the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions which encourages the parties to continue their efforts to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf camps. We have discussions with Morocco on human rights and prison conditions. The UK regards the status of Western Sahara as undetermined.

■ **Western Sahara: Non-governmental Organisations**

Grahame Morris: [\[181238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the UN Security Council to insist on unfettered media and humanitarian NGO access to the occupied territory of Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

The UK regards the status of Western Sahara as undetermined. The UK strongly supported UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2548 on 30 October 2020, which renewed the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for 12 months. In doing so, we continue to stress the importance of improving the human rights situation in Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps, and encourage the parties to work with the international community to develop and implement independent and credible measures to ensure full respect for human rights, bearing in mind their relevant obligations under international law.

■ **Western Sahara: Politics and Government**

Ben Lake: [\[179380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2021 to Questions 151799 and 160768 on Western Sahara: Politics and Government, if will he ask the UN Secretary-General when the UN Commission announced in 2016 on the situation in Guerguerat plans to publish a report.

James Cleverly:

UN reports on Western Sahara can be found on the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) website:
<https://minurso.unmissions.org/secretary-general-reports>

Ben Lake:

[914477]

What recent discussions he has had with his Moroccan counterpart on the UN designated Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

We continue to closely monitor the situation in Western Sahara. We call upon the parties to show restraint in order to avoid further escalation, to return to the ceasefire agreement, and to re-engage with the UN-led political process.

I also spoke to Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita in January, including to discuss Western Sahara. I reaffirmed the UK's commitment to the UN-led process, to find a lasting and mutually acceptable solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

We strongly support the UN Secretary-General's efforts to appoint a Personal Envoy for Western Sahara. We call upon the parties to engage constructively with the UN.

■ **Western Sahara: Sovereignty**

Navendu Mishra:

[181463]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2021 to Question 141623 on Western Sahara: Sovereignty, whether it is his policy that the status of Western Sahara is as a Non-Self-Governing Territory in the process of decolonisation.

James Cleverly:

As the Foreign Secretary stated on 11 December 2020, the UK regards the status of Western Sahara as undetermined. We take note of the UN's position on the status of Western Sahara, which is set out on its website:

<https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsgt/western-sahara>

Navendu Mishra:

[181464]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2021 to Question 141623 on Western Sahara: Sovereignty, what assessment he has made of whether the exercise of self-determination includes the option of independence.

James Cleverly:

The UK supports UN-led efforts to reach a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. It is for the parties to the dispute to agree a resolution on the final status of Western Sahara. We encourage the parties to re-engage with the UN-led political process.

■ **Western Sahara: Trade Agreements**

Ben Lake:

[179379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March to Questions 151798 and 160767 on Western Sahara:

Trade Agreements, whether the consultations included seeking the consent of the UN recognised representatives of the Saharawi people, the Polisario.

James Cleverly:

The European Commission's report, which includes the list of stakeholders consulted, including the Polisario Front, can be found here: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=SWD:2018:346:FIN&from=FR\(opens%20in%20a%20new%20tab\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=SWD:2018:346:FIN&from=FR(opens%20in%20a%20new%20tab))

■ **Yemen: Armed Conflict**

Andrew Rosindell:

[178880]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions officials in his Department have had with their Saudi Arabian counterparts on the plan to offer a ceasefire to the Houthi rebels.

James Cleverly:

We welcomed the Saudi announcement on 22 March of a new peace initiative, which includes a nationwide ceasefire, the opening of Sana'a airport and Hodeidah port, and a return to formal peace talks between the Government and the Houthis. This is an important step towards peace, and we urge the parties to the conflict to engage constructively with the Saudis and UN Special Envoy Griffiths.

On 22 March the Foreign Secretary discussed the new peace initiative with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, and expressed his full support of Saudi peace efforts. We will continue to engage closely with the Saudis, the UN and all our international partners to push for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

■ **Yemen: Military Intervention**

Layla Moran:

[R] [181417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the naval and air blockade of Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The critical Red Sea ports of Hodeidah and Salif remain operational and the majority of Yemen's imports are getting in. On fuel imports, the UK alongside other international partners successfully lobbied the Yemeni Government to release seven fuel ships into Hodeidah in recent weeks, and I discussed this matter with Yemeni Foreign Minister Bin Mubarak on 24 March. The majority of access constraints faced by nine million Yemenis are, however, in Houthi-held areas according to the UN. We are clear that humanitarian aid must not be used as a political tool and we call on all parties to facilitate unhindered access for commercial and humanitarian actors.

The Houthis must work constructively with the UN and the Yemeni Government to negotiate a longer-term solution on Hodeidah port and bring an end to the conflict.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Bipolar Disorder: Suicide**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[179324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the high suicide rate among people with bipolar disorder.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, we are introducing new models of care which will, by 2023/24, give 370,000 adults with a severe mental illness such as bipolar disorder greater choice and control over their care and support them to live well in their communities. We are also investing £57million in suicide prevention through the Plan.

On 27 March, we published our COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan, backed by £500 million to support people's mental health in 2021/22. £58 million of this will be used to accelerate the community mental health framework to treat adults with severe mental illness. The recovery action plan also includes £6 million to boost support for specific suicide prevention work, with £1 million for NHS England and NHS Improvement's work on suicide prevention and £5 million to support voluntary sector organisations that prevent suicide in the community.

■ **Brain: Injuries**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[178912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Defence on traumatic brain injuries affecting (a) serving personnel and (b) veterans.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There have been no recent discussions.

■ **Brain: Tumours**

Carla Lockhart:

[\[180653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to research on the causes and treatment of brain tumours.

Edward Argar:

In May 2018 the Government announced £40 million over five years for brain tumour research as part of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). Brain tumours is a difficult research area with a relatively small research community. We are taking actions to grow the field, such as workshops for researchers and research training for clinicians.

The NIHR released a public announcement to the research community in April 2018, making clear our desire to receive brain tumour research funding applications. We are relying on researchers to submit high-quality research proposals. All applications that were fundable in open competition have been funded. The NIHR welcomes

funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including brain tumours.

■ **BSL Health Access: Finance**

Rosie Cooper: [\[178932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the funding for BSL Health Access; and if he will make a statement.

Rosie Cooper: [\[178933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that deaf British Sign Language users have access to be able to communicate with health providers 24 hours per day, seven days a week.

Helen Whately:

The Department has not made a recent assessment of the potential merits of extending the funding for the British Sign Language (BSL) Health Access service. NHS England and NHS Improvement have commissioned a rapid review into access to BSL interpretation in the National Health Service which is near completion. The review will set out clear steps to support NHS providers to meet their responsibilities to deliver access to BSL interpretation.

All NHS providers must comply with the public sector equality duty set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the Accessible Information Standard to ensure that deaf people who wish to communicate using BSL can do so. NHS England and NHS Improvement have extended access to BSL interpretation of their 111 service via Interpreter Now.

■ **Cancer: Greater London**

Sam Tarry: [\[179674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) tackle the backlog of cancer screenings and (b) shorten the referral time for treatment for patients in north east London.

Jo Churchill:

Bowel screening in London is within national standards while cervical screening services are expected to recover its sample deficit by July 2021. The YouScreen cervical self-sampling project is also taking place within some practices in north east London to support increase in coverage. We are also looking to increase the offer of choice for cervical sampling options for women through expanding commissioning of cervical screening in sexual health services. Breast screening services in north east London are expected to tackle their backlogs by March 2022.

We have invested £1 billion to help the NHS recover from the pandemic and begin to address backlogs in elective care, with cancer care a key priority. Decisions on funding affecting patients in North East London are being made at local levels.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[179411]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has provided to care homes on ensuring that residents are able to receive family member visits on a regular basis as lockdown restrictions are eased during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

Updated guidance was published on 6 April which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>

Every care home should ensure that each resident can nominate up to two named people who can have regular, indoor visits. Residents with higher care needs can also nominate an 'essential care giver'. They will be able to visit more often in order to provide essential care. They will have the same testing and personal protective equipment arrangements as care home staff so that they can also provide extra support.

■ Cerebral Palsy: Children

Greg Smith:

[178653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the all-party Parliamentary group on cerebral palsy's report, Early identification, intervention and pathways of care of infants and young children with cerebral palsy: The case for reform and investment, published in March 2021, what steps he is taking to increase the (a) size and (c) capacity of the health visiting workforce.

Jo Churchill:

Local authorities are responsible for commissioning public health services for 0 to five year olds. The skill mix in any area will vary depending on local needs and therefore the number and ratio of health visitors to support staff will vary. To help increase the health visiting workforce, a Specialist Community and Public Health Nurse apprenticeship (Level 7) is now available, offering an alternative route direct into the health visiting profession.

■ Coronavirus

Philip Davies:

[178961]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were admitted from the community into NHS hospitals specifically for the treatment of covid-19 symptoms, as opposed to being discovered to be infected after admission, from 1 March 2020 to 1 August 2020; and of those so admitted, how many were (i) admitted from a care home and (ii) readmitted after prior discharge from hospital with a covid-19 diagnosis.

Edward Argar:

This data is not held centrally.

■ Coronavirus: Death**Jon Trickett:** [\[146780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS workers have died from covid-19 (a) in total and (b) since 1 January 2021.

Helen Whately:

The Office for National Statistics' data for deaths involving COVID-19 for healthcare workers in England showed that there were 380 deaths registered between 9 March to 28 December 2020 in England, of those aged 20-64 years old, using their last known occupation. The definition of healthcare workers used will include not only those employed in the National Health Service but also wider healthcare sector workers.

Mr Steve Baker: [\[R\] \[181262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the proportion of fatal covid-19 infections that were acquired in (a) healthcare and (b) social care settings; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Data on the number of deaths from COVID-19 following a definite healthcare acquired infection is not routinely collected.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[180434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the timescale for herd immunity to covid-19 being reached in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has not made an assessment.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Records**Justin Madders:** [\[179197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to extend the notice made under Regulation 3(4) of the Health Service (Control of Patient Information) Regulations 2002 (COPI) requiring NHS Digital to share confidential patient information for purposes relating to the outbreak of covid-19 beyond September 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

It is important that health and care organisations can continue to make the best use of data to respond to COVID-19 and as such the notices will be reviewed and extended as appropriate to ensure this is the case.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Hilary Benn:

[\[172884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of complaints received on the late delivery of covid-19 Day 2 and Day 8 tests to people in quarantine at home by Live Covid Testing.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: This information is not held centrally.

Hilary Benn:

[\[172885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on whether people in travel quarantine at home who are sent covid-19 Day 2 and Day 8 tests by Live Covid Testing are told to keep a record of the barcode attached to those tests before sending those tests back to Live Covid Testing in case that barcode information is subsequently needed for identification purposes.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: This information is not held centrally.

Hilary Benn:

[\[172886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on how many covid-19 Day 2 and Day 8 tests sent out by Live Covid Testing to people undergoing travel quarantine at home have not been processed on return to Live Covid Testing as a result of a lack of barcode information relating to those tests; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: This information is not held centrally.

Emma Hardy:

[\[178725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing mandatory covid-19 tests for people that have received fines for breaking the national covid-19 lockdown rules.

Jo Churchill:

We have made no such assessment.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[139970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it the policy of the NHS to collect multi-dose vaccine phials which have been used at vaccination hubs so that they can be sterilised for reuse.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: As set out in the COVID-19 Waste Management Standard Operating Procedure, vaccine vials contaminated with pharmaceuticals are

classified as medicinal waste and should be disposed of accordingly. We have no plans to amend this guidance.

Tulip Siddiq: [142033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review the decision to change the dosing schedule for the Pfizer/ BioNTech covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 27 January 2021]: Whilst there are currently no plans to change the dosage interval for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, or for the other vaccine presently being deployed, this is kept under review.

Sarah Champion: [146900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of prioritising children under 16 with Down's Syndrome for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), children aged under 16 years old, including those with Down's Syndrome, are not included for routine vaccination. Overall, there is a relatively low risk to children from COVID-19 and very limited existing data on vaccination in adolescents, with no data on vaccination in younger children. The evidence does not yet support recommending children should be routinely vaccinated. However, the JCVI's current advice is that only those children at very high risk of exposure and serious outcomes, such as older children with severe neuro-disabilities that require residential care, should be offered vaccination.

Decisions on vaccination, including for COVID-19, are ultimately for the clinician leading on an individual's care. The JCVI advises that where vaccination is considered for someone under 16 years old, clinicians should discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with a person with parental responsibility.

Claudia Webbe: [148963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on the covid-19 vaccine rollout of the British Medical Journal report, Covid-19: Reports from Israel suggest one dose of Pfizer vaccine could be less effective than expected, published on 22 January 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has not made an assessment of the named British Medical Journal report.

An independent assessment of the data from Israel, published by the Norwich Medical School, concluded that estimated vaccine effectiveness is zero 14 days after vaccination, this rose to about 90% at day 21, before levelling off. Further information is available at the following link:

www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.02.01.21250957v1.full

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has not undertaken a specific assessment. The JCVI's position is that there is high efficacy with the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine. The JCVI continues to advise two doses of the vaccine, with a three to 12 week interval.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[154863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including Registered Public Service Interpreters in the list of occupations the Government classes as key workers for the purposes of priority access to covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: No such assessment has been made. If Registered Public Service Interpreters are captured in phase one or two due to age or clinical need, then they will be vaccinated accordingly. However, there are currently no plans to vaccinate by occupation.

Sir Alan Campbell:

[\[178836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to introduce mandatory covid-19 vaccinations for NHS workers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There are currently no plans to introduce mandatory vaccinations for National Health Service staff, with uptake estimated to be around 85% amongst NHS trust healthcare workers in the latest data published by NHS England.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[179068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2021 to Question 158991 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of prioritising special school staff for receipt of covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) advice, special school staff will not be prioritised for a COVID-19 vaccination based on their occupation. Special school staff will be prioritised for vaccination according to their age and clinical risk along with the rest of the population. There are currently no plans to deviate from the JCVI's advice on prioritisation.

Darren Jones:

[\[179370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of covid-19 vaccine prioritisation for people who are visually impaired and unable to manage social distancing in all circumstances.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Visual impairment is not a risk factor for clinically more serious outcomes from COVID-19. Therefore, those with a visual impairment are not prioritised on the basis of this condition. However, some visually impaired individuals who are aged 50 years

old and above or who meet the criteria for one of the nine priority groups will have been prioritised in phase one, in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's advice.

Janet Daby:

[\[179541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to GP surgeries' role in delivering the flu vaccine, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of prioritising GP surgeries to provide the covid-19 vaccine over 24-hour vaccination centres specially-created.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There are no plans to make such an assessment.

We will continue to pilot extended opening hours but there are no current plans to open vaccination sites 24 hours per day. We will keep this under review based on patient and staff feedback.

Paula Barker:

[\[179661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to prioritise students for covid-19 vaccinations during summer 2021 before their departure to universities in the UK and across Europe as part of the Turin scheme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There are currently no plans to prioritise students as a group. Students aged 18 years old or over will be prioritised on grounds of age in phase two of the COVID-19 vaccine programme if they have not been vaccinated as part of phase one.

Vaccination is not currently routinely recommended for those aged 16-17 years old and is not recommended for those under 16 years old except in specific limited circumstances. We are on track to offer a first dose of COVID-19 vaccination to all those aged 18 years old or over by 31 July.

Nadia Whittome:

[\[179726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will prioritise staff in schools for children with learning difficulties for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has concluded that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age, as age is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations and the speed of delivery is crucial as we provide more people with protection from COVID-19.

In line with the JCVI's advice, special school staff will not be prioritised for a COVID-19 vaccination based on their occupation. Staff in schools for children with learning disabilities, will therefore be prioritised for vaccination according to their age and clinical risk along with the rest of the population, rather than on the basis of occupation.

Jim Shannon:

[180499]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether certain variants of covid-19 are less susceptible to vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

All currently deployed COVID-19 vaccines in the United Kingdom are effective against the prevalent strains in the country.

Public Health England has published early estimates of vaccine effectiveness which includes the United Kingdom variant of concern VOC202012/01 and has shown no substantial change in vaccine effectiveness against this variant, which is now the dominant strain of COVID-19 in the UK. If other emerging variants do reduce vaccine efficacy, it would still be anticipated that the vaccines currently in deployment would continue to provide protection to some extent.

The Government are already taking several steps to understand the efficacy of the current UK vaccine portfolio against new and emerging virus variants. This includes a partnership with CureVac to develop a variation of an existing vaccine tailored to the most appropriate variant target.

■ Dementia: Research

Rosie Cooper:

[178931]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on dementia research; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

No specific assessment has been made. However, the Department's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) published a framework in May 2020 to support the restarting of research, including dementia research, paused due to COVID-19 which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/restart-framework/24886>

■ Dental Services

Emma Hardy:

[179409]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) standard of dental health and (b) potential effect on people's dental health of the ability of dental practices to de-register patients without notice leaving those patients to rely on 111 services in the event that urgent treatment is required.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made.

Continuous registration with dental practices is no longer required for a patient to access NHS services. Patients are only registered with a dental practice during the course of their treatment.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Barry Gardiner:**[\[178765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many answers to written parliamentary questions in respect of NHS Track and Trace were drafted by Deloitte.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 April 2021]: As part of their work in helping respond to the pandemic, Deloitte have provided support to civil servants answering Written Questions where required.

Information on the number of questions which have contributions by Deloitte could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Dermatology: Waiting Lists**James Wild:**[\[179617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients with (a) psoriasis and (b) atopic dermatitis were waiting longer than 18 weeks for care at the end of (i) 2018 (ii) 2019 and (iii) 2020.

Helen Whately:

Data is not held centrally in the format requested.

■ Disability: Children**Rosie Cooper:**[\[178957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report by the Disabled Children's Partnership, entitled The Loneliest Lockdown, published on 29 March 2021, what steps his Department plans to take to tackle the disproportionate level of mental health issues affecting disabled children and their families.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 April 2021]: On 23 November 2020 we published a Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19, setting out the steps we have taken to strengthen the mental health support available including for disabled children and their families.

On 5 March 2021, we announced that £79 million of the additional £500 million for mental health announced at the November 2020 Spending Review will be used to significantly expand mental health services for children, including disabled children. As part of the £500 million, £31 million will also be used to address particular challenges faced by individuals with a learning disability and autistic people, including for community respite services for children and young people and their families.

■ Diseases

Dan Jarvis:

[\[180985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people diagnosed with (a) cancer, (b) respiratory diseases, (c) motor-neurone diseases, and (d) type 2 diabetes in (i) Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and (ii) the UK in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: The data is not available in the format requested.

Data is collected based on finished admission episodes, rather than the number of people.

■ Eating Disorders

Ian Mearns:

[\[179037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of covid-19 restrictions on the prevalence of diagnosed eating disorders in the UK.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made.

Ian Mearns:

[\[179039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to (a) reduce the number of people with eating disorders and (b) tackle the stigma attached to people who suffer from conditions such as bulimia and anorexia.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In 2021/22 the National Health Service will receive approximately an extra £500 million, which will support people with a variety of mental health conditions, including eating disorders. This will include programmes to significantly expand children's mental health services, including allowing 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services and accelerating the expansion of integrated primary and secondary care for adults with severe mental illness, including eating disorders. NHS England has also announced additional early intervention services for young people aged 16 to 25 years old with eating disorders in 18 areas across the country, so young adults seeking support could be contacted within 48 hours and begin treatment within two weeks

■ Endometriosis: Research

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[180520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding his Department has allocated for research into the (a) causes of and (b) treatment for endometriosis.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In the last five financial years to 2019-20, the National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation have awarded £8.52 million for research into endometriosis.

Food: Health**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[180402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the health effects of increases in portion sizes of food sold by supermarkets.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has not undertaken a formal assessment.

Health Services and Social Services: Standards**Geraint Davies:**[\[181177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's policy paper entitled *Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all*, published on 11 February 2021, what discussions officials in his Department have had with (a) representatives of professional organisations working with children and young people, (b) charities and voluntary organisations working with children and young people, and (c) children and young people and their families and carers on the (i) themes and (ii) proposals contained in that paper.

Edward Argar:

The recommendations in this paper build on close engagement with more than 100 stakeholders representing all parts of the health and care system. Officials have recently met with the National Children's Bureau to discuss the paper's proposals for integrating care and will continue to have discussions with a range of stakeholders representing children and young people, their families and carers and other patient groups.

Health Services: Females**Sarah Champion:**[\[179130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of split commissioning on the effectiveness of women's health services in England; and whether he plans to recommend changes to the current system through the forthcoming women's health strategy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made.

All evidence regarding commissioning of services will be carefully considered as part of our ongoing work on the strategy.

■ Health Services: Infectious Diseases

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[160520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prevent pseudomonas from occurring in health care environments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[160521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the equipment available to eradicate (a) pseudomonas and (b) legionella type bacteria in water systems in health care environments; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 March 2021]: The Healthcare Safety Investigations Branch (HSIB) is studying the safety of oxygen systems in relation to COVID-19 but NHS England and NHS Improvement are not aware of any current safety incidents related to Pseudomonas or Legionella type bacteria. Each healthcare provider is expected to have a water safety policy and plan, covering both Legionella and Pseudomonas aeruginosa, which is monitored by their water safety group. This group should include infection prevention and control subject matter experts as part of its membership.

These water safety policies and plans will specify the requirements for the design, installation and commissioning of equipment and water testing which includes a risk stratification for clinical areas based upon national guidance. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hot-and-cold-water-supply-storage-and-distribution-systems-for-healthcare-premises>

This draws together and updates the previous guidance and includes recommendations for the safe management of water systems and how to manage and minimise the risks to health from various aspects including those presented by Pseudomonas and Legionella bacteria.

■ Health Services: Sign Language

Daisy Cooper:

[179580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of British Sign Language (BSL) interpretations services for deaf people accessing health services since funding was withdrawn for the BSL Health Access app on 1 April 2021.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 April 2021]: NHS England and Improvement have commissioned a rapid review into access to British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation in NHS services which is near completion.

The BSL Health Access App was established independently of the National Health Service by SignHealth in April 2020, as part of the charity's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It provided additional access to BSL interpretation, in addition to services already provided by the NHS. NHS England and NHS Improvement have extended access to BSL interpretation of their 111 service via Interpreter Now.

■ Health Services: South Yorkshire

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [\[180981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2021 to Question 168937 on Health Services: South Yorkshire, when he plans to publish the South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Integrated Care System boundary review.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently undertaking this boundary review exercise and no final decisions have yet been made. As this work progresses, engagement with local areas will take place including with National Health Service bodies, local authorities and other stakeholders in the affected areas in order to appropriately assess any potential effects a change of integrated care system boundaries in an area may have, this will include consideration of any potential impact on services, patient wellbeing and staff.

■ Heart Diseases and Strokes: Research

Jim Shannon:

[\[178606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what research is being undertaken on personalised medicine to detect genes that make people more vulnerable to strokes and heart attacks.

Jo Churchill:

The Centre for Cardiovascular Genetics group at University College London has focused on genes coding for key proteins that are involved in lipid and lipoprotein metabolism in the control of thrombosis and haemostasis. The Institute for Cardiovascular and Metabolic research at the University of Reading is investigating mechanisms responsible for the influence of common gene on the cardiovascular phenotype

The University of Cambridge has recently completed the first major study into genetics of lacunar stroke. This type of stroke affects the small blood vessels in the brain and causes 25% of strokes and is the major cause of vascular dementia. The United Kingdom is carrying out a number of projects to look at other genes causing familial stroke including the National Health Service funded 100,000 Genomes project.

■ In Vitro Fertilisation: Homosexuality

Tim Loughton:

[\[178755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of giving same sex couples the same rights as heterosexual couples to access IVF treatment.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 April 2021]: In England, decisions about local fertility services are determined by clinical commissioning groups, taking account of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) fertility guidelines.

The NICE guidelines were updated in 2013 to include provision for same sex female couples, who have demonstrated their clinical infertility. The criteria in the guidelines were developed as a way of achieving equivalence between opposite-sex and same-sex couples in establishing clinical infertility and accessing National Health Service fertility treatment services. The guidelines are now due for review and the Department has started discussions with NICE about plans for such a review.

■ Learning Disability: Nurses

Gareth Thomas:

[\[178631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many nurses were employed by the NHS in learning disabilities care settings in each year since 2010; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

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

The following table shows the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) HCHS nurses working in learning disability care settings from September 2010 to September 2020.

	NURSES (FTE)
September 2010	5,137
September 2011	4,667
September 2012	4,311
September 2013	4,035
September 2014	3,776
September 2015	3,577
September 2016	3,442

	NURSES (FTE)
September 2017	3,305
September 2018	3,234
September 2019	3,171
September 2020	3,221

Source: NHS Digital, NHS HCHS workforce statistics.

■ Maternity Services

Dan Jarvis: [\[181274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Minister for Woman and Equalities on the effect on women's well-being of not having a partner attend due to public health restrictions on (a) maternity, (b) neonatal and (c) post-natal appointments for women in the UK.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There have been no recent discussions.

■ Medical Equipment: Innovation

Dean Russell: [\[179638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to support the (a) adoption and (b) spread of innovative medical technology across the NHS.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHSX's NHS Artificial Intelligence (AI) Laboratory is supporting the testing, evaluation and scale of promising AI-driven technologies through the £140 million AI in Health and Care Award. This includes automating early lung cancer detection and developing deep learning software that could improve the NHS Breast Screening Programme.

Last year, we announced the Digital Aspirant Fund to support National Health Service providers. The Digital Aspirant programme with investment of £28 million aims to accelerate the procurement, deployment and uptake of the technology that is needed to underpin digital transformation.

■ Medicine: Education

Daisy Cooper: [\[179579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) medical students and (b) final year medical students; and what plans he has to provide support to those students.

Helen Whately:

We have worked with Department for Education, Health Education England and the Medical Schools Council throughout the pandemic to ensure the continuity of undergraduate medical training. Exams will take place in 2021, meaning most final year medical students are on course to graduate and start work as foundation doctors in August. We will keep this under review.

The Government has also worked to ensure that students have ongoing access to mental health and wellbeing support services. Medical students have access to the wellbeing offer for all National Health Service staff, as well as to Student Space, a mental health and wellbeing platform, which has received £3 million of Office for Students' funding. In addition, the Government has made an additional £85 million of funding available to support students across all courses facing financial hardship. Medical students can continue to access their NHS bursary funding if in an eligible year of their course and student finance as usual and should discuss any requirement for hardship funding with their medical school.

Members: Correspondence**Alison Thewliss:**[\[156450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his oral contribution of 2 February 2021, Official Report column 856, when the Chief Medical Officer plans to respond to the letter of the hon. Member for Glasgow Central on covid-19 and vaccination.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: The Chief Medical Officer responded to the hon. Member on 12 April 2021.

Multiple Births**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[178914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 March 2020 to Question 157977 on Antenatal Care, what assurances he is providing to families who give birth to multiples in units in England and Wales that they will be seen by a multidisciplinary team of doctors, midwives and sonographers who are experts in twin pregnancies.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Women who are pregnant with more than one baby should expect to be seen by a multidisciplinary team of doctors, midwives and sonographers who are experts in twin pregnancies. The fetal medicine clinics which are being established will standardise this type of care and make it available in every part of England.

■ NHS Test and Trace: Consultants

Steve Reed:

[\[140109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average daily cost is of a consultant employed to support NHS Test and Trace; how many consultants are employed to support NHS Test and Trace; and how many days in total of consultancy time were contracted by his Department to support NHS Test and Trace.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The actual average cost per day to the Department for a consultant is £1,100 per day and approximately 2,500 consultants are currently employed on NHS Test and Trace. Information on the number of days in total of consultancy time contracted to support NHS Test and Trace is not collected in the format requested.

■ NHS: Oxygen

Justin Madders:

[\[179195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the second interim bulletin published by Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch on 25 March 2021 entitled Oxygen issues during the covid-19 pandemic, what plans he has to issue guidance on the (a) role, (b) function and (c) key attendees of medical gas committees.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have already commenced work on guidance which will clarify the role, function and key attendees of medical gas committees which will be published shortly.

■ Nurses: Recruitment

Catherine West:

[\[174202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the announcement by the Prime Minister in July 2020 of funding to deliver 50,000 more nurses by 2025, how many of those nursing vacancies (a) have been filled and (b) remain.

Helen Whately:

The information on number of vacancies filled is not held in the format requested as individual vacancies are not collected centrally, only aggregate numbers. However, overall trends show that nursing staff numbers are increasing therefore we are on track to deliver 50,000 more nurses by end of this Parliament.

Catherine West:

[\[174206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's target to recruit 50,000 more nurses, announced in July 2020, how many new nursing vacancies have been fulfilled since that announcement; and how many of those new nurses have been retained.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 13 April 2021]: The information on number of vacancies filled is not held in the format requested as individual vacancies are not collected centrally, only aggregate numbers. However, overall trends show that nursing staff numbers are increasing therefore we are on track to deliver 50,000 more nurses by end of this Parliament.

■ Nurses: Training**Barry Gardiner:**[\[178764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what measures his Department has put in place for healthcare workers who are shielding from covid-19 and unable to complete their three year nursing revalidation.

Helen Whately:

As the independent regulator of nurses and midwives in the United Kingdom and nursing associates in England, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is responsible for nurse revalidation.

On 30 March 2020, the Department laid a statutory instrument allowing the NMC to respond to the pandemic by adapting some of its operating procedures. To support registrants due to revalidate from March 2020, the NMC has extended revalidation timeframes and broadened the criteria for demonstrating continuing professional development. These changes aim to minimise the incidence of lapsed registrations during COVID-19 whilst maintaining public safety and confidence in the nursing profession.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Screening**Jim Shannon:**[\[171603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of skin swab testing for early diagnosis of Parkinson's disease.

Helen Whately:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), as the independent body with responsibility for developing evidence-based guidance for the health and care system, has not made an assessment.

■ Physician Associates: Regulation**Anne Marie Morris:**[\[179125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals on the regulation of physician associates.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 April 2021]: The Government is committed to bringing physician associates (PAs) and anaesthesia associates (AAs) into statutory regulation.

We are currently consulting on proposals to modernise each of the healthcare professional regulators' legal frameworks and on the proposed approach to introducing statutory regulation for PAs and AAs. A separate consultation on the draft legislation that will bring this framework into force will be carried out later this year.

The reforms will update the General Medical Council's (GMC) current legislation and will enable it to bring PAs and AAs into regulation under its new, modernised framework. We are working with the GMC to ensure that regulation of PAs and AAs begins as early as possible in the second half of 2022.

■ **Pregnancy: Mental Health Services**

Zarah Sultana:

[179612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the need for perinatal mental health services with reference to the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No formal assessment has been made.

All specialist and inpatient perinatal mental health services have remained open during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions delivering digital and remote support. Since 1 April 2020, general practitioners are required to offer a maternal postnatal consultation at six to eight weeks after birth, focusing on a review of the mother's physical and mental health and general wellbeing. This service has also continued throughout the pandemic.

Zarah Sultana:

[179613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of publishing a minimum standard of mental healthcare and support for (a) pregnant women and (b) mothers of young infants.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made.

■ **Prescription Drugs: Misuse**

Danny Kruger:

[179700]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations of the 2019 PHE Prescribed Medicines Review, when he plans to introduce a dedicated national helpline and website to support people with prescribed drug dependence.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are leading a programme of work in response to the recommendations in Public Health England's 'Dependence and withdrawal associated with some prescribed medicines: An evidence review'. The recommendation for a time-limited dedicated national helpline and website is being carefully considered as part of this work.

■ Sheltered Housing: Older People

Kim Johnson:

[\[179650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve housing-based social care provision for older people.

Kim Johnson:

[\[179651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what further steps officials in his Department plan to take with officials in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to increase housing-with-care provision for older people.

Helen Whately:

Housing-with-care has a vital role in enabling older people to live independently, with the necessary care and support available if required. Both the Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government provide capital funding to incentivise their supply. Both Departments are working closely together to improve the diversity of housing options available to older people, including housing-with-care and are engaging with the sector and a range of other stakeholders on this issue.

■ Social Services: Staff

Layla Moran:

[\[179470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to create a social care workforce strategy to regulate fluctuations in agency rates.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 April 2021]: The vast majority of care workers, including agency workers, are employed by private organisations who set their pay. Both the National Minimum Wage and the National Living Wage apply across social care and we expect local authorities to work with providers to determine a fair rate of pay.

■ Surgery: Foetuses

Mary Glendon:

[\[180494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many surgeries were performed by the NHS on foetuses under 20 weeks' gestation in each year for the last five years; and how many (a) of those surgeries and (b) surgeries on foetuses over 20 weeks' gestation used fetal pain relief.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold the information requested.

■ Surgery: Waiting Lists**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[181461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to reduce the backlog for operations and enable NHS staff to take all allocated their annual leave in 2021.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked local services to draw up plans to tackle the elective backlog, while taking into account staff wellbeing. An additional £1 billion funding has been made available to the National Health Service in 2021-22 to support the start of the recovery of elective activity, to reduce patient waiting times.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have issued planning guidance for 2021-22 which prioritises 'looking after our people and helping them to recover'. This includes encouraging NHS trusts to offer flexibility for staff to take time off to recover, to allow staff to carry over all unused annual leave, or to buy back unused leave.

■ UK Health Security Agency**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[178729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the UK Health and Security Agency will be subject to accountability through the Intelligence and Security Committee.

Jo Churchill:

As an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, the UK Health and Security Agency is accountable to the Department.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[178731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the UK Health and Security Agency will receive data from the Joint Biosecurity Centre.

Jo Churchill:

The Joint Biosecurity Centre will become part of the UK Health and Security Agency, bringing its cutting-edge capabilities in data analysis.

HOME OFFICE**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Children****Daisy Cooper:**[\[179567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the recommendations in the report by Alcohol Change UK, entitled Effective age-gating for online alcohol sales, published on 9 June 2020, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing the technical measures included in those recommendations for protecting children from the harm of alcohol.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to improving internet safety for all and the protection of children from harms related to alcohol use.

It is illegal to sell age-restricted products to underage consumers whether that is offline or online. We expect all retailers to have suitable policies in place to ensure this is the case.

In March, we launched a call for proposals to explore how technology can improve or enhance achieving the licensing objectives for the sale of alcohol, including age verification. Controlled trials will help to ensure that the government supports the needs of businesses and customers whilst ensuring the right protections are in place for young and vulnerable people in the sale of alcohol.

The Government has now published its first working version of the digital ID and attributes trust framework. We will continue to work with industry and civil society to develop standards that lead to improved age verification checks both in retail stores and online.

■ Animal Experiments**Henry Smith:**[\[178554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the Government's long-term strategy is for phasing out the use of animals in scientific procedures as non-animal technologies are further developed; and if she will publish that strategy.

Kevin Foster:

It is too soon to impose a timetable on phasing out the use of animals of animals in those areas of scientific enquiry that are delivering benefits to people, animals and the environment.

The UK's rigorous regulatory system requires that no animal testing takes place if there is a validated non-animal alternative that would achieve the scientific outcomes sought. Prior to any work being authorised, project licence proposals for research on animals for which there is no non-animal alternative must comply fully with the principles of the 3Rs: replacement, reduction and refinement.

Henry Smith:[\[178568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking towards the full replacement of procedures on live animals for scientific and educational purposes.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government is committed to maintaining high standards of animal welfare where procedures are undertaken on live animals for scientific or educational purposes. It champions the work of the National Centre for the Replacement, Reduction and Refinement of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) in supporting the research community to develop and use science and technology in the creation of new approaches to replace studies that require animals.

Central to any decision to use animals in research is the need for robust scientific evidence to justify the use of animals. The UK's rigorous regulatory system requires that no testing takes place if there is a validated non-animal alternative that would achieve the scientific outcomes sought. Project licence proposals for research on animals for which there is no non-animal alternative must comply fully with the principles of the 3Rs: replacement, reduction and refinement.

■ Asylum

Jim Shannon:

[\[180498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that proposed changes to asylum policy do not lead to the stigmatisation of people who enter the UK illegally to claim asylum.

Kit Malthouse:

The New Plan for Immigration published on 24th March set out the intended reforms to the end-to-end asylum system. We stand by the principle that people in need of protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach and not travel through multiple safe countries in an attempt to reach the UK illegally. Our proposals are designed to help discourage those perilous journeys, protect life and break the business model of criminal networks behind illegal immigration.

All policy development will be undertaken in line with the law, including our equalities duties and international obligations.

■ Asylum: Census

Neil Coyle:

[\[179154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to ensure that asylum seekers living in initial and dispersal accommodation have been encouraged to undertake the 2021 Census.

Kevin Foster:

Home Office officials have worked with colleagues within the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to support the completion of the Census, particularly in relation to those currently accommodated within IA / Contingency.

ONS officials are content they have appropriate arrangements in place for other asylum seekers accommodated within community settings.

■ Asylum: Housing

Jim Shannon:

[\[178604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to improve the condition of housing offered to asylum seekers as part of Operation Oak.

Kevin Foster:

We expect the highest standards from our providers, who are expected to conduct regular checks across the accommodation estate. The Home Office have access to providers' systems to monitor compliance.

The Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts (AASC) have a robust performance management system, against which providers are expected to deliver.

This is supplemented by a formal governance process which includes quarterly Strategic Review Management Boards and monthly Contract Management Groups. Service credits and subsequent improvement plans are discussed and monitored as part of this process. Service Delivery Managers speak daily with providers about service delivery and performance.

In response to the global pandemic, officials also have formal meetings on a weekly basis to ensure individuals are housed safely, services are delivered in line with their contractual obligations and adherence to guidance from Public Health England (PHE) is followed.

Asylum seekers can also raise specific issues or concerns about their accommodation through the 24/7 Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service operated by Migrant Help. The Home Office and our providers receive feedback on complaints raised through our regular dialogue with Migrant Help, which enables attention to be focussed on particular areas of concern.

Mr Barry Sheerman:**[178810]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure the adequacy of accommodation for asylum seekers.

Kevin Foster:

We expect the highest standards from our providers, who are expected to conduct regular checks across the accommodation estate. The Home Office have access to providers' systems to monitor compliance.

The Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts (AASC) have a robust performance management system, against which providers are expected to deliver.

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service operated by Migrant Help. The Home Office and our providers receive feedback on complaints raised through our regular dialogue with Migrant Help, which enables attention to be focussed on particular areas of concern.

■ Asylum: Uighurs

Layla Moran: [179481]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the eligibility of Uyghurs fleeing persecution in Xinjiang for (a) asylum and (b) visa rights in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

Our assessment of the situation for Uyghurs is set out in our Country Policy and Information Note (CPIN) on opposition to the state in China, available on gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/china-country-policy-and-information-notes>

■ British National (Overseas): Hong Kong

John Lamont: [179354]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Scottish Government on the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) visa.

Kevin Foster:

Throughout the development of the Hong Kong BN(O) route, the Home Office has had regular discussions with counterparts across the UK government and in the Devolved Administrations. This includes the continued work being led by MHCLG to support the effective integration of BN(O) status holders and their family members arriving in the UK.

■ British Nationality

Andrew Rosindell: [178884]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the eligibility requirements will be for a person to be granted citizenship via the discretionary adult registration route as announced in her new plan for immigration in March 2021.

Kevin Foster:

We recognise a small number of people have been adversely affected by a combination of their specific set of circumstances and the immigration and citizenship legislation in place at the time. We intend to create a route for adults to apply to the Home Secretary to grant citizenship in exceptional circumstances.

This is one of a number of measures which need to be approved by Parliament. Further detail will be available in due course.

■ British Nationality and English Language: Assessments

Sam Tarry:

[179663]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will take steps to review the English B1 and Life in UK Test for spouses and carers of disabled and extremely vulnerable patients in light of the role that carers and spouses have played during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

The Government believes those seeking to make a permanent home in the UK should be equipped to integrate successfully in the UK, with an appropriate level of English and an understanding of British life and society's expectations.

All applicants between the ages of 18 and 65 are therefore required to pass the Life in the UK test; and meet the English language requirement, either when applying for settlement or citizenship.

There is discretion to waive these requirements if a person's physical or mental condition means it would be unreasonable for them to have to pass the test or learn English. Applicants must submit a medical waiver form completed by a medical practitioner to support their request for exemption from these requirements.

Unless the requirement is met because the applicant is a national of a majority English-speaking country, or they have a degree taught or researched in English, we need to be satisfied as to their English language skills through the passing of a specified test at or above the required level.

We have established a range of measures to support those affected by the covid-19 outbreak. We continue to monitor the situation closely and take these exceptional circumstances into account.

Where a test centre is closed or inaccessible due to covid-19, an application will be put on hold and applicants are permitted to submit their test certificates at a later date. Further information about the current concessions in place can be found here:

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

If there is evidence the inability of an applicant to meet these requirements due to covid-19 will lead to significant detriment to the circumstances, dignity, and well-being of any disabled and extremely vulnerable patient who is dependent on them for their care, the Secretary of State has the power to grant leave on a discretionary basis outside the Immigration Rules. Further information on the requirements for cases considered outside the Immigration Rules can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chapter-1-section-14-leave-outside-the-immigration-rules>.

■ British Nationality: Children**Drew Hendry:** [\[181338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to review the level of the fee charged for the registration of children as British citizens.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has acknowledged the recent judgment and is reviewing the fee in line with its duties under Section 55. In the meantime, the fees set out in the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations 2018 continue to be charged.

■ British Nationality: East Africa**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[178874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will grant citizenship to East African Asian children on the basis of compelling compassionate grounds and exceptional circumstances.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office considers individual cases within the context of the applicant's circumstances and the statutory requirements for citizenship.

Within the British Nationality Act 1981 there is discretion to register a child under the age of 18. In each case, the Home Office will consider if there are circumstances which would mean it is appropriate to register a child, and if so the child would be granted citizenship.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[179338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to review the levels of THC content allowed in CBD products.

Kit Malthouse:

On 11 January I wrote to the independent Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) seeking advice on how we can strengthen and clarify the law on consumer Cannabidiol (CBD) products and ensure that these products contain only a trace percentage of controlled cannabinoids, including THC. The ACMD advice will be published on gov.uk.

■ Crime: Laboratories**Peter Kyle:** [\[179294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress the Government has made on establishing a National Crime Laboratory.

Kit Malthouse:

Establishing a National Crime and Justice Laboratory is part of the Government's ambition to make better use of data in the fight against crime.

We are working closely with stakeholders from across the Criminal Justice System to deliver this manifesto commitment. This has included a project working with stakeholders and suppliers to explore the technical requirements needed to underpin its development.

Dogs: Theft**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[178811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle dog theft in England and Wales.

Kit Malthouse:

I refer the Hon Gentleman to the answer I gave to a question from my Hon Friend, the Member for Bosworth on 22 March (UIN 913720)

Drugs: Organised Crime**Peter Kyle:**[\[179298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to page five of the National Crime Agency's report entitled County Lines Drug Supply, Vulnerability and Harm 2018, what recent assessment she has made of the prevalence of concealing drugs internally for transportation in (a) England and (b) Wales.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is taking action to target those who seek to exploit vulnerable children through their county lines operations, which includes the practice of concealing drugs internally for transportation.

On 20 January, the Government announced £40m of dedicated investment to tackle drugs supply and county lines and surge our activity against these ruthless gangs. This will allow us to expand and build upon the successful results of our existing £25m county lines programme and brings the total invested to £65 million since November 2019.

Through our county lines programme we are funding the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) to improve the intelligence picture and co-ordinate the national law enforcement response. NCLCC are responsible for delivering the National Strategic Assessment for county lines and the next assessment, for the period covering 2020, will be published shortly.

Emergency Services Network: Ceredigion**Ben Lake:**[\[179375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, of the Extended Area Services (EAS) mast sites that are located in Ceredigion how many (a) have been designed and

have received planning approval, (b) are awaiting physical work to connect the mast to the network and (c) are awaiting final activation.

Kit Malthouse:

In your constituency of Ceredigion, there are 11 EAS sites, 8 of which have been designed and have completed the planning approval stage. 4 of the sites have completed the passive build stage.

For reference the key stages are:

- 1) building the structure (this is known as 'passive build')
- 2) connecting the mast to the network, either by a cable link, microwave link or (on occasions) via a satellite connection
- 3) activating the mast for operational use for the emergency services

The table attached provides an update on each sites' progress and shows when power is forecast to be provided along with a forecast for site activation. After the award of the contract to connect to the network in Autumn 2021, we anticipate that a survey of each site will result in activation timelines varying depending on the work involved, therefore the dates forecast for activation may change accordingly.

■ **Emergency Services Network: Lifeboats**

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[179566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the new Emergency Services Network will include lifeboats.

Kit Malthouse:

The option to join the Emergency Service Network (ESN) will be available to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). ESN will be available up to 12 nautical miles out to sea and will provide air coverage up to 10,000 feet making it a viable option for the organisation. The RNLI already use the existing Airwave system, which is organised locally or regionally, either through the Resilience Forum or directly with the Emergency Services. We are currently engaging with the RNLI and will work with them to prepare them for transition to the network, however the ultimate decision to join the network will sit with the RNLI based on their organisational requirements.

■ **Emergency Services Network: Scotland**

Tim Farron:

[\[178975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken alongside the Scottish Government to accelerate the activation of Extended Area Services sites in Scotland.

Kit Malthouse:

The Emergency Services Network (ESN) has activated seven Extended Area Services sites in Scotland so far, this means that the sites are connected to the ESN network and are capable of housing commercial networks. Six of the sites are in

conjunction with the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) which is funded by the Scottish Government. EAS has a further 17 sites in progress with SFT, with another four going live in the next 6-8 weeks, good progress is being made with the SFT and Scottish Government in the delivery and activation of these sites. EAS is also in the process of building and activating the remaining 99 sites which form the 123 EAS site coverage in Scotland. These are made up mostly of greenfield sites with 24 site shares also being utilised.

■ Entry Clearances: Coronavirus

Marion Fellows:

[179216]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of continuing to cover the cost of replacing an expired 90 day vignette at a cost of £154 where a visa has expired due to flights being cancelled as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has taken active steps to assist individuals planning to come to the UK by extending the 30-day entry clearance vignettes to 90 days.

If their 90 day vignette has expired, the individual will need to apply for a replacement by completing the online form on GOV.UK:

<https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/visa-type>

We strongly advise individuals to only apply for a new visa, or apply to replace an expired vignette, when they are confident they can travel to the UK given the restrictions on international travel at this time.. The new vignette will be valid for a period of 90 days. If they cannot travel during this time, they may need to apply again to update their vignette.

■ Fraud

Andrew Rosindell:

[178883]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help the police tackle the recent rise in scam messages and calls.

Kit Malthouse:

Fraudulent calls can have significant and devastating impacts on people's lives, particularly the most vulnerable in society.

The Home Office and DCMS are in regular discussion with the telecommunication industry on ways to tackle fraud and protect the public.

The Government has taken a range of actions to reduce the number of these calls. For example, we have supported the National Trading Standards Scams Team to roll out call blocking devices to vulnerable people. DCMS have provided over £1 million in the last 3 years to National Trading Standards for distribution of call blocking devices to vulnerable people. This funding has helped to protect some of the most vulnerable in society from nuisance calls and scams.

However, the best way to tackle this problem is to try and identify the sources of these calls and stop them. We are encouraging the public to forward suspicious text messages to 7726 (which is free of charge) and continue to encourage anyone who has been targeted by a scam to report it. Action Fraud is the central police reporting point for all victims of fraud and can be contacted by phone on 0300 123 2040 or through their website: http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud.

If you have received a scam call, rather than text message, you can also log an information report on the site. Using the information collected from these reporting platforms, law enforcement partners are able to spot patterns of calls/compromised numbers. Using this information, City of London Police (the National Lead Force for fraud, who manage the Action Fraud system), the National Cyber Security Centre and the National Crime Agency are able to facilitate numbers being used for scam calls/texts being blocked or removed.

However, the Government recognises there is more to do and is working closely with communications providers, law enforcement, regulators and consumer groups to consider further legislative and non-legislative solutions

■ Fraud: Telephones

John Nicolson:

[179189]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help prevent fraudulent phone calls from overseas being routed through UK exchanges.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Government has taken a range of actions to reduce the number of these scam calls, including those originating from overseas. It has supported the National Trading Standards Scams Team to roll out call blocking devices to vulnerable people. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has also provided over £1 million in the last 3 years to National Trading Standards for distribution of call blocking devices to vulnerable people. This funding has helped to protect some of the most vulnerable in society from nuisance calls and scams.

The UK Government recognises nuisance calls and cold calling can be a gateway to scams, with opportunistic criminals targeting potential victims in the UK. The UK Government has therefore banned cold calls from personal injury firms and pensions providers unless the consumer has explicitly agreed to be contacted. We have also introduced director liability for nuisance calls.

The City of London Police, the lead force for Economic Crime, has partnered with Law Enforcement and Industry to combat call centre fraud from overseas jurisdictions.

The UK Government recognises there is more to do and is working closely with communications providers, law enforcement, regulators and consumer groups to consider further legislative and non-legislative solutions.

■ **Graduates: Visas**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[179077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 24 February 2021 to Question 155013 on Graduates: Visas, for what reason people on a Tier 2 visa route cannot use time spent in the UK under a previous Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa to contribute towards their continuous residence requirement.

Kevin Foster:

Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) was a temporary route designed to enable graduates to bridge the gap between studies and the Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)/ Innovator routes.

Time spent on temporary immigration routes do not lead to settlement, so would only contribute to meeting a continuous requirement under the provision for long term residents. This approach is consistent with other temporary routes.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[179079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of enabling international students who have completed their studies and whose Tier 4 visa leave expires ahead of 1 July 2021 to submit an early application to the Graduate Route opening on that date.

Kevin Foster:

Those whose permission expires prior to the launch of the route will not be eligible, but will still benefit from the favourable switching provisions into the Skilled Worker route.

The Doctorate Extension Scheme for PhD students will remain open up until the launch of the new route.

■ **High Speed 2 Railway Line: Protest**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[179608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government took to ensure the health and safety of HS2 protestors during their eviction from the Euston tunnel in February 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

We have a long tradition in this country of respect for legal protest. However, these protestors were putting themselves and those who might have to try to rescue them at risk. The response to the situation was led by the police, who are operationally independent of Government.

■ **Homicide: Russia**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[179404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to prevent the killing of UK residents in the UK by the Russian state.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office works closely with other government departments as well as relevant agencies and law enforcement to protect those identified as being at risk from foreign states. Tailored protective advice is offered to some individuals considered to face specific threats.

However, it is our long-standing policy not to provide detailed information on the security arrangements for individuals or certain groups. To do so could compromise the integrity of those arrangements and affect the security of the individuals concerned.

Human Trafficking: English Channel**Sir John Hayes:**[\[175703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to work with French authorities to identify and prosecute people traffickers operating across the English Channel.

Chris Philp:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: We will do everything we can to stop these crossings and make this route unviable.

The danger to life from Channel crossings and the criminality behind it are simply unacceptable.

These journeys are often illegally-facilitated and are totally unnecessary; France and other EU countries are safe with fully functioning asylum systems.

The UK and France jointly investigate criminal groups engaged in these crossings, sharing intelligence and prosecuting cases on both sides of the Channel. The Joint Intelligence Cell, founded in July 2020 and resourced by both UK and French staff, is central to those efforts, enabling the sharing of information between UK and French law enforcement

In 2020, we arrested 113 individuals and secured 56 convictions for facilitation related to small boats resulted in sentencing of over 29 years. A further 35 disruptions were recorded against gangs and individuals engaged in organised immigration crime related to small boats

Immigration**Hilary Benn:**[\[178818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of immigration casework queries from hon. Members are not responded to within the 20 working day service standard; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The Department works to a target of responding to 95% of MPs written correspondence within 20 working days. Performance has been impacted by a very significant increase in the volume of correspondence received, alongside the need for

Ministers and officials to instigate a remote process for drafting and signing correspondence during the period of COVID-19 restrictions.

The latest published data on UKVI performance against the service standard includes data up to and including the end of quarter 3-2020/21 and is held at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-november-2020>

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Angela Crawley:

[179236]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applicants to the EU Settlement Scheme have updated their birth name to their married name using the Update My Details service since March 2019.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office issues settled status documentation in the primary name which is used in the official documentation produced as part of an individual's application.

The Home Office does not capture data on the number of customers who have updated their birth name to their married name since being issued status. To capture numbers would require a manual trawl of data and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

Peter Grant:

[181332]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of the Government directly contacting care home operators to ensure those operators are aware of the need for vulnerable and isolated residents to apply to the EU Settled Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

Home Office officials have undertaken a range of work to reach care home operators and vulnerable applicants to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).

The Home Office is also working closely with the Department for Health and Social Care, and the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government to ensure local authorities and care provider organisations are aware of the need to support those in care to submit applications. NHS employers, Scottish Social services and Wales Social care also sit on EUSS advisory groups which have been running since the Scheme launched in 2018.

A comprehensive three-year campaign has increased awareness of the need to apply to EUSS, targeting employers, including social care sector employers, and EEA and Swiss citizens themselves.

The Home Office has also provided up to £17million in grant funding to a grant funded network of 72 organisations provide bespoke support to vulnerable and hard to reach EU citizens and their family members eligible to apply to EUSS. Grant funded organisations include the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services

(ADASS), and the Institute Organization for Migration (IOM) who work closely with local authorities. Earlier this year, the Home Office announced a further £4.5 million of funding to the 72 organisations to continue the support services well beyond the 30 June 2021 deadline.

As of 31 March 2021, 5.3 million applications had been received to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), and 4.98 million applications have been concluded, delivering on the government's promise to secure the rights of millions of Europeans in UK law for years to come.

Peter Grant:

[181333]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government plans to take in the event that an individual who is required to apply for EU Settled Status is unable to do so before the 30 June 2021 deadline.

Kevin Foster:

In line with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, the Government has made clear where a person eligible for status under the EU Settlement Scheme has reasonable grounds for missing the 30 June 2021 deadline for applications by those resident in the UK by the end of the transition period, they will be given a further opportunity to apply.

Non-exhaustive guidance on what constitutes reasonable grounds for missing the deadline can be found at pages 26 to 44 of the main caseworker guidance for the scheme, which is available here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-caseworker-guidance.

The guidance will underpin a flexible and pragmatic approach to considering late applications under the scheme, in light of the circumstances of each case.

Peter Grant:

[181334]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the need for paper applications to be made available for people with no access to online services or who are IT illiterate when applying for EU Settled Status.

Kevin Foster:

Assistance for applicants to the EU Settlement Scheme is available via a network of 72 organisations across the UK, for which £22 million in grant funding has been made available by the Home Office, and via the Assisted Digital service, which can provide help over the telephone or in person in completing an application online.

Where a person needs to apply using a paper application form, this can be obtained from the EU Settlement Resolution Centre, which is open seven days a week to provide assistance over the telephone and by email.

Peter Grant:

[181335]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the processing time for EU Settled Scheme applications is five working days.

Kevin Foster:

We currently have 1,500 UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) European Casework staff in post. We are committed to ensuring our operational teams have the resources they need to run an efficient and effective system, and we actively monitor workflows to ensure sufficient resources are in place to meet demand.

Our aim is to process all applications to the Scheme as quickly as possible. The majority of applications are concluded within 5 working days, but cases may take longer dependent on the circumstances of the case, for example if the applicant is facing an impending prosecution or has a criminal record.

The following link lists the expected processing times for EU Settlement Scheme applications, based upon current performance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-application-processing-times/eu-settlement-scheme-pilot-current-expected-processing-times-for-applications>

Members: Correspondence**John Spellar:****[178791]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to provide a substantive response to the letter of 14 December 2020 from the hon. Member for Warley on Mr Gamaralalage.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 2 March 2021

Rosie Cooper:**[178952]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 12 February 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on domestic abuse, reference ZA55563.

Victoria Atkins:

A response was sent by the Minister for Safeguarding on 20 April 2021.

Migrant Workers**Sarah Champion:****[179131]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of the new immigration system on (a) the glass sector and (b) other industries that require the services of temporary specialist workers who enter the UK as frontier workers; and what consultation her Department has undertaken with representatives of the glass industry on that matter.

Sarah Champion:**[179132]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the potential

effect of the new immigration system on (a) the glass sector and (b) other industries that require the services of temporary specialist workers that are currently entering the UK as frontier workers.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office undertook extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and employers as part of the development of the new points-based immigration system. The new immigration system provides a wide range of routes for skilled workers and specialist service suppliers which can be utilised by industries such as the glass sector.

EEA or Swiss citizen frontier workers who regularly undertook work in the UK before 11pm on 31 December 2020 can continue to do so if they meet the requirements of The Citizens' Rights (Frontier Workers) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Home Office Ministers frequently discuss the operation of the immigration system with Ministerial colleagues in the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

■ **Migrant Workers: Video Games**

Alex Sobel:

[\[179485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential effect of a points-based immigration system on the video games industry in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The points-based immigration system was developed following advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) who assessed evidence provided by many interested sectors of the economy.

The new points based 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. Many games industry jobs are eligible for the skilled work visa, including computer games programmer and computer games tester.

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: Health Services**

Clive Lewis:

[\[179287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of eligible NHS and social care workers have been refunded the immigration health surcharge since the Prime Minister's announcement on 17 June 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The information regarding proportion is not readily available nor held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost due to the fact the Immigration Health Surcharge is payable across multiple application routes. For example, where the customer is on a visa with a general right to work and subsequently takes up employment, we do not have a record who the employer is.

■ Naturalisation: Fees and Charges**Ruth Cadbury:****[179168]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much revenue her Department raised from fees for applications for naturalisation as a British citizen in 2019.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not hold the information in the format requested. We do not have a separate code or field for fees collected for naturalisation as British Citizens.

Immigration statistic, with volumes of applicants, are available at

Immigration statistics data tables, year ending December 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Total visa and immigration income data is published annually in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts. See page 152 of the Home Office 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts for the most recent disclosure of visa and immigration income.

[Home Office annual report and accounts 2019 - 2020 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)

Ruth Cadbury:**[179169]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to review the level of fees for applying for naturalisation as a British citizen.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office keeps fees for immigration and nationality applications under review and ensure they are within the parameters agreed with HM Treasury and Parliament, as set out in Section 68 (9) of the Immigration Act 2014 which can be viewed via the following link:

(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/22/section/68>).

■ NHS: Migrant Workers**Drew Hendry:****[181337]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of reducing the cost of visas for foreign national spouses of UK national NHS workers who have worked for the NHS during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kit Malthouse:

The government is hugely grateful for the vital contributions made by NHS staff during the pandemic and have brought in a range of unprecedented measures to ensure the sector is supported fully.

This has included the introduction of a Health and Care Visa, which provides fast track entry, reduced fees and dedicated support for professionals and their families, along with exemption from the Immigration Health Surcharge. Further free 12-month extensions were also announced last week for crucial frontline health workers and their dependents.

Fees, however, apply equally to all those settled in the UK who are seeking to sponsor family members to come to the UK. Relaxing these fees for the family members of NHS workers only, would undermine this principle.

Fees are set taking account of the charging powers provided by Section 68(9) of the Immigration Act 2014, which include the ability set fees based on: the cost of processing the application, the benefits and entitlements provided by a successful application and the wider cost of the Border, Immigration and Citizenship system. Full details of which can be reviewed via the following link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/22/section/68>.

The Home Office keeps fees for immigration and nationality applications under review and ensures they are within the parameters agreed with HM Treasury and Parliament

.

Philip Rutnam**Charlotte Nichols:****[179630]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how her Department's settlement with its former permanent secretary, Sir Philip Rutnam, will be funded.

Kevin Foster:

As with all employment and exit costs, these are met by the employing department, which in this case is the Home Office.

Proscribed Organisations**Florence Eshalomi:****[179733]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to review the number of proscribed far-right groups classified as terrorist.

Kevin Foster:

Under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Home Secretary may proscribe an organisation if she believes it is concerned in terrorism, and it is proportionate to do so.

We keep the list of proscribed organisations under regular review.

■ Protest: Journalism

Catherine West:

[179315]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with police chief constables on the importance of protecting freedom of the press for journalists covering protests.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is clear that freedom of the press is an absolute priority. That is why the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport set up the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists last year which brings together representatives from government, journalism, policing, prosecution services and civil society. The Committee published its National Action Plan on 9 March 2021 - [National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-action-plan-for-the-safety-of-journalists).

Following engagement with the police and others, we are introducing measures through the Police, Crime, Courts and Sentencing Bill to give the police the powers they need to manage highly disruptive protests that infringe on the rights of others to go about their daily business. How the police use their powers are operational matters for the police.

■ Radicalism: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[178878]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will undertake an assessment of how the covid-19 lockdown has affected the spread of extremist ideologies in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

Throughout the pandemic operational and intelligence services have been monitoring and assessing the terrorist threat, but such reports are classified and cannot be shared.

■ Refugees: Treaties

Ben Lake:

[181382]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the New Plan for Immigration policy paper, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the upholding of its obligations under (a) Article 31 of the Refugee Convention (b) the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties to interpret the Refugee Convention in good faith, and (c) Article 35(1) of the Refugee Convention on States' duties to cooperate with UNHCR.

Chris Philp:

The UK remains committed to meeting our obligations under international law. Any legislative changes will be assessed against these obligations.

■ Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships: Coronavirus**Rosie Cooper:****[178629]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to ensure that changes brought in by the Coronavirus Act 2020 which have digitised the death registration process are retained after March 2022.

Kevin Foster:

No such plans have been made as the changes brought in by the Coronavirus Act 2020 have not digitised the death registration process.

■ Religious Practice: Coronavirus**Andrew Rosindell:****[180429]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to (a) ensure that police officers are aware of the covid-19 guidelines on religious services and (b) prevent religious services from being shut down unlawfully under those guidelines.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government continues to work with the police to ensure that the law is being correctly enforced. The National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing develop and disseminate guidance for forces in England and Wales on enforcing the rules and this is updated as regulations are changed.

Enforcement of the restrictions is an operational matter for the police. As they have done throughout the pandemic, the police continue to utilise the 4Es approach: engaging with individuals who are not following the rules, explaining the rules to them, and encouraging them to comply before moving on to enforce the law. Police officers have received clear guidance that they should use their common sense, discretion, and experience in enforcing coronavirus regulations, and we expect enforcement activity to be proportionate and within the law.

Government guidance provides a set of key principles for both those wishing to attend a place of worship and venue managers, these principles enable a safe opening of these venues and allow individuals to congregate in a Covid-secure environment. Further information on guidance on attending and managing a place of worship can be found here; www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-2-december

■ Sexual Offences: Greater London**Andrew Rosindell:****[178885]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to encourage women in east London boroughs that have been sexually assaulted to report those incidents to the police.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government is committed to ensuring that perpetrators of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls are brought to justice, and ensuring victims know where and how to access support.

In April last year we launched guidance on our.gov.uk website and delivered a successful #YouAreNotAlone awareness raising campaign to signpost victims to help and support services - reaching almost 30 million UK adults and securing over 130 million followers on social media.

This January, we also launched a new Ask for ANI Codeword scheme to enable domestic abuse victims to seek safe and discreet support from over 5000 participating pharmacies across the UK who will be able to provide victim focussed support, including engagement with specialist victim support services and the police as necessary

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

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

Added to this, the government has committed new funding to support victims of rape and sexual abuse. The Ministry of Justice announced earlier this year victims of rape and domestic abuse will be helped by a major £40m funding boost for specialist support services. In addition, a further £11million funding was announced on 15 March to provide for more Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) to support victims through the criminal justice process.

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Correspondence**Rosie Cooper:****[181211]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will provide assistance in securing a response from the Director General of UK Visas and Immigration, to the letter dated 3 December 2020 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, regarding an asylum claim, reference ZA54763.

Kevin Foster:

UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 16 April 2021

■ Undocumented Migrants**Ben Lake:**[\[181383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what evidence base was used to determine the projected efficacy of the policy proposals outlined in her Department's New Plan for Immigration policy paper in (a) limiting irregular arrivals and (b) breaking the business model of people smugglers.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office draws on various sources of analysis and insight to support policy development. A consultation and engagement exercise is underway to further inform these considerations.

■ VFS Global: China**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[178876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 160548, on VFS Global: China, if he will publish a list of the 16 VFS visa centres in China that are run by subcontractors.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[178877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 160548, VFS Global: China, if he will publish a list of the subcontractors that run the 16 VFS visa centres in China.

Kevin Foster:

The 16 VFS centres in China run by subcontractors, plus their subcontractor, are listed below:

Beijing Beijing Shuangxiong Foreign Service Company

Chengdu Chengdu Sino Visa Eternal Exit & Entry Immigration Co. Ltd

Chongqing Chongqing Taifu Exit & Entry Service Co Ltd

Fuzhou Fujian Shenzhou Nonofficial Exit & Entrance Service Centre

Guangzhou Guangdong CTS Visa Consulting Service Co. Ltd

Hangzhou Hangzhou Leader Business Consultant Co. Ltd

Jinan Shandong YIHUI Industry Co. Ltd

Nanjing Jiangsu Golden Sunshine Foreign Entry Resources and Service Centre

Shenzhen Shenzhen XingGuo Visa Services Co. Ltd

Shanghai Shanghai Foreign Relation & Trade Overseas Affairs Consulting Co. Ltd

Shenyang Liaoning Aoxin Consulting Co. Ltd

Wuhan Wuhan Johnton Science and Technology Co. Ltd

Xi'an Xian Boli Immigration Agency Co., Ltd

Kunming Yunnan Delang Business Consulting Co., Ltd

Changsha Hunan GDCTS Visa Consulting Service Co., Ltd

Hong Kong Glory Visa Consulting Company Limited

■ Visas: Coronavirus

Afzal Khan:

[179511]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will take steps to ensure that covid-19 pandemic travel restrictions are taken into account when assessing evidence of relationships for future UK visa applications.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office will take into account the impact of covid-19 pandemic travel restrictions on relationships. This can affect individual applicants in different ways, and full details of the evidential requirements for relationships can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/uk-family-visa/provide-information>.

Details of the concessions the Government has already put in place as a result of the covid-19 pandemic can be found here:

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

■ Visas: Married People

Stephen Farry:

[179692]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the spousal visa minimum income requirement in allowing sufficient participation in everyday life to facilitate integration.

Kevin Foster:

The purpose of the minimum income requirement, implemented in July 2012 along with other reforms of the family Immigration Rules, is to ensure family migrants are supported at a reasonable level so they do not become a burden on the taxpayer.

The UK Government is committed to promoting social cohesion, good relations and a sense of belonging for all members of society. The ability to participate in activities and organisations outside the home plays a part in this. The minimum income requirement is not the only factor which promotes the ability to participate, but the level at which it is set can mean one particular barrier is reduced.

The Supreme Court has endorsed our approach in setting an income requirement for family migration which prevents burdens on the taxpayer and promotes integration into our communities. In particular, it strikes a balance between the interests of those wishing to sponsor a partner from overseas and the community in general by ensuring migration to the UK is not based on access to services funded by UK taxpayers.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus**Peter Kyle:**[\[181067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to provide support for local authorities to waive the fee for a further notice of intention to marry for couples whose wedding ceremonies have been cancelled as a result of covid-19 restrictions.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government provides guidance on how to access the local government income compensation scheme for lost sales, fees and charges as a result of Covid -19.

This new, one-off income loss scheme will compensate local authorities for irrecoverable and unavoidable losses from sales, fees and charges income generated in the delivery of services in the last financial year

■ Youth Mobility Scheme: EU Countries**David Mundell:**[\[178908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to include the EU within the Youth Mobility Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

We remain committed to expanding our Youth Mobility Scheme to more nations, including member states of the EU.

Each Youth Mobility Scheme is subject to a bilateral, reciprocal agreement which also provides benefit to UK Nationals, with the detail negotiated and agreed between the relevant parties. We will not add nations unilaterally in the absence of such an agreement.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing: Cambridgeshire****Daniel Zeichner:**[\[179163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March 2021 to Question 174145 on Affordable Housing: Cambridgeshire, what other criteria were assessed in addition to value for money.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department has no plans to publish the criteria or metrics used but remains committed to supporting affordable housing in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and will consider making further funding available for schemes that can deliver by the end of March 2022.

■ All Party Park Homes Parliamentary Group

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[181186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Minister responsible for park homes policy plans to respond to the invitation from the Chairman of the APPG for Park Homes to participate in a meeting of the APPG.

Eddie Hughes:

The Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing responded to the invitation from the Chairman of the APPG for Park Homes on 20 April.

■ Building Safety Fund

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[181342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department made of the potential merits of extending the Building Safety Fund to buildings 11 to 18 metres in height.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has rightly targeted the Building Safety Fund at the removal of unsafe cladding on higher rise buildings (over 18 metres), where the risk is greater and the cost of cladding remediation is higher. This is in line with longstanding independent expert advice. We know that as buildings get taller there is greater risk. That is why we are making sure that these buildings are remediated and have provided grants to get this done quickly.

Between 11 metres and 18 metres the risk profile of buildings is different and will not always require the same level of remediation when risks are identified. However, we want to make sure that residents and leaseholders in these buildings also have peace of mind and financial certainty. Our financing scheme for these buildings will give them confidence that remediation of dangerous cladding can take place, and leaseholders will not be asked to pay more than £50 a month towards it.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[178692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that contractors are charging fair and reasonable prices for remediation works on buildings clad with unsafe materials given the high demand for those remediation services.

Christopher Pincher:

All applicants for remediation grant funding are required to confirm that costs are competitive and reasonable. Reasonable costs are required to be informed by an industry standard approach to specification and procurement of works having regard to cost benchmarks established from comparable projects. Higher than expected costs will be challenged and will be subject to further scrutiny. For more information please see the Building Safety Fund Prospectus available at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#prospectus---outlining-eligibility-for-the-fund .

■ Burlington House

Layla Moran: [179471]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the recommendations of the analysis provided at its request by the Courtyard Societies on their tenancy and public value.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department is sympathetic to the Societies' position and is exploring whether there is a solution that can deliver value for taxpayers and help the Learned Societies remain at New Burlington House. The Department has been discussing options with DCMS given their responsibility for policy in regards to culture, museum and heritage.

Layla Moran: [179472]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to resume negotiations with Courtyard Societies on the tenancy and the value of Burlington House.

Eddie Hughes:

Ministers and officials are in frequent contact with the Learned Societies.

The Learned societies pay discounted rent on new Burlington House, currently 30 per cent of the market rate, in line with the agreement they reached with the then Government in 2006. The current arrangement would not see them pay market rent until 2085, however the Government is sympathetic to their position and is working with them to find a solution.

Layla Moran: [179473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to preserve the use of Burlington House for the Courtyard Societies.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department is sympathetic to the Societies' position and is exploring whether there is a solution that can deliver value for taxpayers and help the Learned Societies remain at New Burlington House. The Department has been discussing options with DCMS given their responsibility for policy in regards to culture, museum and heritage.

■ Conveyancing: Disclosure of Information

Richard Fuller: [178989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of non-disclosure agreements used by house building companies where there are disputes between the company and the house buyer after completion of the purchase of a property.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is not aware that the practice of using non-disclosure agreements is routine. However, it is unacceptable for developers to be requiring non-disclosure agreements as a condition of carrying out repairs. This Government expects all defects with a newly purchased home to be addressed swiftly and fairly. It is essential that homebuyers are able to have confidence in the quality of the home that they are buying.

Domestic Abuse: Coronavirus**Neil Coyle:**[\[179158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department's Spending Review 2020, which includes a £125 million settlement for the new duty on local authorities contained in the Domestic Abuse Bill, took into account the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on domestic abuse.

Eddie Hughes:

MHCLG engaged with local authorities and service providers to ensure that the new duty is funded appropriately. The £125 million new burden funding has now been paid to local authorities to provide support in safe accommodation, to include all unmet demand, for financial year 2021-22. This is on top of £10 million in emergency funding during 2020/21 and continued supply of free PPE to refuge providers.

We continue to work with the sector to monitor demand on services as a result of Covid-19.

Duchy of Cornwall: Leasehold**Kim Johnson:**[\[179649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will guarantee that reforms to leaseholder laws announced in January 2021 will align the Duchy of Cornwall's tenants' rights with other leaseholders in England.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. We are taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market. In January we announced reforms to the valuation process and length of lease extensions, in response to Law Commission recommendations.

The Law Commission's report on enfranchisement includes recommendations relating to the qualifying criteria for enfranchisement and lease extensions, including the applicability of these to leaseholders of the Crown. We will bring forward a response to these and the other remaining Law Commission recommendations in due course.

■ Fire Prevention: Research**Sir George Howarth:**[\[178835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to publish the findings from its research on fire safety and property protection; and whether he has plans to incorporate the findings from that research into the draft Building Safety Bill.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has no current plans to extend the scope of the building regulations in this area through the Building Safety Bill, but is keeping this matter under review. As a next step, we are planning to undertake research this year looking at international approaches to regulation in this area, and will be publishing the final reports.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation**Royston Smith:**[\[179258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of offering council tax exemption to leaseholders at high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government currently has no plans to introduce new council tax exemptions. Council tax contributes to a range of vital public services, including those which are at the forefront of the Covid-19 response. We are providing over £5 billion to speed up the removal of unsafe cladding, making homes safer, more quickly.

Royston Smith:[\[179259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what financial support is available to leaseholders at high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding who are issued with increased insurance premiums as a result of their buildings being classed as not fire-safe.

Christopher Pincher:

We are aware that some leaseholders have received significant increases in their insurance premiums where their block has building safety concerns. We are working with the insurance industry to understand this issue and are engaging with a range of proposals put forward to address it. We are encouraging insurers to take a proportionate approach to risk.

With an unprecedented over £5 billion investment in building safety, including £3.5 billion announced in February 2021, leaseholders will now need to pay either nothing, or up to £50 per month towards fixing the problem. This helps gives lenders certainty both that the cladding will be remediated, and of the total potential financial implications for a leaseholder and their property.

This announcement is therefore an important step towards restoring confidence in the housing market. It provides certainty for lenders where unsafe cladding is present

and complements the wider work we have underway to continue to develop a proportionate risk-based regulatory environment on fire safety.

Royston Smith:

[179260]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the mental health of leaseholders at high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding of their homes being classed as not fire-safe.

Christopher Pincher:

MHCLG has regular engagement with leaseholder groups and recognises the effect on residents living in high-rise buildings with unsafe cladding. That is why the Government is investing over £5 billion to remediate high rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding.

Mental health is one of the Government's top priorities and we are working across Government to ensure that all people, regardless of their residential situation, get the help and support they need. Where residents of buildings fitted with flammable cladding need mental health support, they should make contact with their GP to discuss these issues so they may be referred to mental health services as appropriate. In addition, we are working with the NHS, Public Health England and MIND, develop resources signposting all residents to key services to help those concerned about their mental health and financial situation.

Royston Smith:

[179261]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of financial advice services available to leaseholders of high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding that are facing interim remedial costs and increased building insurance premiums.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government recognises residents' concerns about the cost of waking watch measures. That is why we collected and published information on waking watch costs, available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-waking-watch-costs. The data also illustrates that alarm systems can provide a more cost-effective means of protecting resident safety. We are therefore providing £30 million in funding to pay for the costs of installing an alarm system in buildings with unsafe cladding. The Waking Watch Relief Fund opened on 31 January 2021 to all eligible Social sector buildings in England, and all private sector buildings except those in Greater London. All applications have now been submitted and are being processed. In Greater London, the fund opened on 18 March for 6 weeks and is being administered by the GLA. Common alarm systems will enable costly waking watch measures to be replaced in buildings waiting to have unsafe cladding removed.

We are aware that some leaseholders have received significant increases in their insurance premiums where their block has building safety concerns. We are working with the insurance industry to understand this issue and are engaging with a range of

proposals put forward to address it. We are encouraging insurers to take a proportionate approach to risk.

■ Homelessness: Ethnic Groups

Marsha De Cordova:

[179523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to tackle the increase in homelessness for Black residents of England and Wales in 2020.

Eddie Hughes:

The latest data relating to ethnicity breakdown of homeless households in England can be found in the annual homelessness statistics and live homelessness tables here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

Housing is a devolved issue and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government does not collect homelessness data for Wales.

The Government is committed to tackling homelessness and is investing over £750 million this year to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in England.

■ Homelessness: Young People

Mr Steve Baker:

[180476]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of local authorities that will act as a guarantor for young people who have experienced homelessness; and what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of such schemes.

Mr Steve Baker:

[180477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the number of local authorities that offer a deposit scheme to support young people in moving into the private rental sector; and what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of such schemes.

Eddie Hughes:

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness. Local authorities must now work with people who are homeless or at risk of losing their homes to develop personalised housing plans, tailored to focus on the needs and circumstances of the household. The support offered may involve financial support.

We are providing a £310 million Homelessness Prevention Grant to local authorities in 2021/22 to help them plan and respond to their local homelessness pressures. Amongst other things, local authorities may use this to support people into the private rented sector, for example through guarantor schemes or by providing

deposits. Local authorities may use homelessness funding flexibility in line with local need.

In addition, this year there is £140 million available in Discretionary Housing Payments which can be used for those who may need additional support with housing costs.

■ **Housing: Access**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[179279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to respond to the consultation on raising accessibility standards for new homes published on 8 September 2020.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[179280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to require all new homes to meet the accessible and adaptable standard.

Christopher Pincher:

Further to our consultation on how to raise accessible housing standards, we are considering responses and will publish a Government response setting out next steps

The evidence from this work will help Government consider what changes can be made, including reviewing and potentially tightening the regulatory framework to deliver accessible new homes and updates to statutory guidance.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[179281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that provision of accessible housing for older and disabled people is prioritised in light of the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

We recently consulted on options to raise accessible housing standards, including options to review and potentially tighten the regulatory framework to deliver accessible new homes. By 2021-22 the Government will have invested over £4 billion through the Disabled Facilities Grant, funding adaptations to almost 450,000 homes since 2010. In our Social Housing White Paper we said that we will look at how we can improve access to suitable homes for disabled people. Our planning rules already mean councils must consider the needs of older and disabled people when planning new homes, and we are significantly reforming the planning system to put a much greater emphasis on design and quality, creating a system which gives local people more of a voice to make clear what new development their areas need and where.

Housing: Airports**Henry Smith:**[\[179020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish his Department's policy on new homes being built near to existing airports; and what assessment he has made of the compatibility of that policy with the Government's aim to reduce the number of people significantly affected by aircraft noise.

Christopher Pincher:

It is for local authorities to determine the most appropriate location for new housing, and they should do this having regard to the local circumstances that they know best. However, in determining the most appropriate locations, the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that planning decisions and policies should avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse effects on health and quality of life.

In a situation where new homes are proposed near an airfield, and therefore could be affected by noise from air traffic, the Framework's 'agent of change' principle makes clear that the applicant 'or 'agent of change' should be required to provide suitable mitigation to address adverse effects of noise. This principle is in place to avoid unreasonable restrictions being placed on existing facilities.

Housing: Enfield North**Feryal Clark:**[\[179646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support leaseholders living in buildings under 18 metres in height with (a) dangerous cladding and (b) other fire safety defects in Enfield North constituency.

Christopher Pincher:

On 10 February we announced a generous finance scheme, which will provide leaseholders in buildings of 11-18m with access to finance for cladding remediation costs. This includes costs that are integral to the safe removal and replacement of unsafe cladding systems. We have committed that monthly cladding repayment costs will not exceed £50 a month. Further details of the financing scheme will be made available.

The package of financial measures announced covers cladding because longstanding independent safety advice has been clear that unsafe cladding poses the greatest risk to buildings. This is because it can act as a fuel to a fire. Our approach prioritises action on the risks of unsafe cladding: the costs for remediating this are high, and the risks posed by it are also high.

Housing: Insulation**Royston Smith:**[\[179263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to issue the guidance announced on 10 February 2021 for the finance

scheme to provide reassurance for leaseholders in buildings between 11 and 18 metres, or 4 to 6 storeys, for cladding removal.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is conscious of the need to make any financing scheme affordable for leaseholders, which is why we have said that the financing scheme will have a £50 a month cap. Further details of the financing scheme will be made available as soon as we are able.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[181339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that loans taken out by leaseholders living in blocks affected by cladding-related issues are capped at £50 per month for repayments.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is providing grants for the removal of unsafe cladding systems from residential buildings over 18 metres. In lower rise buildings of 11-18 metres, with a lower risk to safety, leaseholders will gain new protection from the costs of cladding removal through a financing scheme that will limit repayments so that leaseholders will never pay more than £50 a month. We are developing the details to ensure it protects leaseholders, prioritising affordability and accelerating remediation where required. Further details of the financing scheme will be available as soon as possible.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[181340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to publish the guidance for loans taken out by leaseholders living in blocks affected by cladding-related issues.

Christopher Pincher:

We realise the need to get unsafe cladding remediated as swiftly as possible as public safety is our first priority. We will make further details of the financing scheme available as soon as possible.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[181341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department is providing to leaseholders in buildings of 11 to 18 metres affected by cladding-related issues.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has announced a generous financing scheme which will mean that buildings of 11-18 metres in height will be able to make use of finance for the remediation of unsafe cladding, with a commitment that leaseholders will not need to pay more than £50 a month towards this. By providing this financing scheme we are ensuring that funding is available for remediation, accelerating the process and making homes safer as quickly as possible.

Housing: Rochester and Strood**Kelly Tolhurst:**[\[181343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support leaseholders in buildings with dangerous cladding in Rochester and Strood Constituency.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is providing further grant funding of £3.5 billion in addition to the £1.6 billion already provided to fund the removal of unsafe cladding systems from residential buildings of 18 metres and over in England. We are also providing expert construction consultation support to actively engage with those planning and undertaking remediation work being funded by the Government to increase the pace of remediation. In addition to this, the Government is providing a £30 million Waking Watch Relief Fund to pay for the costs of installing an alarm system in high rise buildings with unsafe cladding. Common alarm systems will enable costly waking watch measures to be replaced in buildings waiting to have unsafe cladding removed.

The Government has recently announced a generous financing scheme which will mean that buildings of 11-18 metres in height will be able to make use of finance for the remediation of unsafe cladding, with a commitment that leaseholders will not need to pay more than £50 a month towards this. By providing this financing scheme we are ensuring that money is available for remediation, accelerating the process and making homes safer as quickly as possible. We are developing the underpinning details to ensure it protects leaseholders, prioritising affordability and accelerating remediation where required and we will release further information on this financing scheme as soon as we can.

However, Government funding and other support does not absolve industry from responsibility and taking action. We expect developers, investors and building owners to cover remediation costs themselves, meeting their legal and contractual obligations, recovering costs or drawing on warranties where applicable, without passing on costs to leaseholders. This is happening in over half of all private sector high-rise residential buildings with unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding systems.

Housing: Young People**Mr Steve Baker:**[\[180475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the (a) accessibility of the private rental sector to young people moving on from supported accommodation and (b) barriers faced by young people trying to move on from supported accommodation into the private rental sector; and what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on that matter.

Eddie Hughes:

Whilst my Department has not made a formal assessment, we recognise the importance of supporting vulnerable young people, including those staying in supported accommodation, into independent living for example in the private rented sector and we keep this and similar issues under regular review. Ministers in my Department and in the Department for Work and Pensions meet regularly on a range of matters.

We are already undertaking a range of wider action that should also help vulnerable young people with their onward housing needs. We have also taken action to support people, including young people, with renting property in the private rented sector, and we will go further to bring in a better deal for renters.

■ Levelling Up Fund**Alan Brown:**[\[179239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will list the local authorities that have been awarded £125,000 of capacity funding for future Levelling Up Fund bids.

Luke Hall:

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

For the first round of funding, capacity funding of £125,000 will be provided to the 93 local authorities in England that fall into category 1 on the index of priority places published alongside the prospectus; and all local authorities in Scotland and Wales to help build their relationship with UK Government for the purpose of the Fund.

Steve Reed:[\[180512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what stakeholder engagement his Department undertook to inform the design of the Levelling Up Fund.

Luke Hall:

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

As part of putting together proposals, it is important that bidding authorities consult a range of local stakeholders across the full geography of a place in developing their proposed investments for the Fund.

■ Levelling Up Fund: Wales**Virginia Crosbie:**[\[179706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to £125,000 of capacity funding for Welsh local authorities in the Levelling Up

Fund, how the Government plans to allocate that funding; what the timeframe is for allocating that funding; whether the Government plans to undertake an assessment of the effort made by each local authority in respect of the awarding of that funding; and whether the Government plans to award that funding in the event that a local authority does not make a bid.

Luke Hall:

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

For the first round of funding, capacity funding of £125,000 will be provided to the 93 local authorities in England that fall into category 1 on the index of priority places published alongside the prospectus; and all local authorities in Scotland and Wales to help build their relationship with UK Government for the purpose of the Fund.

■ **LGBT People**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[178813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities have adequate resources to provide safe public spaces for transgender people.

Luke Hall:

The Government is clear that all forms of hatred are unacceptable and will be tackled. We have one of the strongest legislative frameworks in the world to protect communities from hostility, violence and bigotry, and to deal with the perpetrators of hate crime. Hate crime policy and legislation is designed to protect all victims equally and there is no form of hate crime that is given higher priority than any other.

The Government is now considering a range of options to tackle hate crime beyond the current action plan, we will ensure a range of views from civil society partners and communities are taken into consideration.

Depending on local decisions, Core Spending Power in England may rise from £49 billion in 2020-21 to up to £51.3 billion in 2021-22, a 4.6% increase in cash terms. If councils do decide to take up the entirety of the increase on offer, they will see an increase in line with last years. This recognises the resources councils need to meet their pressures and maintain current service levels

The Settlement is unringfenced to ensure local areas can prioritise based on their own understanding of the needs of their local communities.

■ **Litter**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[180401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities have adequate resources to tackle littering in their communities.

Luke Hall:

The Government is committed to encouraging local solutions for local problems. This is particularly relevant in dealing with litter and fly-tipping problems, which require a local approach, tailored to the characteristics of the area and the community in which the problems occur. The role of central Government is to enable and support this local action: providing a clear legal framework of rights, responsibilities and powers, setting national standards and, where possible, making sure that the costs of dealing with litter issues are passed to those responsible for causing the problem. We published the Litter Strategy for England in April 2017, setting out our aim to deliver a substantial reduction in litter and littering within a generation. The Litter Strategy brings together communities, businesses, charities and schools to bring about real change by focusing on three key themes: education and awareness; improving enforcement; and better cleaning and access to bins. A copy of the Litter Strategy can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-strategy-for-england

Depending on local decisions, Core Spending Power in England may rise from £49 billion in 2020-21 to up to £51.3 billion in 2021-22, a 4.6% increase in cash terms. If councils do decide to take up the entirety of the increase on offer, they will see an increase in line with last years. This recognises the resources councils need to meet their pressures and maintain current service levels

The Settlement is unringfenced to ensure local areas can prioritise based on their own understanding of the needs of their local communities.

■ Liverpool City Council: Councillors**Dan Carden:****[179437]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his oral contribution of 24 March 2021 on Liverpool City Council, Official Report, column 937, what the process will be for appointing Commissioners under the proposed intervention package.

Luke Hall:

The Secretary of State will consider the appointment of Commissioners as outlined in the proposals he announced on 24 March 2021 in the light of representations received from Liverpool City Council and other interested parties. The process for appointing Commissioners is set out in guidance published by my Department on 7 May 2020 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-intervention-and-inspection-a-guide-for-local-authorities>.

Dan Carden:**[179438]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his oral contribution of 24 March 2021 on Liverpool City Council, Official report, column 937, what consultation he is undertaking on his proposed intervention package in addition to seeking representations from that council.

Luke Hall:

The Secretary of State's proposals are publicly available on gov.uk (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/liverpool-city-council-letter-to-the-chief-executive-setting-out-the-proposed-intervention-package>). Representations are welcome from all interested parties. As required by statute, the Secretary of State is specifically seeking representations from the council on the report and his proposals in response by 24 May. This timetable allows for a newly elected Liverpool City Mayor and their Cabinet to provide their view. The Secretary of State will update the House on any conclusions in due course.

Dan Carden:**[179439]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his oral contribution of 24 March 2021 on Liverpool City Council, Official report, column 937, what impact assessment his Department is undertaking on the proposal for electing a reduced number of councillors in single member wards.

Luke Hall:

Subject to the representations we have requested by 24 May 2021, the Secretary of State proposes to direct Liverpool City Council to consider and consult upon a new submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of its current electoral review. Under the proposed Directions, that submission must include a proposal to reduce the number of councillors to those consistent with elections on a single member ward basis and will need to be approved by the proposed Commissioners. Any impact assessment on the proposal would be prepared by the Council.

■ Local Government: Archegos Capital Management and Greensill**John Spellar:****[178793]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of local authorities in England that have invested in funds of (a) Greensill Capital and (b) Archegos Capital Management.

Luke Hall:

Under the Prudential Framework, which governs how councils borrow and invest, local authorities are free to determine their own capital strategies and have wide freedoms to invest provided they do so within the bounds of the Framework. This is on the basis that authorities are best placed to make local capital decisions and to ensure their own prudent financial management. It also ensures that councils remain accountable for their decisions.

The Government has responsibility for the Prudential Framework to ensure it remains fit for purpose in driving sound investment decisions and constraining risk. However, the Government does not play any role in local decision making. Commensurate to its stewardship role, the Government does collect aggregate data on local authority investments, but does not collect data on investments in individual funds.

■ Local Growth Deals

Steve Reed:

[\[181282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to provide further funding to local enterprise partnerships through Local Growth Deals.

Luke Hall:

We are changing the way we support local economic growth to regenerate our town centres and high streets, support individuals into employment, improve local transport links and invest in local culture. At the Budget, we announced the Levelling up Fund which builds on and consolidates prior programmes such as the Local Growth Fund. We will be working with local businesses on the future role of Local Enterprise Partnerships, with a view to announcing more detailed plans ahead of summer recess.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[178948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 27 October 2020 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA54204, regarding households in debt.

Eddie Hughes:

I have responded to the hon. Member for West Lancashire's letter.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Meetings

Steve Reed:

[\[181280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that all meetings undertaken by Ministers in his Department are declared.

Steve Reed:

[\[181283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department holds records on meetings undertaken by special advisers employed by his Department.

Eddie Hughes:

Where required, Ministers' meetings with external organisations are published on the gov.uk website:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956236/Ministerial meetings July to Sept 2020.csv/previewhttps://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mhclg-special-advisers-gifts-hospitality-and-meetings-july-to-september-2020](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956236/Ministerial_meetings_July_to_Sept_2020.csv/previewhttps://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mhclg-special-advisers-gifts-hospitality-and-meetings-july-to-september-2020)

■ Owner Occupation

Seema Malhotra:

[\[180507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent progress he has made on bringing forward legislative proposals on leasehold extension and commonhold reform.

Eddie Hughes:

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

We will reform the process of enfranchisement valuation that leaseholders must follow to calculate the cost of extending their lease or buying their freehold. The Government will abolish marriage value, cap the treatment of ground rents at 0.1% of the freehold value, prescribe rates for the calculations at market value, and introduce an online calculator.

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'.

Having closely reviewed the Law Commission's report on Commonhold, we will establish a new Commonhold Council as a partnership of industry, leaseholders and Government that will prepare homeowners and the market for the widespread take-up of commonhold. This will take time and close working with consumers and industry, and the Commonhold Council will be the critical first step.

The Government will respond to the Law Commission's remaining recommendations on enfranchisement, commonhold and right to manage in due course. The Government will also ban the sale of new leasehold houses, give freehold homeowners equivalent rights to challenge unfair charges, and close loopholes to prevent unfair evictions.

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.

■ Public Health (Coronavirus) (Protection From Eviction) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2021: Mortgages

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[181320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the The Public Health (Coronavirus) (Protection from Eviction) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2021 apply to mortgage as well as landlord possession actions.

Christopher Pincher:

Yes. The regulations restricting the serving and execution of writs and warrants of possession by bailiffs apply to mortgage and landlord repossessions. Landlords and mortgage lenders are able to issue a claim and obtain a possession order, however bailiff enforcement in mortgage and landlord repossession cases is restricted by the terms of these Regulations until 31 May. Limited exemptions exist to enable landlords to take enforcement action in the most serious cases.

Right to Buy Scheme: Feltham and Heston**Seema Malhotra:**[\[179127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of rolling out the voluntary right to buy scheme to housing association tenants in Feltham and Heston constituency.

Christopher Pincher:

The Voluntary Right to Buy Midlands pilot is now in its final stages, and an independent evaluation of the pilot was published in February 2021. The Government committed to evaluate new pilot areas.

Schools: Travel**Stephen Timms:**[\[181179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of families in temporary accommodation in London who have to travel over an hour each way to their children's schools.

Eddie Hughes:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN178728 on 19 April.

Social Services: Fees and Charges**Steve Reed:**[\[181281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of councils charging for social care.

Eddie Hughes:

The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22 confirmed that Core Spending Power is forecast to rise by 4.6% in cash terms - a real terms increase. We are also rolling forward £1.4 billion of Social Care Grant funding from 2020-21. To this, we are adding £300 million of further funding, taking the total Social Care Grant to £1.7 billion. Councils will also have access to almost an additional £800 million through a 3% Adult Social Care precept. This is on top of continuation of all existing social care funding, including £2.1 billion of the improved Better Care Fund

Complementing this is an unprecedented package of support for local authorities to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, including £4.6 billion of un-ringfenced funding for

Covid-19 pressures in 2020/21 and an additional £1.55 billion of un-ringfenced funding for Covid pressures in 2021/22, including social care

We are now preparing for another Spending Review, which will be an opportunity to look at inflationary and demographic pressures and new service requirements – to ensure sector sustainability across the full Spending Review period.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Kate Hollern: [\[181285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding each English region will be allocated under UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers.

The November 2020 Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the Heads of Terms. The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework later in 2021 and confirm multiyear funding profiles at the next Spending Review.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry: [\[179695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether organisations based in the Republic of Ireland will be permitted to partner with organisations in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) elsewhere in the UK to access funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers. We will publish further details on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in a UK-wide Investment Framework later in 2021.

Stephen Farry: [\[179696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 30 March 2021 to Question 174332 on UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland, if he will publish a list of the community and voluntary groups that the Department has engaged with on the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers. Officials have held 25 engagement events across the UK, attended by over five hundred

representatives from a breadth of sectors including businesses, public bodies, higher education institutions, voluntary and charity sector and rural partnership groups including many in Northern Ireland. Government officials have been working closely with interested parties and will continue to do so as we develop the fund.

■ **Waking Watch Relief Fund: Applications**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[181318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications his Department received to the Waking Watch Relief fund (a) in total and (b) by local authority.

Christopher Pincher:

The Waking Watch Relief Fund opened for applications for buildings in England, except private sector buildings in London, on 31 January 2021 and closed on 14 March. Applications received are currently being processed. For private sector buildings in London the Fund opened on 18 March 2021 and remains open until 30 April. We will publish complete data on the Waking Watch Relief Fund, including the number of applications.

■ **Water Supply: Building Regulations**

Luke Pollard:

[\[178718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made on the potential effect on water efficiency of lowering the requirement to 100 litres per person per day as part of a building regulations review.

Christopher Pincher:

Building regulations require that new homes are built to a standard of 125 litres of water used per person per day, or 110 litres per person per day if required by the local authority. The Government consulted on measures to reduce personal water use, including potential amendments to building regulations in 2019 and intends to publish a response in the coming months.

■ **Water Supply: Planning**

Luke Pollard:

[\[178720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including a water neutral planning policy requirement within the OxCam Arc development.

Christopher Pincher:

On 18 February the Government published '*Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford Cambridge Arc*' where we set out the principles for how we will develop a Spatial Framework for the Arc. It will be based on a long-term, strategic approach to planning for growth across the area, unlocking its long term potential in a sustainable way and improving the Arc as a place to live and work.

In it we outline that we support an integrated approach to water management. This means setting high standards for new development, ensuring sustainable water abstraction and drought resilience, supporting water quality and support for reducing risk and resilience to flooding. It will also look at where new infrastructure should be developed, as well as incorporating nature-based solutions.

The Framework will be based on a robust and comprehensive evidence base, and we will make sure we understand the environmental, social and economic implications of proposed policies before we finalise, adopt and implement them, underpinned by a full and integrated sustainability appraisal.

As part of developing the case for new Development Corporations in the Arc, infrastructure and environmental assessments will be undertaken, including in relation to water.

■ **Windows: Repairs and Maintenance**

Bob Blackman:

[\[179044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his plans are to increase the glazing renovation rate of existing houses.

Christopher Pincher:

Double glazing is a popular energy efficiency measure and the English Housing Survey suggests that more than 85% of properties in England are fully double glazed, with less than 4% having no double glazing. As such, there is limited potential for further energy savings because so much of the stock already has efficient windows. Nevertheless, there are other benefits to more efficient glazing such as reduced internal noise, and improving the remaining single glazed windows would contribute to lower emissions.

The Government is committed to improving the energy efficiency of all homes. As part of reaching Net Zero by 2050, the Clean Growth Strategy set out that all homes should reach EPC C by 2035 where that is cost effective, affordable, and practical.

■ **Windows: Standards**

Bob Blackman:

[\[179043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to increase building standards for glazing in line with improvements in modern glazing technology for (a) new and (b) existing homes.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government will introduce a Future Homes Standard for new homes by 2025. Homes built to the Future Homes Standard will be future-proofed with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. To help industry prepare for that, in 2021 we will introduce an interim uplift in Part L standards that delivers a meaningful reduction in carbon emissions and provides a stepping stone to the Future Homes Standard in 2025. Within the 2021 standard, there is an increase in the performance of windows. The draft specification for the Future Homes Standard includes a further

increase in the performance of windows, which will be further developed over the next couple of years and consulted on in 2023

We also recently consulted on proposals for changes to requirements when work is done in existing buildings. That consultation opened on the 19 January 2021 and closed on the 13 April 2021. For this consultation we have reviewed the standards for windows in order to identify improvements. The proposal we put forward is the highest standard for replacement windows in existing homes which is still cost-effective using a simple measure of payback for investment over the life of the product. We are currently analysing responses to this consultation and will be responding to it.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Consumer Goods

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[178555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to build (a) international and (b) domestic consumer awareness of non-food and drink products made in the UK.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[179597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to increase (a) international and (b) domestic consumer awareness of non-food and drink products made in Britain.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is responsible for promotion of UK products in international markets. Some of the measures this department is taking to boost exports of non-food and drink products made in the UK are: trade promotion campaigns in key markets; UK presence at tradeshow; leveraging DIT's teams in 110 countries; providing finance and insurance from UK Export Finance; global promotion via the GREAT campaign; export hubs in all Nations; and working in partnership with UK companies and trade associations.

■ Foreign Investment in UK

Greg Smith:

[\[179595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether officials in her Department will continue to work with representatives of the employee relocation sector to maximise opportunities to attract inward investment by exploring options to give the UK a competitive advantage over other prospective destinations; and if she will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

The employee relocation sector has an important role to play in supporting inward investment into the United Kingdom. My officials will continue to engage with it.

The UK is one of the most open economies and one of the foremost destinations for inward investment in the world. In 2019/20 the Department for International Trade provided support for 1,449 Foreign Direct Investment projects, creating almost 45,000 new jobs and safeguarding a further 8,000. We also recently launched a new points-based, single global immigration system to attract a wide pool of skilled workers; this will allow a fairer, skills-led system, and a process that is simpler and quicker for employers.

■ Foreign Investment in UK: Productivity

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[179271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to increase foreign investment in UK industry in order to raise productivity.

Graham Stuart:

The UK is a leading foreign investment destination; second in the world for inward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) stocks with \$2.1 trillion, behind the USA in 2019. DIT analysis of Office for National Statistics data shows that in 2018 foreign owned firms were on average 72% more productive than domestic only firms.

In 2019/20 the Department for International Trade provided support for 1,449 FDI projects, creating almost 45,000 new jobs and safeguarding a further 8,000. In November 2020, the Prime Minister announced a new Office for Investment within the Department but under the sponsorship of Downing Street to support strategic investment. We are also prioritising regional investment and growth through our High Potential Opportunities Programme.

■ GREAT

Emily Thornberry:

[\[178921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, who in Government has responsibility for consulting business and other external stakeholders on the effective promotion of the UK's exports and export industries through the Government's GREAT campaign.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade and UK Export Finance hold this responsibility. We work together to build strong relationships with business-representative organisations, trade associations and other strategic partners such as the major banks.

The GREAT Private Sector Council meets three times a year and is attended by industry leaders from across the private sector. The primary role of this group is to act as a business advisory panel, providing valuable advice, guidance and insights into improving the GREAT programme.

■ Life Sciences: Finance

Mary Glendon:

[\[179117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the £800 million commitment from Mubadala as part of the UAE-UK Sovereign Investment Partnership, which areas of the life sciences sector will receive funding from that Partnership.

Graham Stuart:

The UK Government remains committed to providing £200m in funding to unlock additional investment in our world-leading life sciences sector. We are working closely with Mubadala and considering how best to deploy this funding in light of Mubadala's own £800m commitment to the sector.

In total, this means £1bn of new funding available for our most promising life sciences companies, with the potential to crowd in more funding from other investors.

■ Trade Agreements: Serbia

Daisy Cooper:

[\[179575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what her planned timescale is for concluding a trade deal with Serbia.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

A trade deal has been on offer to Serbia for a number of years. Rapid progress has been made since 1st January and it was signed on Friday 16th April.

■ Trade Promotion

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[178681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the cost to the public purse has been of each Trade Envoy since their appointment, to date.

Graham Stuart:

Trade Envoys are unpaid. Total expenditure for the trade envoy programme since its launch in November 2012 has been £987,153.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[178683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the accumulated investment results achieved by each Trade Envoy.

Graham Stuart:

The Prime Minister's Trade Envoy Programme supports British businesses overseas and attracts investment into the UK. The programme works in collaboration with other trade promotion activities and it focuses on emerging and high growth markets where additional senior interactions can be valuable, or larger economies where multiple interactions at different levels are effective.

There is no verifiable way to quantify the investment results achieved by each Trade Envoy given they work in collaboration with our other activities to promote investment

into the UK. The Department for International Trade's most recent published foreign direct investment results can be found in the annual report:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-international-trade-annual-report-and-accounts-2019-to-2020>

JUSTICE

■ Askham Grange Prison: Pregnancy

Rachael Maskell:

[179249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women in each ethnic group were known to be pregnant while on remand or serving a sentence in HMP Askham Grange in each quarter from 31 March 2015 to 30 September 2020.

Alex Chalk:

From July 2016 to date there have been six women known to be pregnant whilst residing at HMP Askham Grange. There were three women who declared their ethnicity as white, and three women who declared themselves as mixed ethnicity.

As part of our fundamental review of policy relating to pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units and maternal separation from children up to 2 in prison, we have committed to providing national pregnancy data in future. Further information on the review, including our findings and resulting reforms regarding data collection, can be found in our summary report published in July 2020:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/905559/summary-report-of-review-of-policy-on-mbu.pdf

■ Cemeteries: Tottenham

Janet Daby:

[179542]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to implement the recommendations of the review commissioned by his Department in 2018 into Tottenham Park Cemetery; and what recent assessment he has made of the need to regulate private cemeteries.

Alex Chalk:

We continue to work closely with all relevant stakeholders in light of the findings of the 2018 statutory inspection of Tottenham Park Cemetery.

While private burial grounds are not covered by the same regulations and guidance that govern local authority burial grounds, MoJ anticipates that private cemeteries will adhere to those standards.

The Law Commission's current Programme of Law Reform includes a project to consider modernising and streamlining the law governing the disposal of human remains, with a view to putting forward a legal framework for the future. We will ensure that issues around the management of private cemeteries are brought to the Law Commission's attention in this context.

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus

Layla Moran:

[\[179466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of employers that have been prosecuted for breaches of health and safety in relation to covid-19 to date.

Chris Philp:

National statistics on detailed offence level prosecutions including those relating to COVID-19 for the calendar year of 2020 are due for publication in May 2021.

■ Juries: Parents

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[179525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what guidance his Department has issued to staff in the Jury Central Summoning Bureau in respect of deferral of jury service by (a) breastfeeding mothers and (b) people on maternity and other statutory parental leave.

Chris Philp:

HM Courts and Tribunals Service recognise that sometimes it may be difficult for some people to serve on the date originally summoned. Jurors are given the opportunity when responding to their summons to apply for a deferral to a more suitable date within the next twelve months.

Deferral and excusal applications are considered by summoning officers at the Jury Central Summoning Bureau (JCSB). Each application for deferral/excusal is considered on its own merit, in a way that is both fair to the individual and consistent with the needs of the court in providing a representative jury.

Guidance on applications for excusal or deferral in relation to breastfeeding or maternity or parental leave states that officials should consider these applications sympathetically, with deferral considered in the first instance. Breastfeeding a child would be considered a valid reason for deferring jury service. A juror could apply for an excusal if they were still unable to serve as the new date approached.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[178951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 5 February 2021 on prisoners and vaccines, reference ZA55418.

Alex Chalk:

The Hon. Member's letter was not received by the department on 5 February 2021. A copy was requested and has now been received. A response will be sent as soon as possible.

■ Office of the Public Guardian: Staff**Gareth Thomas:**[\[178685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff are employed by the Office of the Public Guardian (a) in total and (b) to investigate powers of attorney and safeguarding; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

OPG currently employs 1,462 people. 93 of these people currently work within the LPA Investigation unit and 11 work in the deputyship's investigations team. 28 currently work within the Investigations, Triage and Support Team (ITAS) – giving a total of 132 people working within this area.

This information was taken from SOP, the Ministry of Justice's HR system. The figures include all OPG employees, including those who are currently off strength, for example those out on loan or on secondment to other organisations, sick or parental leave or on career breaks. They do not include contractors or temporary clerical workers provided by employment agencies.

■ Prisoners: Veterans**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[180635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people currently serving a prison sentence were previously members of the armed forces.

Chris Philp:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service records previous service in the Armed Forces as part of the reception process for newly received prisoners. Information on previous service does not distinguish between those who have served in the British Armed Forces or those of another nation. Those who choose to declare previous service may be referring to time spent with the UK forces or with those of another country.

As of 30 June 2020, there were 1,406 prisoners serving a custodial sentence in England and Wales who had declared former military service.

■ Public Health Funerals: Fees and Charges**Marco Longhi:**[\[178628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will take steps to help reduce the level of local authority burial fees; and what support the Government provides to people who cannot meet the cost of burials.

Alex Chalk:

Local authorities are responsible for their own budgets and making decisions on local spending in line with local priorities. This is entirely appropriate, given that central government cannot predict exactly what the cost of a local service will be. In line with this principle, public burial authorities have the power to set their charges at levels they consider to be appropriate.

The Funeral Expenses Payments scheme provides a significant contribution towards the cost of a simple, respectful funeral arranged by recipients of certain income based benefits or tax credits. The scheme pays necessary burial and cremation costs in full, as defined by legislation, plus up to £1000 for other expenses such as the cost of a coffin, church and funeral director fees. Scotland has a similar scheme, the Funeral Support Payment scheme. Support for funeral costs for all young people under 18 is provided by the Children's Funeral Fund for England, with similar schemes in Scotland and Wales. Interest-free Social Fund Budgeting Loans and Universal Credit Budgeting Advances can also be used for funeral expenses. Further financial support is available through Bereavement Support Payments which help working age people whose spouse or civil partner dies.

■ Sentencing

Esther McVey:

[\[178684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans his Department has to bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that sentencing is commensurate with the severity of the crime.

Chris Philp:

This government is serious about fighting crime, protecting the public and creating a criminal justice system that people have confidence in. Sentencing plays a crucial role in this: it is one of the key ways through which the public, victims, and offenders see justice being done, and this government is clear that sentencing must be commensurate with the severity of the crime committed.

On the 9th March the government introduced the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (PCSC Bill). This legislation will bring forward the new, smarter approach to sentencing laid out in the Sentencing White Paper published in September 2020.

Serious sexual and violent offenders must spend as much of their sentence behind bars as possible in order to reflect the severity of their crimes. The PCSC Bill will:

- End automatic halfway release from prison for an additional cohort of serious sexual and violent offenders;
- Make a Whole Life Order the starting point for the premeditated murder of a child, as well as allowing judges to hand out this maximum punishment to 18-20 year olds in exceptional cases;
- Introduce a new power to prevent the automatic early release of prisoners who become a significant public protection concern while in custody; and
- Double the maximum penalty for assaulting an emergency worker.

Delivering public protection and ensuring that sentencing is commensurate with the severity of the crime is not just about better use of custody. The PCSC Bill will make community sentences more effective so that they offer an appropriate level of punishment but also address the underlying drivers of offending, by:

- Piloting a problem-solving court approach for certain community and suspended sentence orders;
- Improving national consistency for adult Out of Court Disposals; and
- Extending the use of Electronic Monitoring.

The government is pleased that the PCSC Bill was given a Second Reading on 16th March by a large majority. As we are approaching the end of the current session, the House of Commons agreed to carry over consideration of the Bill to the next session. Given the size of the Bill, it is right to allow time for MPs to consider the detail before starting their line-by-line scrutiny.

■ Suspended Sentences: Reoffenders

Dan Jarvis: [\[181275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, on average how many previous convictions offenders who received suspended sentences had in each of the last 10 years.

Dan Jarvis: [\[181276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders with previous suspended sentences have received convictions for murder in each of the last 10 years.

Dan Jarvis: [\[R\] \[181277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders with previous convictions for violence have received suspended sentences in (a) Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and (b) South Yorkshire.

Chris Philp:

Obtaining the necessary information to answer these questions involves accessing the secure Police National Computer (PNC) system, which my relevant officials are unable to do at this time due to the current national restrictions and the need to minimise non-essential travel.

I will write to the Hon Member in due course with the information requested, once my officials are able to safely access the PNC system, and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

■ Youth Courts

Peter Kyle: [\[178747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the size of the case backlog in the youth court system.

Chris Philp:

In 2020 outstanding youth cases at the magistrates' court reached an annual peak of 12,138 in June, then consistently fell to 9,930 cases by December. In the same period, outstanding youth cases at the Crown Court remained stable, peaking at 665 in October then falling to 629 by December.

The focus for 2021 will be to drive the continued reduction of outstanding cases in the Youth Court, working with agencies across the Criminal Justice System to minimise delays.

■ Youth Offending Teams: Coronavirus

Peter Kyle:

[\[179295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to publish the Covid Recovery Plans submitted by youth offending teams to the Youth Justice Board.

Alex Chalk:

The Youth Justice Board has oversight of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and has received Covid-19 Recovery Plans from each YOT. There is no current plan for MoJ or the YJB to publish Covid-19 Recovery Plans as it is the responsibility of local authorities to make their individual plans available to the public.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Football: Takeovers

Chi Onwurah:

[\[181471\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, how many discussions he has had with how many officials on the takeover of (a) Newcastle United and (b) any other English football club in the last 12 months.

Boris Johnson:

These are commercial matters for the parties concerned. The Government was not involved at any point in the takeover talks on the sale of Newcastle United.

■ Members: Correspondence

Afzal Khan:

[\[181425\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton of 10 November 2020 on Islamophobia.

Boris Johnson:

My Office has no record of receiving this letter. I have asked my Office to contact the Hon Member's Office to re-send the correspondence and arrange for a reply to be sent.

■ Prime Minister: West Yorkshire

Tracy Brabin:

[\[181366\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, how many West Yorkshire based organisations he has met in the last 12 months.

Boris Johnson:

As Prime Minister I meet individuals and organisations from across the United Kingdom. Details of my meetings are published on gov.uk. I most recently visited West Yorkshire in February when I went to the vaccination centre in the Al Hikmah centre in Batley where I was personally able to thank all the members of staff for their vital role in rolling out the coronavirus vaccination programme.

■ **St George's Day****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[180938\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, if he will list his Engagements for St. George's Day on 23 April 2021.

Boris Johnson:

My engagements are still to be finalised, and will be announced in due course. I can inform my hon. Friend that the Cross of St George will be proudly flying alongside the Union Flag in Downing Street.

TRANSPORT■ **Acceleration Unit****Stephen Hammond:****[R]** [\[178680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide a progress report to Parliament on the work of his Department's Transport Acceleration Unit.

Andrew Stephenson:

Since commencing operation in October 2020, the Acceleration Unit has been involved in accelerating projects through the Northern Transport Acceleration Council, the Restoring Your Railways programme and the National Bus Strategy. Among the projects the Acceleration Unit has successfully supported accelerating there is, notably, ensuring the delivery of the first Beeching reversal, the Dartmoor Line into Okehampton, will open later this year 20 months early. It has supported accelerating delivery, unblocking barriers, and driving down cost on this project. Among the many projects the unit is supporting are the new A19 Tees Crossing, improvements to the A59 at Kex Gill, and ensuring the National Bus Strategy was published in March.

■ **Assistance Animals: Travel****Dan Carden:**[\[181411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress he has made in reducing barriers to travel for people with assistance dogs seeking to travel to the (a) EU and (b) Northern Ireland.

Rachel Maclean:

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

Northern Ireland-based pets and assistance dogs returning to Northern Ireland from Great Britain can continue to use a Northern Ireland-issued EU Pet Passport to re-enter Northern Ireland and will not need an animal health certificate. Current guidance on pet travel to Northern Ireland is available on DAERA's NIDirect website.

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are proactively engaging with the assistance dog community and relevant stakeholders on the impacts on dog movements from Great Britain to the EU and to Northern Ireland.

■ Aviation**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[180627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to ban short haul domestic flights; and whether his Department has made any assessment of the potential merits of such a policy.

Robert Courts:

We have no plans to ban domestic flights. The aviation sector is vital for the whole of the UK economy in terms of connectivity, direct economic activity, trade, investment and jobs, particularly where viable alternative modes of travel are limited.

We are committed to enabling the recovery of the sector to support our levelling up agenda through regional connectivity and strengthen ties within the Union. We recognise the importance of maintaining a thriving and competitive aviation sector in the UK to deliver connectivity.

The Government is already supporting a variety of technology, fuel and market-based measures to address aviation emissions, and we will consult on a Net Zero Aviation Strategy in the coming months, setting out the steps to reach net zero aviation emissions by 2050.

Kerry McCarthy:[\[181206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of UK domestic passenger journeys made by air in 2019-20 that would have taken less than two and half hours to complete by train.

Kerry McCarthy:[\[181207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of domestic passenger flight routes in operation in the UK that would take less than two and a half hours to complete by train.

Robert Courts:

UK domestic air routes with more than 1,000 passengers in 2019 that are within a two-and-a-half-hour range by train, as well as the number of passenger journeys on these routes in 2019, are presented in the table below.

DEPARTURE AIRPORT	ARRIVAL AIRPORT	DOMESTIC PASSENGERS
Heathrow	Manchester	283,063
Manchester	Heathrow	270,044
Heathrow	Leeds Bradford	50,930
Leeds Bradford	Heathrow	48,953
Exeter	London City	17,307
London City	Exeter	15,007
Manchester	London City	1,862
London City	Manchester	1,325

The Department holds data on passenger numbers on a direct basis only. Rail journey times on routes between these cities can be variable between services and train operators, so some services could take longer than the indicative two-and-a-half-hour threshold used here.

Data on passenger movements on all UK domestic routes for 2019 are published by the Civil Aviation Authority on their website in table 12.2.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus**

Sir Greg Knight:[\[181194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) level of risk of catching covid-19 posed to passengers on aeroplane flights and (b) effect of leaving all middle seats vacant on the level of that risk; what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the additional steps that could be taken to reduce that risk; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The Government expects all airlines to manage the risks of COVID-19 transmission as far as possible and published guidance to provide safer services for passengers. The Safer Transport guidance for operators, which was developed with industry, is clear that robust social distancing, regular cleaning, and good hand and respiratory hygiene are the best ways of protecting against the transmission of coronavirus.

Where social distancing is not possible, airlines are advised to carry out a risk assessment and implement appropriate risk controls. For example, wearing a face

covering can play a role in helping us to protect other passengers, which is why it is now mandatory to wear one on board aircraft.

It is also worth noting that passengers are seated facing forwards in the same direction on board aircraft, which avoids the increased transmission risk of being seated face to face.

In addition, air conditioning systems on modern aircraft filter cabin air every few minutes through High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters. These filters are very effective at capturing airborne microbes in the filtered air and, when coupled with the drawn in fresh air, can help to mitigate the longer-range risk of transmission.

Officials continue to engage with the aviation sector to ensure they are supported in implementing best practices.

■ Bus Lanes

Sarah Olney: [181373]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) length of bus lanes removed between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 to (i) provide more space for motorists and (ii) create sections of road dedicated to cyclists; and if he will list the locations where those lanes have been removed.

Sarah Olney: [181374]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance he has issued to local transport bodies on the removal of bus lanes to enable the creation of sections of road dedicated to cyclists.

Sarah Olney: [181375]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his policy is on dedicating sections of roads for use as bus and cycle lanes.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has made no such estimate on the removal of bus lanes. Local authorities are responsible for managing their roads, including provision of bus lanes and cycling infrastructure. They are free to make their own decisions about the streets under their care, provided they take account of the relevant legislation.

The Department has issued guidance for local authorities on reallocating road space in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. This includes bus and cycle-only corridors as one measure local authorities may consider. This can be accessed at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities.

In July 2020, the Department also published Local Transport Note 1/20: Cycle Infrastructure Design. This provides good practice advice on designing high-quality cycling infrastructure and includes advice on bus and cycle lanes.

Bus lanes are open to cyclists by default, and whilst not specifically a cycle facility, bus lanes can offer some degree of segregation for cyclists as they significantly reduce the amount of interaction with motor traffic. Local Transport Note 1.20 can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

■ Bus Services

Stephen Hammond: [R] [178965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the change in bus patronage as a result of bus franchising and enhanced partnerships compared to operation of the deregulated bus market.

Rachel Maclean:

Bus passenger journey statistics are collected and published by the Department quarterly.

The Bus Services Act 2017 Impact Assessment estimates the impact of franchising and enhanced partnerships on patronage. Under franchising, we estimated that there will be a significant increase in patronage as a result of fare simplification as Local Transport Authorities take control of bus fare revenue. Under enhanced partnerships, we estimated that patronage will increase as a result of journey quality improvements.

■ Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [180423]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what methods of communication are available to (a) Ministers and (b) hon. Members for corresponding with the chief executive of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency.

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [180424]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has set response time targets for correspondence with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency.

Rachel Maclean:

The Chief Executive of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) welcomes correspondence from ministers and hon members about issues for which the DVSA is responsible, either electronically or by post.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency aims to respond to letters and emails it receives within 10 working days.

■ Driving Licences

Kirsten Oswald: [181314]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps DVSA is taking to prioritise renewal of lorry and bus licences which have expired since 31 December 2020.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[181316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a six month extension of the policy of automatically extending lorry or bus driving licences or entitlement to drive in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

All applications to renew lorry and bus (Group 2) driving licences are being prioritised by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. There are no plans to further extend driving licence validity periods. Group 2 drivers who have previously benefited from an extension to their driving licence must obtain the necessary medical report in the interests of road safety.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[181315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) backlog and (b) processing time is to renew lorry and bus licences that have expired since 31 December 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

The number of applications awaiting processing fluctuates on a daily basis as driving licences are issued and new applications received. All driving licence applications are currently being processed within published target times.

■ Driving Licences: France

Catherine West:

[\[181365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with his French counterpart on the validity of British driving licenses for British residents in France since the end of the transition period.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to establishing reciprocal arrangements with France with the minimum of bureaucracy. The Government has secured interim arrangements with the French authorities which will allow UK licence holders, resident in France, to continue to use their valid UK licence until 1 January 2022. We are working urgently with the French government to find a solution for those with expired licences as well as to finalise a permanent arrangement. The Government commits to providing an update as soon as possible.

■ Driving Licences: Reciprocal Arrangements

Stephen Farry:

[\[180650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the absence of a UK-France reciprocal agreement on driving licences, what plans he has to support UK citizens living in France whose licences have recently expired, or are due to expire soon.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to establishing reciprocal arrangements with France with the minimum of bureaucracy. The Government has secured interim arrangements with the French authorities which will allow UK licence holders to

continue to use their valid UK licence until 1 January 2022. These interim arrangements do not extend to UK licences that have expired. We are working closely with the French government to find a solution for those with expired licences as well as to finalise a permanent arrangement. The Government commits to providing an update as soon as possible.

Stephen Farry:

[180651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2021 to Question 164339 on Driving Licences: Reciprocal Arrangements, what recent progress he has made on a UK-France reciprocal agreement.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to establishing reciprocal arrangements with France with the minimum of bureaucracy. The Government has secured interim arrangements with the French authorities which will allow UK licence holders to continue to use their valid UK licence until 1 January 2022. We are working closely with the French government to finalise a permanent arrangement, which we expect to be concluded soon. The Government commits to providing an update as soon as possible.

■ Driving Tests

Ian Lavery:

[180502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will extend the date on driving theory tests due to expire in 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

The maximum duration of two years between passing the theory test and a subsequent practical test is in place for road safety reasons, to ensure a candidate's knowledge is current. This validity period is set in legislation and the Government has no current plans to lay further legislation to extend it.

It is important road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date at the critical point a person drives unsupervised for the first time. Those with theory test certificates expiring now will have taken their test in early 2019. Since then, they have been unable to take lessons and practice for long periods of time, and not at all during recent lockdowns. It is difficult to maintain knowledge and understanding of driving theory at the level required during that time without being able to put it into practice. Research suggests that this would be particularly harmful for hazard perception skills, a key factor in road safety.

Ensuring new drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the training of new drivers, who are disproportionately represented in casualty statistics. Taking all this into consideration, the decision has been made not to extend theory test certificates and learners will need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires.

■ Driving Tests: Employment

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[181313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 131307 on Driving Tests: Employment, what steps the DVSA is taking to prioritise applicants for whom a driving licence is a requirement for maintaining or taking up employment.

Rachel Maclean:

During the lockdown period, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has been offering a limited theory test and practical test service in England and Wales to NHS health and social care workers, emergency services and local council workers who need to both drive as part of their job and respond to 'threats to life' as part of their job. The DVSA has contacted eligible organisations, such as NHS Trusts, to explain how to nominate candidates; candidates cannot apply themselves.

Mobile emergency worker tests cannot be currently offered in Scotland due to Covid restrictions determined by the Scottish Government.

The DVSA has no current plans to expand this priority service.

■ Driving Tests: Scotland

John Lamont:

[\[180578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Transport Scotland on the recommencement of Category F driving tests.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has had regular discussions with Transport Scotland when making decisions around its testing services.

On 16 March, the First Minister of Scotland introduced an updated Strategic Framework for COVID-19. The Framework sets out the aim to move back to a levels system from the last week of April 2021. If the data allow, in Scotland, category F driving tests will resume on 26 April 2021 at the earliest.

■ DVLA: Correspondence

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[181185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of when the DVLA plans to respond to the application dated 30 December 2020 from a resident of Christchurch with driver number NICH0311169DG9SB; and for what reason that response is delayed.

Rachel Maclean:

I have asked the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to look into this particular case as a matter of urgency and will ensure my Honourable Friend receives a reply directly.

■ Electric Vehicles: Sales

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[181203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the transition of public and private sector fleets to electric vehicles on (a) the development of electric vehicle second hand markets and (b) electric vehicle affordability.

Rachel Maclean:

We estimate that fleet operator businesses buy over half of the new vehicles sold each year and subsequently are major suppliers to the second hand market. Supporting them to choose zero emission vehicles will therefore help to grow the second hand market. Our ambitions for zero emission driving are 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.

Once fuel costs and tax incentives are factored in, we expect the total cost of ownership to reach parity during the 2020s, compared to petrol and diesel cars. It costs from 1p/mile to run a new electric vehicle, compared to around 10p per mile for new diesel/petrol vehicles.

■ Ferries: Isle of Man

Kim Johnson:

[\[178531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Liverpool City Region Freeport on the employment conditions of seafarers working on Isle of Man Steam Packet ferry services between Liverpool and the Isle of Man.

Robert Courts:

Employment conditions for seafarers are subject to international and domestic law and the provision of freeports does not change those obligations.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: North East

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[178910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the economic benefits of High Speed Two for Wearside; and what funding his Department plans to allocate for rail in Wearside.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 presents a significant opportunity for businesses of all sizes across Wearside, and the North East, with HS2 Ltd's supply chain consisting of up to 400,000 contract opportunities.

HS2 has a very extensive supply chain and can therefore only monitor critical contracts as a result. 24 suppliers on critical contracts across the North East have won work on HS2, 2 of which are based in Wearside. The contracts for the suppliers in Wearside have been for services including, but not limited to, Land Surveying and

Engineering services. £12bn worth of supply chain contract opportunities are available to businesses across the United Kingdom in the coming months and years.

The Department for Transport is currently considering the recent Restore Your Railway Ideas Fund Round 3 bid, co-sponsored by the Hon Member, for reinstatement of local passenger services on the Leamside line. We are also contributing, through the Transforming Cities Fund allocation for the North East, to the redevelopment of Sunderland station

Subject to the creation of appropriate governance arrangements to agree and deliver funding, the North East will have access to a share of the £4.2 billion intracity transport fund over the next five years from 2022/23

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: EU Countries

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[180911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the post-UK leaving the EU cabotage rules on UK hauliers involved in live music touring in the EU.

Rachel Maclean:

It is the Department for Transport's assessment that the TCA allows for the vast majority of haulage operations that were being undertaken by UK hauliers before the end of the transition period to continue. During UK-EU negotiations, the UK put forward proposals for an exemption for specialist hauliers carrying out tours for cultural events in the EU, but the EU did not agree to our asks.

■ Public Transport

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[180524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to ensure future public transport systems in England are (a) efficient, (b) affordable and (c) environmentally friendly.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to ensuring an efficient, affordable and environmentally friendly public transport system. This is why on 15 March we published a National Bus Strategy which will improve bus services for passengers across England, making them more reliable, environmentally friendly and better co-ordinated with simpler fares. We are also currently preparing the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail to deliver a more efficient, affordable and greener rail network, and a bold and ambitious Transport Decarbonisation Plan to achieve net zero emissions across all public transport services.

■ Rail Review

Stephen Hammond:

[R] [\[178972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the outcomes of the Williams Rail Review.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The government intends on publishing a White Paper with details of its plans for rail reform soon.

■ Railway Stations: Disability

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[181392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to increase the number of train stations in England with step free access.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government has committed to spend £350million on providing step free access to more stations by 2024. We will shortly commission audits of all mainline stations to prioritise future investment in station accessibility, and further measures will be included in the forthcoming rail reform White Paper.

■ Railways: Coronavirus

Sam Tarry:

[\[179666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the RSSB report, Covid Transmission Rates on Rail, published in August 2020, what recent assessment his Department has made of the level of covid-19 transmission on rail journeys.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department for Transport's decisions continue to be informed by the most up-to-date scientific evidence and advice, including advice from SAGE, its sub-groups, industry and academia.

The Department is working hard and collaborating across the UK's research and innovation community, including with Rail Safety and Standards Board, to build and assess a broad base of evidence to better understand transmission and interventions that help reduce transmission risk. This includes working with SAGE, industry and academia on the Transport Risk Assessment for COVID Knowledge (TRACK) project. This is an 18-month, £2 million UK Research and Innovation-funded project designed to address critical knowledge gaps around transmission of SARS-CoV-2 on public transport, including on rail. Outputs from this project will continue to help inform decisions and practices for mitigating risk of transmission in public transport.

■ Railways: Disability

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[181389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 30 March 2021 to Question 173145, on Railways: Disability, whether the Government has plans to publicise the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard and badge scheme.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[181390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 30 March 2021 to Question 173145, on Railways: Disability, whether he plans to make lanyards and badges available at train stations.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[181391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 30 March 2021 to Question 173145, on Railways: Disability, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of that scheme to all.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is committed to ensuring that disabled people have the same access to transport services and opportunities to travel as other members of society and supports the Sunflower Lanyard and Card scheme. Every train operator across England, Scotland and Wales has signed up to the Sunflower scheme. The lanyards and cards can be obtained and collected from participating ticket offices at stations, as well as other locations such as supermarkets. Following the rail industry announcement last year recognising the scheme across the rail network, it will be included in any disability related communications over the summer.

■ Railways: Finance

Kirsten Oswald: [\[181028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much of the £4.2 billion for intra-city transport settlements referred to in Build Back Better: our plan for growth will be invested in the existing rail network.

Rachel Maclean:

As announced at Budget 2020 and confirmed in the subsequent Spending Review, the Government is investing £4.2 billion in the transport networks of eight city regions across England from 2022/23.

This funding will be delivered through multi-year consolidated transport settlements negotiated with central Government and based on plans put forward by city regions.

It will be for the eligible Combined Authorities, in their role as the local transport authorities, to prioritise projects within their local areas.

The Department is looking forward to working towards and agreeing settlements based on each eligible city region's transport priorities.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[181029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when a Project Speed review of investment planning for the rail network will be undertaken.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We continue to develop our rail portfolio in line with the rail industry's Project SPEED principles, reflecting the need to deliver fast and efficient outcomes for the significant investment this government is making in rail. That means we are embedding the rail industry's Project SPEED principles in every one of our investment decisions. We are also working with colleagues across Government to ensure that the HMT led Project Speed initiatives are also embedded in rail projects.

■ **Rapid Transit Systems: Urban Areas**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[180525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support the introduction and expansion of very light rail transit systems in towns and cities in England.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has demonstrated a commitment to supporting the light rail sector. Throughout the pandemic, Government has provided almost £200 million of funding support to Light Rail operators in England, outside of London. In addition, through funding packages to cities, the Government has paid for or underwritten significant investments in light rail in recent years. Very Light Rail is still an emerging technology and the Government will continue to work with towns and cities to ensure any business cases focused on very light rail fully reflect the costs and benefits of new mass transit schemes and identify possible funding and financing routes.

■ **Roads: Accidents**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[181204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of lower traffic levels in 2020 on the number of road traffic casualties in that year.

Rachel Maclean:

Detailed data on reported personal injury road accidents in Great Britain for 2020 will be published in September 2021. Provisional estimates of reported road casualties in Great Britain for the year ending June 2020 were published in January 2021.

Provisional estimates suggest that the total number of road casualties in Great Britain between January and June 2020 was 30% lower than in the first six months of 2019. Motor traffic levels in the first half of 2020 also decreased by 30% compared to those in the first half of 2019. The overall casualty rate remained consistent between the two periods.

The change in road traffic and road casualties in the first half of 2020 compared to the previous year varied notably by month, with the most considerable reductions in

both following the Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown beginning during March 2020. Further details are available in the published report on provisional estimates of reported road casualties in Great Britain for the year ending June 2020, which can be accessed at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956524/road-casualties-year-ending-june-2020.pdf

Kerry McCarthy:

[181205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he had made of the potential effect on road casualties of introducing a default 20mph speed limit on residential streets.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department published a comprehensive three-year evaluation of the effect of 20mph signed-only limits on 22 November 2018.

The research substantially strengthens the evidence base on perceptions, speeds and early outcomes associated with 20mph speed limits, and is the only major UK study to consider multiple case study areas and provide a national view.

The headline findings were:

- 20mph limits are supported by the majority of residents and drivers
- There has been a small reduction in median speed (less than 1mph).
- Vehicles travelling at higher speeds before the introduction of the 20mph limit have reduced their speed more than those already travelling at lower speeds.
- There is insufficient evidence to conclude that there has been a significant change in collisions and casualties following the introduction of 20mph limits in residential areas.
- In one city centre case study there has been a significant reduction in collisions and casualties.

■ Roads: Safety

Justin Madders:

[181044]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish his response to the Review of The Highway Code to improve road safety for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders consultation, which closed on 27 October 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

The consultation on the review of the guidance in The Highway Code to improve safety for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders closed in October 2020 with over 20,000 responses received. We are currently undertaking a full analysis of all replies and expect to publish a response later this year.

■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions

Kerry McCarthy: [\[178901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress the UK has made towards meeting the 2018 International Maritime Organisation target of halving shipping emissions by 2050.

Robert Courts:

Since the agreement of the Initial IMO Strategy in 2018, the UK has continued to work with the IMO to develop and agree policy measures to drive emissions reduction in the sector. In 2019 the UK became the first IMO Member State to publish a National Action Plan, the Clean Maritime Plan, and the plan's commitments have now largely been implemented. In March 2021 the UK launched the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition to support the development of clean maritime technology. Further action is needed both internationally and domestically, and the upcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan will set out plans to deliver ambitious emissions reduction in maritime and across all modes of transport.

■ South Western Railway: Rolling Stock

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[181387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions has he had with representatives of South Western Railway on the length of time taken for the roll-out of the class 701 Arterio units.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has regular discussions with South Western Railway which include all rolling stock related matters and has been kept updated on the position regarding the new class 701 Arterio units. I recently met with the Managing Director of SWR and received a briefing on this matter and other similarly important issues.

■ Suez: Shipping

Dr Luke Evans: [\[181122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to learn lessons from the recent blockage of the Suez Canal in the context of strategic planning for the UK's future maritime trade.

Robert Courts:

The Department has been working closely with maritime operators throughout the pandemic, and in particular major shipping lines and ports regarding the unprecedented global surge in container freight that was experienced at the end of 2020 and early 2021. The lessons learned from that meant that there was a swift response across Government Departments to assess impacts on supply chains following the Suez incident. The Department will continue to engage with shipping lines and container ports. It is clear that whilst some disruption is hard to avoid, industry has established operational plans and flexibility to enable them to respond to

crisis and maintain continuity of trade, as evidenced by the re-routing of vessels around the Cape of Good Hope

■ **Transport: Infrastructure**

Stephen Hammond:

[R] [\[178971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proposals his Department's Transport Acceleration Unit has put forward to accelerate the delivery of transport infrastructure projects.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Acceleration Unit continues to provide the Secretary of State with regular updates and proposals for future projects and is due to discuss its delivery plan for the coming 12 months. The Unit is continuing its work following the publication of the National Bus Strategy. Through the Northern Transport Acceleration Council, 112 projects have been identified with northern leaders, including the Tees Valley hydrogen hub, dualling the A66, Northumberland Line and Hope Valley Line projects. The Unit is also engaged on progressing the Restoring Your Railway programme to delivery and is reviewing individual schemes for acceleration. It has also been commissioned to challenge the Cambridge South rail enhancement project.

■ **Transport: North East**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[178911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister of State of 17 March 2021, Official Report, column 446, what transport infrastructure has been considered for (a) Tyne and Wear and (b) Durham.

Andrew Stephenson:

As I stated in my oral contribution on 17 March 2021, Official Report, column 446, delivering high-quality, world-class transport infrastructure in northern England and following through on our commitments to level up remain a top priority for the Government. This is certainly the case for Tyne and Wear and Durham.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department has endeavoured to provide the necessary support to local transport operators in Tyne and Wear and Durham, with the Bus Services Operators Grant paid at pre-Covid levels to maintain essential services. Furthermore, Tyne and Wear Metro have received over £33 million from light rail support packages throughout the pandemic.

In keeping with our ambition to build back better, Nexus will receive £20 million of capital funding to deliver infrastructure renewals for the Metro in 2021/22.

Furthermore, early last year the Department announced the £500 million Restoring Your Railway fund, to start reopening lines and stations, reconnecting people and communities. We received a bid for development funding for the Leamside Line in round 3 of the Ideas Fund, which closed on 5 March 2021. The Department is currently assessing the bid and we expect to announce outcomes in the summer.

Further to the above, Transport North East was the recipient of £198.4 million in tranche 2 of the Transforming City Fund, which will support transformational projects like Metroflow and the regeneration of Durham Bus Station. As well as this, £13.5 million from the Active Travel Fund was made available to the North East, along with a share of the £4.7 million Rural Mobility Fund delivered to local authorities across the North to help connect isolated communities.

The Department recognises that existing highways infrastructure needs constant improvement, hence £82.9 million was allocated to the North East to support highways maintenance, pothole repairs and local transport measures in 2021/22. This planned investment follows the delivery already well underway, for example on the transformational improvements to the A19 at Downhill Lane and Testo's roundabout, which will vastly improve traffic flow through this vital corridor when completed later this year.

Finally, subject to the creation of appropriate governance arrangements to agree and deliver funding, the North East will have access to a share of the £4.2 billion intracity transport fund over the next five years from 2022/23. This is in addition to the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund that areas across the country can bid into, demonstrating our commitment to all regions of the UK including Tyne and Wear and Durham.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[179179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether humanitarian aid work and volunteering qualify for exemptions from covid-19 travel restrictions; and if he will update the online Government guidance on travel to clarify what travel restrictions apply to humanitarian aid work and volunteering.

Robert Courts:

Guidance for those intending overseas travel from England during the national restrictions is published on GOV.UK, at: <https://www.gov.uk/travel-abroad>

For humanitarian and volunteering there is relevant detail under the section on 'Reasonable excuses for travel abroad' on: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-declaration-form-for-international-travel>

The guidance for persons returning to or travelling into the UK, is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>

Different international travel rules may apply in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and individuals should follow the guidance of the relevant devolved administration.

■ Travel Restrictions: India

Sir Christopher Chope:

[181184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason is India not a red list country for the purposes of covid-19 travel restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The government announced on 19 April 2021 that India had been added to the 'red-list'. A travel ban will be implemented for visitors from India from 4am on 23 April.

■ **Travel Restrictions: Scotland****John Lamont:**[\[179351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Scottish Government on the easing of domestic travel restrictions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Secretary of State for Transport has been and will continue to engage with his counterpart in the Scottish Government to discuss domestic Covid-19 policy.

■ **Vehicles: Refrigeration****Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[180400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many vehicles fitted with industrial refrigeration units are registered in the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport does not hold information about the number of vehicles fitted with industrial refrigeration units that are registered in the UK as this information is not required for the vehicle registration process.

■ **West Coast Railway Line: Timetables****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[181404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of timetable changes in May 2021 on passengers wanting to book in advance on Avanti West Coast's services.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In order to remain aligned with nationwide COVID-19 restrictions and the Government's Roadmap for Recovery, Avanti West Coast has adapted its timetable, often at short notice, which has had the effect of impacting the advanced reservation ticket release.

The Department continues to work closely with Avanti West Coast and Network Rail to minimise this impact on passengers. Advanced booking is on track to recover over the spring and for the summer in line with the Roadmap roll out.

TREASURY**■ Business: Capital Investment**

Andrea Jenkyns: [179270]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support businesses with high capital investments apart from the super-deduction of capital gains tax.

Jesse Norman:

The super-deduction reduces the corporation tax bill of companies that invest. Therefore, it is separate to the capital gains tax regime.

HM Treasury have published a factsheet on the super-deduction that also explains what capital expenditure qualifies for the different reliefs in the capital allowance regime. The factsheet can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/967202/Super_deduction_factsheet.pdf.

■ Capital Allowances: Carbon Emissions

Dan Carden: [179443]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the super-deduction on progress towards the Government's climate emissions targets.

Jesse Norman:

The super-deduction relieves investments in new plant and machinery assets, meaning companies can invest in new equipment, including those designed to make them more energy efficient.

■ Capital Allowances: Fraud

Dan Carden: [179442]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the super-deduction on levels of tax fraud.

Jesse Norman:

The super-deduction has safeguards within the legislation to prevent abuse, including the exclusion of connected party transactions and second hand assets.

The legislation also introduces a new anti-avoidance provision that applies to counteract arrangements which are contrived, abnormal, or lacking a genuine commercial purpose.

■ Capital Gains Tax

Dan Carden: [179444]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the regional distribution of capital gains in the UK.

Jesse Norman:

Capital Gains Tax (CGT) is reserved and applies across the whole of the UK.

In 2018-19, 92.3 percent of CGT liabilities arose in England, 1.6 percent in Wales, 4.6 percent in Scotland and 1.4 percent in Northern Ireland.

The full 2018-19 CGT data on individuals, gains and tax accruals by region is available online:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908659/Table_5.pdf.

■ Capital Gains Tax: Income Tax**Dan Carden:****[179446]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment has he made of the potential (a) distributional effect and (b) projected receipts of equalising capital gains tax rates with income tax rates.

Jesse Norman:

Last year, the Chancellor commissioned the Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) to carry out a review of Capital Gains Tax (CGT). The OTS considered a range of issues and recommended aligning the rates charged on capital gains with those on income. The report contains revenue estimates on the impact of their recommendations. The Government will respond to the OTS report in due course.

Any changes to the tax system will balance the need to raise revenue with the principles of fairness and market efficiency. The Government's priority is supporting jobs and the economic recovery from the pandemic.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Dan Carden:****[179434]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether (a) persons and (b) organisations from outside Government were involved in designing the Government's covid-19 emergency loan schemes.

Kemi Badenoch:

Since March 2020, the Government has introduced a collection of emergency loan guarantee schemes to support businesses' access to lending in response to Covid-19. As of 21st March 2021, these schemes have collectively approved more than £75 billion worth of finance through more than 1.6 million facilities to support businesses of all sizes to get through the pandemic.

On 23 March 2020, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) was launched, building closely off the former Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG) Scheme which ran from 2009 to 2020.

The Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) were launched on 20 April and 4 May 2020 respectively. These schemes responded to market feedback that both the largest and

smallest UK businesses needed support outside CBILS. CLBILS offered Government-guaranteed loans to businesses with a turnover greater than £45 million who needed bigger loans than £5 million. BBLS offered 100% guaranteed loans to ensure that the smallest businesses could access loans from £2,000 up to £50,000, capped at 25% of businesses' turnover in a matter of just days, as these businesses had struggled with the eligibility criteria for CBILS.

In launching these schemes and ensuring their smooth operation thereafter, the British Business Bank (BBB), HM Treasury and BEIS worked closely with the finance industry and business groups to ensure Government-backed finance could get to the businesses who needed it most. These discussions focused purely on how the schemes could function as effectively as possible; they did not cover the entry criteria for firms who wanted to participate in the scheme as accredited lenders.

■ Customs Intermediaries: Recruitment

Jack Dromey: [\[178990\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many additional customs agents have been employed by HMRC since February 2020.

Jack Dromey: [\[178991\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what comparative assessment he has made of the number of (a) additional HMRC customs agents that are required to manage the new trading rules with the EU under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and (b) those agents required in February 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The Government does not employ customs agents/customs intermediaries directly, and it does not have a target for numbers of customs agents. Readiness of the customs intermediary sector relates to the capacity to make declarations, rather than numbers of staff employed. This is because the sector is varied and made up of a number of different business models including specific customs brokers, freight forwarders and fast parcel operators; all of which will require different numbers of staff to complete declarations and to provide their services. Many in the sector have innovated and brought in significant IT solutions to automate many processes which has reduced the numbers of staff they require. The Government has helped them to do this by making over £80 million of support available, including flexible grants that can be used for IT and training, as well as recruitment, depending on the needs of the business.

The Government knows the intermediary sector has used this support and increased capacity significantly. The findings of recent Ipsos Mori surveying of the sector (published on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-into-the-customs-intermediaries-sector-wave-2-report>) show that customs intermediaries expected to increase their capacity four fold to meet additional demand. In addition, the Government has created an intermediary register on GOV.UK to help traders find an agent. This holds a list of intermediaries that traders could use and shows which

are taking on new clients, and the services offered. Over 300 intermediaries have highlighted they are taking on new clients, including those that specialise in smaller traders or movements of goods subject to SPS controls.

The Government continues to monitor the situation closely and engage with the sector to understand the support it needs, keeping measures under review.

■ Education: Finance

Nadia Whittome:

[\[179722\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will confirm that the amount of funding allocated to education in 2022-23 will be at least that allocated in 2021-22.

Steve Barclay:

Discussions on spending allocations for 2022-23 between the Treasury and other governmental departments, including the Department for Education, are ongoing. These will be decided at the Spending Review later this year. More details will be set out in due course.

The core schools budget for 2022-23 has already been agreed as part of the 3-year schools settlement announced at Spending Round 19. This represents a £7.1 billion increase in school funding compared to 2019-20 budgets.

■ Empty Property: Non-domestic Rates

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[178591\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending empty property business rates relief on properties that remain empty due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government maintains an Empty Property Relief (EPR) to support property owners ahead of the reoccupation of vacated premises.

Under EPR, owners of retail properties do not normally have to pay business rates on newly vacated buildings for three months.

The Budget announced a three-month extension to the business rates holiday for eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors that was provided at Budget 2020. From 1 July 2021, 66% relief will be available subject to a cash cap that depends on whether businesses have been required to close or were able to open.

Properties which have closed temporarily due to the Government's advice on COVID-19 should be treated as occupied for the purposes of the business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure properties.

■ Free Zones: Crime

Dan Carden:

[\[179445\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the designation of freeport status on levels of (a) tax evasion, (b) tax avoidance and (c) other criminality in those areas.

Jesse Norman:

The UK plays a key role in tackling cross-border illegal activity. Freeports are commonly used across the globe, and the Government has learned from these examples to build upon its current expertise and ensure cross-border illegal activity is thwarted.

The Government's commitment to combatting abusive tax practices has also been a key consideration throughout the design of the freeport offer.

■ High Rise Flats: Taxation

Royston Smith:

[\[179257\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making leaseholders of high-rise buildings with unsafe cladding who are required to complete a self-assessment tax return exempt from any taxes due as a result of that assessment.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is investing over £5 billion in building safety, which will help protect leaseholders from cladding remediation costs in high-rise residential buildings. On 10 February 2021, the Government announced a 5-point plan for investment in building safety, with £3.5 billion earmarked for the removal of unsafe cladding on high-rise residential buildings, as well as a new finance scheme for cladding removal on buildings between 11 and 18 metres where no leaseholder will ever pay more than £50 a month. In addition, the Government has proposed a new 'Gateway 2' industry levy and residential property developer tax to ensure developers contribute to costs. These measures will provide certainty to residents and lenders, boosting the housing market and helping to ensure that developers, investors and building owners who have the means make a fair contribution to costs of remediation, without passing on costs to leaseholders.

No consideration has been made for a self-assessment exemption for leaseholders of high rise buildings with unsafe cladding.

■ Hospitality Industry: VAT

Ian Paisley:

[\[179119\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has undertaken an assessment of the effect of the reduction in VAT on the hospitality sector.

Jesse Norman:

In order to support the cash flow and viability of about 150,000 businesses and to protect over 2.4 million jobs, the Government has applied a temporary reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) to goods and services supplied by the tourism and hospitality sectors, which will now end on 30 September 2021. On 1 October 2021, a new reduced rate of 12.5 per cent will be introduced for these goods and services to ease affected businesses back to the standard rate. The new rate will end on 31 March 2022.

This relief is estimated to be worth over £7 billion to the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Ian Paisley:[\[179120\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the sales figures for hospitality broken down by (a) food, (b) alcohol and (c) non-alcoholic drinks in each month since the introduction of the reduction in VAT.

Jesse Norman:

The information is not available. Most businesses submit VAT returns to HM Revenue and Customs quarterly, and quarterly returns are for differing accounting periods. Businesses are not required to provide figures for different products or services on their VAT returns, as this would impose an excessive administrative burden.

Members: Correspondence**Afzal Khan:**[\[179512\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to reply to the correspondence of 19 January 2021 from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton on coronavirus job retention scheme: supply teachers.

Jesse Norman:

The Treasury has no record of receiving the letter of 19 January from the Honourable Member regarding supply teachers having difficulties with access to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS).

Since receiving this question, Treasury officials have contacted the Honourable Member's office to request a copy of the letter. The Treasury has now received this and will respond as soon as possible.

Multinational Companies: Disclosure of Information**Dan Carden:**[\[179447\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent progress has been made on the publication of aggregate data from the country-by-country reporting of multinational companies; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Government supports the goal of improving the measurement and monitoring of base erosion and profit shifting, and improving tax transparency.

UK officials are continuing to work with the OECD Secretariat to address issues with the quality of country-by-country reporting data, to ensure that it is accurate, reliable and suitable for publication.

■ Multinational Companies: Tax Avoidance**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[178894\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the value of additional tax revenues as a result of the implementation of Pillar 2 of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) framework.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[178895\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of implementing Pillar 2 of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) framework on costs to (a) businesses and (b) consumers in the UK.

Dan Carden:[\[179441\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a global minimum tax rate, as proposed by President Biden; and if he will make a statement.

Dan Carden:[\[179448\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of a global minimum tax rate of 21 per cent on revenues under the corporation tax charge in 2022-23.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[180427\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of proposals under Pillar 2 of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) framework on the (a) insurance and reinsurance industries, (b) revenues to his Department and (c) wider economy.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[180428\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits for the UK economy of securing carve-outs from Pillar 2 of the OECD Framework on BEPS for (a) manufacturing, (b) financial services and (c) insurance.

Jesse Norman:

The UK has been at the forefront of global efforts to update the international corporation tax framework in response to challenges created by digitisation.

The UK played an active role in helping to develop a comprehensive two-pillar solution. This would ensure countries can more effectively tax businesses that participate in their economies as well as require multinational groups to pay a minimum level of tax on profit they generate in jurisdictions in which they operate.

The UK also played a leading role in securing a G20 commitment to reach political agreement on such a solution by mid-2021, and is now using its G7 Presidency to help deliver on that objective.

The details of a political agreement are still subject to international negotiation and it would not be appropriate to provide a detailed impact assessment or to comment on specific provisions.

If and when a global solution is agreed and implemented it will be assessed through the OBR forecast process in the usual way.

■ Off-payroll Working

Peter Aldous:

[179085]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that end-clients administer IR35 status accurately for contractors in instances where contractors are working in a genuinely independent manner.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC are continuing to help businesses get determinations right. HMRC set up dedicated teams to provide education and support to all businesses, public bodies and charities affected by the off-payroll working reform. This includes topic-based webinars, workshops as well as targeted one-to-one calls with affected businesses.

This is further supported by updated off-payroll working guidance, online learning and attendance at stakeholder events.

HMRC have also outlined how they will support customers to comply with the changes to the off-payroll working rules:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-issue-briefing-supporting-organisations-to-comply-with-changes-to-the-off-payroll-working-rules-ir35>.

HMRC developed the Check Employment Status for Tax (CEST) tool to help organisations and individuals determine employment status for tax and decide whether the off-payroll working rules apply.

CEST is a free service which was developed working closely with tax specialists, contractors and other stakeholders. It was tested rigorously against known case law and settled cases, and HMRC stand by its results if the tool is used in accordance with HMRC's guidance.

The Government has also ensured there is a client-led status disagreement process where contractors and deemed employers can lodge a complaint, if they disagree on how a contractor has been categorised.

Peter Aldous:

[179086]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether HMRC has made an assessment of the potential merits of updating its CEST tool used for determining employment status to account for Mutuality of Obligation in the determination of independent contract work.

Jesse Norman:

‘Mutuality of obligation’ (MoO) is a term often used to describe the basic obligations that exist between a hirer and a worker. These basic obligations are where the hirer is obliged to pay remuneration, of any kind, and the worker is obliged to provide their work or skill in return.

MoO is important because without it there can be no contract for the supply of a worker. CEST does account for MoO on these terms and is clear in guidance to users that it can only be used to determine employment status for tax where there is such a contract in place. CEST then considers this contract, testing the employment status factors, and determines whether the engagement is more likely to be employed or self-employed for Income Tax and National Insurance contributions purposes.

After receiving feedback during user testing, HMRC provided a link to guidance on MoO on CEST’s landing page to make this understanding clearer to users of the tool. The guidance can be found on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-status-manual/esm0543>.

■ Overseas Aid

Layla Moran:

[179478]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 144833 on Official Development Assistance allocations, when his Department plans to publish the allocation of Official Development Assistance to each Department for the financial year 2020-21.

Steve Barclay:

HM Treasury is committed to publishing departmental 2020-21 Official Development Assistance allocations in due course.

Chris Law:

[180535]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Oral Statement of 25 November 2020, Official Report, column 830, how his Department will (a) measure and (b) define the fiscal situation to determine whether Official Development Assistance spending can return to 0.7 per cent of GNI.

Chris Law:

[180536]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Oral Statement of 25 November 2020, Official Report, column 830, what plans he has to set out in detail the measurements that will be used to define the fiscal situation under which Official Development Assistance spending can return to .the 0.7 of GNI level.

Chris Law:

[\[180537\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made on the potential effect of reducing Official Development Assistance spending in 2021 from 0.5 per cent to 0.7 per cent of GNI on the value for money of existing UK aid investments.

Chris Law:

[\[180538\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the reduction in Official Development Assistance spending from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of GNI in 2021 on the UK fiscal situation.

Steve Barclay:

In the context of unprecedented economic and fiscal circumstances, the Government decided at the 2020 Spending Review that sticking rigidly to spending 0.7% of gross national income as Official Development Assistance (ODA) was not an appropriate prioritisation of resources.

To ensure coherence and maximum value for money from the UK's ODA spending, the Foreign Secretary led a cross-government process after the 2020 Spending Review to review in detail how ODA is allocated against the Government's priorities. This has ensured that UK ODA is focused on our strategic priorities, spent where it will have the maximum impact, has greater coherence and delivers most value for money.

The Government intends to return to the 0.7% target when the fiscal situation allows. We cannot at this moment predict with certainty when the current fiscal circumstances will have sufficiently improved.

■ Payments

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[178727\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with relevant stakeholders on bringing forward legislative proposals to allow cashback without a purchase.

John Glen:

The Government has supported an amendment to the Financial Services Bill that will introduce legislative changes to allow for the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase by shops and other businesses.

The Government's view is that cashback without a purchase has the potential to be a valuable facility to cash users, and to play an important role in the UK's cash infrastructure. The recent Call for Evidence on Access to Cash invited views on this issue. It noted that cashback with a purchase was the second most frequently used method for withdrawing cash in the UK behind ATMs in 2019. There were 123 million cashback transactions when using a debit card to make a purchase amounting to a total value of £3.8 billion.

Pre-existing legislation, which derives from the EU's Second Payment Services Directive, has meant that if a merchant wanted to offer cashback without requiring the

customer to make a purchase, that shop, or its agent, would have to be authorised or registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). This presents a significant burden for many businesses.

This legislative change to enable cashback without a purchase will allow merchants to offer this service without being authorised or registered with the FCA. It is only possible now that the UK has left the EU and is a welcome step towards protecting access to cash for the future.

Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the process of policy development and delivery.

Details of ministerial and permanent secretary meetings with external organisations on departmental business are published on a quarterly basis and are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmt-ministers-meetings-hospitality-gifts-and-overseas-travel>

■ Revenue and Customs: Correspondence

Rachael Maskell:

[179247]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that HMRC are able to comply with their guidelines on clearing (a) 80 per cent of customer post within 15 days of receipt and (b) customer post within 40 days of receipt.

Jesse Norman:

Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to have a significant impact both on the way HMRC work and their immediate priorities. In light of the situation, HMRC have not set formal performance targets for customer service for 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022. HMRC's aim is to reply to post in the shortest time possible while balancing resources across priority workloads including COVID-19 and EU Exit while looking for innovative ways to help their customers.

Information on HMRC's current performance is published on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-quarterly-performance-updates>.

■ Sanitary Protection: VAT

Sarah Atherton:

[178541]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the effect on women's income of excluding reusable sanitary underwear from the new zero rate of VAT.

Jesse Norman:

A zero rate of VAT has applied to women's sanitary products since 1 January 2021. This applies to those products which were previously subject to the reduced rate of 5 per cent, for example, tampons and pads, and to reusable menstrual products, such as keepers.

The relief specifically excludes articles of clothing, such as “period pants”. Such exclusions are designed to ensure that the relief is properly targeted, since difficulties in policing the scope of the relief create the potential for litigation, erosion of the tax base and a reduction in revenue. Under existing rules “period pants” may already qualify for the zero rate, if they have been specifically designed to be worn by a child, meet the sizing criteria, and are held out for sale specifically for use by girls under the age of 14 years old.

Details are provided in VAT Notice 714: zero-rating young children's clothing and footwear: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-notice-714-zero-rating-young-childrens-clothing-and-footwear/vat-notice-714-zero-rating-young-childrens-clothing-and-footwear#items-suitable-only-for-young-children>.

The Treasury, along with other relevant departments, carefully considers the impact of its decisions on those sharing protected characteristics, including at Budgets and other fiscal events, in line with both its legal obligations and with its commitment to promoting fairness.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Shabana Mahmood:

[178567]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of bringing forward the fourth grant payment for Self-Employment Income Support Scheme from the current scheduled date.

Emma Hardy:

[178690]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on self-employed people of the delay in the fourth grant under the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme; and whether he has plans to provide further support for those people.

Paul Blomfield:

[179074]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward the application date for the fourth round of Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grants.

Jesse Norman:

The Government announced at Budget 2021 that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue until September, with a fourth and a final fifth grant.

The Government also announced a major improvement in access to the self-employed scheme. As the deadline for 2019-20 tax returns has now passed, HMRC will use these tax returns for the fourth and fifth grants, provided they were submitted by 2 March. This means that 600,000 people, many of whom became self-employed in 2019-20, may now be able to claim the fourth and fifth grants, bringing the total number of people who could be eligible to 3.7 million.

Using these returns requires time to deliver due to the increased population and new data. In order to allow HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) time to process 2019-20 tax returns it has not been possible to invite applications or open the claims service earlier.

HMRC will open the online claims service for the fourth SEISS grant from late April 2021 and expect to notify potentially eligible people of their personal claim date from mid-April.

Guidance on how to claim the fourth grant is now available online:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme>.

The SEISS is just one part of a wider package of support for the self-employed, which includes automatic, self-serve time-to-pay arrangements, loans, welfare support, and other business support grants.

Nickie Aiken:

[179555]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of lowering the requirement for freelancers to receive at least 50 per cent of their income from self-employed work to qualify for financial support from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The SEISS provides generous support to the self-employed, including freelancers who meet the eligibility criteria. Freelancers who are ineligible for the SEISS are likely to be those who receive less than half of their income from self-employment. The design of the SEISS, including the eligibility, requires that an individual's trading profits must be at least equal to their non-trading income. This is intended to target support at those who need it the most, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income.

People ineligible for the SEISS on the basis of these criteria may be eligible for other elements of the substantial package of support available.

The CJRS has been available to all employers with a PAYE system and all employees on PAYE regardless of their employment contract. As such, freelancers and those on short term contracts could be eligible for the CJRS if they are on PAYE and meet the eligibility criteria.

■ Shoes: VAT Zero Rating

Marsha De Cordova:

[179518]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the zero VAT rating on children's shoes to adult shoes in the event that those shoes are sold for children with larger feet.

Jesse Norman:

Under the current VAT rules, a zero rate of VAT is applied to footwear designed for children younger than 14. HMRC limit this based on the average size of 13-year-old children using data provided by the British Standards Institution.

The Government keeps all taxes under review, but there are no plans to extend the scope of this relief to adult shoes.

■ Soft Drinks: Taxation**Christian Wakeford:**[\[179735\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the rates charged on soft drinks that are eligible for the Soft Drinks Industry Levy.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy, like all taxes, is kept under regular review, and the impact of any potential changes to its rates is considered through the Budget process.

■ Students: Housing**Nadia Whittome:**[\[179724\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether student accommodation providers have been eligible for covid-19 business support and assistance during the outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises that businesses up and down the UK are feeling the impact of this crisis. That is why the Government has put in place an economic package of support measures which are carefully designed to complement each other to ensure we provide businesses with certainty, even as measures to prevent further spread of the virus change.

UK businesses – including student accommodation providers where eligible – have benefitted from a range of these measures, including the generous Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and billions in government-backed loans.

In response to the current restrictions, and the Prime Minister's roadmap to easing public health measures, the Chancellor announced further support at the recent Budget to businesses on top of our previous economic responses. This includes the extension of the CJRS until the end of September 2021, which provides a substantial grant for employers to cover 80% of the wages of their employees, and the new Recovery Loan Scheme (80% Government-guaranteed loans between £25,000 and £10 million), which opened on 6 April and will run until the end of the year.

We recognise that universities also rent accommodation to their students and are feeling the impact of this crisis. We have established the Higher Education (HE) Restructuring Regime, which may be deployed as a last resort, if a decision has been made to support a HE provider in England facing severe financial difficulties related

to COVID-19. This is for when other steps to preserve its viability and mitigate the risks of financial failure have not proved sufficient. HE providers can also access the CJRS if they meet the published criteria.

As measures to control the virus change, it is right that Government support should also evolve. Because of this, we will continue to take a flexible but cautious approach as we review restrictions, ensuring support reflects the easing of restrictions to enable the private sector to bounce back as quickly as possible.

■ Tax Avoidance

Zarah Sultana:

[180619]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the implementation of changes to the loan charge, what estimate he has made of the number of people that are (a) falling into debt and (b) declaring bankruptcy as a result of those changes; and what assessment he has made of the effect on the mental health of people affected by those changes.

Jesse Norman:

No estimate can be provided for the number of people who have fallen into debt, or who have been declared bankrupt, as a result of the loan charge. Falling into debt or being declared bankrupt can occur for many reasons, not necessarily as a direct result of a loan charge liability.

HMRC are not always the only creditor; some individuals may fall into debt or are declared bankrupt as a result of a non-HMRC debt and some individuals may choose to enter insolvency themselves based on their overall financial position.

HMRC only ever consider insolvency as a last resort and encourage taxpayers to get in contact to agree the best way to settle their tax debts. Anyone who is worried about being able to pay what they owe is encouraged to get in touch with HMRC as soon as possible on 03000 599110. Where a taxpayer is unable to pay their debt in full HMRC will work with them to agree an instalment arrangement based on their individual financial circumstances, and there is no maximum length.

The Government recognises that tax burdens can add significant pressures. HMRC also recognise that some taxpayers need extra help because of their individual needs or circumstances. HMRC are committed to identifying and supporting taxpayers who need extra help with their tax affairs.

HMRC have signposted the extra help available to taxpayers in correspondence and on calls. Staff look out for indications that a taxpayer may need extra support, and where appropriate will transfer them to an Extra Support adviser who has the skills and knowledge needed to help them.

■ **Taxis: Coronavirus**

Emma Hardy:

[\[178655\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing funding to the private hire vehicle sector to help that sector recover from the effects of the national covid-19 lockdown restrictions that began in January 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has recognised the challenging times faced by the private hire vehicle sector as a result of Covid-19, and throughout the pandemic, has sought to support businesses and individuals.

The overwhelming majority of taxi and private hire vehicle drivers are self-employed, and therefore may have been able to benefit from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). At Budget, the Chancellor announced that SEISS will continue until September, with a fourth and fifth grant, to provide certainty to businesses as the economy reopens.

The government will spend over £33bn supporting those in self-employment through the SEISS throughout this crisis, yet it remains to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support. Those ineligible may still be able to access other elements of the support available, including automatic, self-serve time-to-pay arrangements, loans, welfare support, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ **UK Trade with EU: VAT**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[178593\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on small businesses of VAT charges on goods imported from the EU.

Jesse Norman:

Any businesses, including small businesses, that are registered for UK VAT have the ability to reclaim VAT charged on goods imported from the EU on their VAT return.

As with all tax measures, where new changes have been introduced, the Government includes its assessment of the impacts of the changes in Tax Information and Impact Notes. Notes for measures recently legislated for in the Taxation (Post-transition Period) Act were published alongside that legislation.

■ **Video Games: Tax Allowances**

Alex Sobel:

[\[179484\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the proposal by the games industry to increase video games tax relief from 25 per cent to 32 per cent.

Jesse Norman:

In 2019-20 the Video Games Tax Relief (VGTR) supported UK expenditure of £355 million on the production of 150 video games.

The Government keeps all tax reliefs under review, and regularly receives proposals for changes to tax reliefs. When considering changes, HM Treasury must ensure they provide support to businesses across the economy in a fair way.

■ Wholesale Trade: Food**Alan Brown:**[\[179240\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what sectoral targeted support has been provided to food wholesalers.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, the Government has protected people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK. Food and drink wholesalers have been eligible for a number of economic support schemes, including:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme;
- Deferral of VAT payments due between 20 March and 30 June 2020; and
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme for small businesses to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000, with no interest payments or fees for the first 12 months. This has now been succeeded by the Recovery Loan Scheme, which launched on 6th April 2021.

Wholesalers in England may also receive further support with their fixed costs from local authorities through the £2.1 billion in funding made available for discretionary Additional Restrictions Grants to support local businesses.

Businesses may also be eligible for other elements of the Government's support package including government-backed loans, tax deferrals, and general and sector-specific grants. The Government urges businesses to visit the online Coronavirus Business Support Finder Tool for tailored information on how to access support available to them.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities****Afzal Khan:**[\[179517\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities published on 31 March 2021, to what extent that Commission participated and engaged with (a) people and (b) organisations in order for those people and organisations to be listed in (i) Appendix C: commissioned research and (ii) Appendix D: Stakeholders of that report.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Commission sought new and existing research and analysis from individuals and organisations to aid their work – they are listed in ‘Appendix C: Commissioned research’ of the Commission’s report.

The Commission met with many individuals and organisations during the course of its work, either to hear evidence or to discuss recommendations – they are listed in ‘Appendix D: Stakeholders’ of the Commission’s report.

To note – the Commission included names of individuals and organisations in the Appendices of the report to acknowledge and thank them for their contributions as a courtesy – and advises that their being named should not be taken as an endorsement.

Equal Pay**Rachael Maskell:**[\[178657\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the report of the Behavioural Insights Team, Reducing the gender pay gap and improving gender equality in organisations: Evidence-based actions for employers, whether it is Government policy to encourage employers to clearly communicate the salary range on offer for a role to encourage women to negotiate their salary as an effective action to close the gender pay gap.

Rachael Maskell:[\[178660\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what plans she has to bring forward legislative proposals to require employers to display the salary range when advertising employment opportunities.

Kemi Badenoch:

Supporting employers through robust insights and evidence is at the heart of our commitment to gender equality in the workplace. As the Behavioural Insights Team guidance sets out, if employers clearly communicate the salary range on offer for a role it encourages better informed salary negotiations. There is no formal policy on how employers should communicate salary ranges for job offers but it is clear that transparency and better designed processes contribute to better workplace outcomes.

Equality**Zarah Sultana:**[\[180623\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the Government plans to re-examine the findings of the report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published March 2021, in response to feedback on that report’s conclusions on inequality.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities' report makes an important contribution to both the national conversation about race, and our efforts to level up and unite the whole country.

We are carefully considering the report's findings and recommendations. We will publish a Government response in due course. This Government remains fully committed to building a fairer UK and taking the action needed to address disparities wherever they exist.

■ **Equality Act 2010****Daisy Cooper:**[\[179578\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward amendments to the Equality Act 2010 to include caste as a protected characteristic.

Kemi Badenoch:

This Government completely opposes any discrimination because of a person's origins, including any perceptions of their caste.

The *Tirkey v Chandhok* case in 2014 established that it is likely that anyone who believes that they have been discriminated against because of caste could bring a race discrimination claim under the existing ethnic origins limb of the race provisions in the Equality Act because of their descent.

The Government considers, having also taken into account over 16,000 responses to a 2017 consultation on this issue, that the *Tirkey* judgment serves as a welcome clarification of the existing protection under the Equality Act – helping to deter those inclined to treat others unfairly or unequally because of conceptions of caste.

■ **LGBT Advisory Panel****Margaret Ferrier:**[\[180999\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what plans she has for the replacement of the recently-disbanded LGBT Advisory Panel.

Liz Saville Roberts:[\[181362\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will provide details on the plans and date for the establishment of a replacement Government LGBT advisory panel.

Kemi Badenoch:

The LGBT Advisory Panel was created under the previous administration and the term of all panel members ended on 31 March. The Minister for Women & Equalities has written to panel members to thank them for their contributions. I will shortly set out further details on our plans for the International LGBT Conference and banning conversion therapy, including how we will engage those with relevant expertise.

■ Sexual Harassment: Employment

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[178812\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace.

Kemi Badenoch:

Under the Equality Act 2010 employers have a legal responsibility to take all reasonable steps to protect their employees against workplace sexual harassment. The Government expects employers to take these responsibilities seriously. If they fail, employees can seek advice from Acas and, if necessary, take legal action in an Employment Tribunal.

Last year the Equality and Human Rights Commission, with the Government's support, published guidance on harassment and sexual harassment at work.

In addition, the Government has consulted on sexual harassment in the workplace, focusing on whether the laws to protect people from harassment at work are operating effectively. We will be setting out the Government's response to this shortly.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Amazon: Industrial Health and Safety

Sarah Owen:

[\[180617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Health and Safety Executive on health and safety inspections of Amazon distribution warehouses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Sarah Owen:

[\[180618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Health and Safety Executive on health and safety inspections of supermarket distribution warehouses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and individual Local Authorities (LA) enforce health and safety law in work premises where the allocation of enforcement responsibility is dependent on the type of work carried out.

Amazon warehouses, where customers' orders are fulfilled when stored products are picked, packed and shipped, are known as fulfilment centres and are enforced by LAs. There are numerous centres across Great Britain and individual LAs will be better placed to advise on COVID-19 management practices for specific sites.

Similarly, supermarket distribution warehouses broadly fall to LA enforcement where goods are stored for retail or wholesale purposes.

As part of its role as the national regulator for health and safety across Great Britain, HSE monitored the effectiveness of COVID-19 risk controls across the supply chain, followed up workers' concerns in premises enforced by HSE, and recently undertook a joint inspection programme in December 2020 with LAs to cover warehousing and distribution centres. Amazon's COVID-19 practices were assessed via a virtual head office inspection by HSE and local authority site inspection.

A report on the recent inspection campaign will be issued the week commencing 19th April 2021 to share examples of good practice in relation to COVID risk management.

■ **Benefits Rules: Domestic Abuse**

Neil Coyle:

[179157]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the (a) benefit cap and (b) two child limit on people fleeing domestic abuse.

Will Quince:

DWP is committed to supporting all our claimants, including the most vulnerable in society. This includes those who are, or have been, victims of domestic abuse.

The benefit cap and the two-child limit policies help to restore fairness between those receiving working age benefits and taxpayers in employment. However, important mitigations are in place to support the most vulnerable.

We provide a tailored service that recognises those with complex needs and ensures provision of appropriate support. This might include pausing job search requirements, initiating alternative payment arrangements or deferring repayments. In addition, claimants that are temporarily absent from home due to fear of violence can receive the housing element of Universal Credit, and/or Housing Benefit, for both the home that has been left and any new home for up to a year. Housing support for specified accommodation, including refuges, is excluded from the benefit cap calculation as is any Housing Benefit paid to a Universal Credit claimant.

Departmental training and awareness is now better than it ever has been, allowing Jobcentre staff to proactively identify, support and signpost victims of abuse.

Discretionary Housing Payments are available for households that need additional financial support to meet housing costs. While the allocation of this funding is at Local Authority discretion, we have strengthened the associated Guidance Manual to ensure that individuals or families fleeing domestic abuse are considered a priority group for DHP support.

■ **Child Maintenance Service: Standards**

Ben Bradley:

[180591]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she takes to assess the effectiveness of the Child Maintenance Service; and how frequently she makes that assessment.

Guy Opperman:

The Department measures the effectiveness of the Service through regularly assessing data on the Service's performance. This includes compliance of paying parents on paying their maintenance, the amount of money the service collects for the children and our measures of enforcement.

Discretionary Housing Payments: Young People**Caroline Nokes:**[\[179064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people under the age of 25 were refused Discretionary Housing Payment (a) nationally and (b) in each local authority area in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Will Quince:

As Discretionary Housing Payments are administered by Local Authorities the information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

The most recent data available on Discretionary Housing Payments is the following set of official statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/use-of-discretionary-housing-payments-april-to-september-2020>

Industrial Health and Safety: Carcinogens**Zarah Sultana:**[\[179606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government plans to apply the EU Directive 2019/130 on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens from February 2023.

Mims Davies:

EU Directive 2019/130 is the second phase of amendments to the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (CMD) 2004/37/EC. While there is no legal obligation for the Government to apply the Directive, we will continue to have a system for setting workplace exposure limits in Great Britain (GB) to ensure worker protection and will consider, and apply as appropriate, relevant limits as part of this.

Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus**Layla Moran:**[\[179465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of companies that have received workplace inspections in respect of covid-19 from the Health and Safety Executive to date.

Mims Davies:

HSE's recording systems do not readily allow the number of companies inspected to be identified. To do so would require HSE officials to manually retrieve the data, which would incur disproportionate costs.

An estimate of the number of companies inspected can be derived from the number of COVID-19 spot checks carried out, although there will be instances where a company has been inspected more than once where they have multiple sites e.g. a construction company may have more than one of their construction sites inspected.

Since March 2020, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has carried out a programme of interventions to check how businesses are implementing measures to reduce transmission of COVID-19 at their sites.

As at 15 April 2021, HSE has completed 194,641 COVID-19 spot checks.

Whenever HSE visits a workplace, irrespective of the purpose of the visit it always reviews COVID-19 control measures and if needed will take appropriate action to address any control failings.

Notes:

(i) Figures represent interventions across all sectors, including both public and private sector duty holders.

(ii) Figures were obtained from HSE's live operational database and are subject to change, e.g., as there can be a delay of up to ten working days before information is uploaded onto the system.

■ Jobcentres: Bromsgrove

Sajid Javid:

[179012]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support she is providing to Bromsgrove Jobs Centre to help unemployed people in Bromsgrove District.

Mims Davies:

Through our Plan for Jobs, the Department is providing broad ranging support for all jobseekers. Currently, support includes the Kickstart scheme, Job Finding Support, Sector Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAP) and Job Entry Targeted Support. In addition, the Work and Health Programme, and Intensive Personalised Employment Support, is available to support disabled people and people with long term health conditions, to enter and stay in work.

To support the long term unemployed, £2.9 billion is being invested in the Restart Programme, which is due to go live from summer 2021. The Restart Programme will support individuals who have been unemployed for at least 12 months and through regular, personalised support providers will work with participants to identify the best way to support them into sustained employment. We have also increased the number of Work Coaches, by 13,500 nationally, to support Claimants - with 368 joining our Mercia District by the end of April, including 4 based at Bromsgrove Jobcentre.

Bromsgrove Jobcentre has strong partnership links with the Local Authority with partnership representation on housing, financial inclusion and claimant support forums at both district and county level. It also has strong relations with local providers such as New Starts who have provided laptops to assist with online courses during the pandemic.

The Jobcentre team are engaging with Kickstart employers and Gateway organisations to support our younger customers move closer to employment, and have partnered with local employers and organisations to deliver a number of successful Sector Based Work Academy Programmes, across multiple sectors, which are available to all claimants irrespective of age or length of unemployment.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Alison McGovern:

[179100]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart scheme jobs have been (a) approved and (b) started in each region.

Mims Davies:

As of the 8th of April, over 11,800 young people had started jobs created by the Department of Work and Pensions' Kickstart Scheme.

We are unable to provide a breakdown of the approved jobs by region as at the approval stage a company provides their registered address which will often not reflect the location of associated jobs.

The table below shows the number of starts broken down by region. The data in the table has been rounded. Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly.

The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency.

REGION	STARTS
East Midlands	660
East of England	780
London	2600
North East	490
North West	1700
Scotland	1100
South East	1200
South West	780
Wales	540
West Midlands	1200

REGION	STARTS
Yorkshire and The Humber	890

■ Kickstart Scheme: Small Businesses

Justin Madders: [\[181045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of Kickstart scheme applications have been received from SMEs; and how many of those applications have been successful.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ [165631](#).

■ National Insurance Contributions

Peter Grant: [\[181336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 157313 on National Insurance Contributions, what progress her Department has made on provision of a National Insurance Number service to the majority of people.

Guy Opperman:

The National Insurance Number Service is now available to all applicants living in England and Wales and, in line with Scottish Government guidelines, will be available, in Scotland, from week commencing 26th April when our face to face service resumes.

■ Redundancy: Rapid Response Fund

Paul Blomfield: [\[179078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason rapid response funding does not cover retraining for those who have been made redundant.

Mims Davies:

Rapid Response Service can fund training on a case by case basis in supporting people serving their notice period, whether from compulsory redundancy or other workforce measures such as an early release scheme. They can access:

- information, advice and guidance
- non-vocational training to move a person closer to employment
- help to assess transferable skills in relation to the local labour market by conducting a skills transfer analysis
- vocational training to address skills needs

- other RRS funded support to help overcome barriers to getting a job or starting self-employment

Those who don't find alternative employment before losing their job can access the same support as those under notice of redundancy for a period of 13 weeks. This is whether they make a claim for benefit or not.

■ Restart Programme: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[179284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the Restart employment scheme is fully accessible for disabled people.

Mims Davies:

Restart will be fully accessible for all scheme participants, including those with health conditions and disabilities. At the core of Restart is the requirement on providers to design and deliver a personalised service that addresses individuals' support needs.

The contracts also make specific requirements on providers regarding accessibility. Under the terms of the Equality Act, providers will be required to enable equal access to the provision. They will be required to fund additional support for anyone who needs extra help to attend and fully participate in Restart, which may include travel and specialist equipment. They must also take necessary steps to obtain and provide special aids or services that might be needed to enable participation.

Restart providers will also be required to be Disability Confident Leaders, and therefore to be fully aware of best practice in supporting disabled people.

■ Social Security Benefits: Children

Hywel Williams:

[\[181197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the comparative effects of the two child limit on (a) universal credit and (b) child tax credit support between (a) Wales, (b) Scotland, (c) England and (d) Northern Ireland since 2017.

Hywel Williams:

[\[181198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many additional children in Wales have been affected by the two-child limit on universal and child tax credit since March 2020.

Hywel Williams:

[\[181199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the comparative effects of the two-child limit on (a) universal credit and (b) child tax credit support on different ethnic groups in (a) Wales and (b) the rest of the UK since 2017.

Will Quince:

The Government has committed to annual statistics releases related to the operation of the policy to provide support for a maximum of two children. Statistics related to the period up to April 2020 were published in July 2020 and can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-tax-credit-and-universal-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2020>. Statistics related to the period up to April 2021 will be published in the summer.

The government's published Impact Assessment noted that ethnic minority households may be more likely to be impacted by the policy. This is because they are, on average, more likely to be in receipt of CTC and UC, and on average have larger families. However, the government does not collect sufficiently robust data on the ethnic background or religious beliefs of benefit claimants to enable a fuller assessment of the impact of the policy on particular ethnic or religious groups. The Government has assessed the impact of the policy from an equality and human rights perspective, meeting our obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, and ensuring compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention.

■ Social Security Benefits: Complaints**Jessica Morden:****[178556]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average time was for a complaint submitted to her Department for the (a) case to be assigned to an Independent Case Examiner, (b) investigation to commence and (c) decision to be provided to the complainant in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Jessica Morden:**[178958]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) average and (b) longest waiting times were for Independent Case Examiner decisions in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019 and (iii) 2020.

Guy Opperman:

At the point the Independent Case Examiner (ICE) Office accept a complaint for investigation, they will initially try to broker a solution between the complainant and the Department or supplier, without having to undertake an investigation – this is known as “resolution”. If the complaint cannot be resolved the evidence will be requested and the case will await allocation to an Investigation Case Manager (ICM). Cases are usually brought into investigation in strict date order. Following a review of the evidence, it may be possible to “settle” the complaint, if agreement can be reached which satisfies the complainant. If the complaint cannot be settled, ICE will issue a report detailing findings and any recommendations for redress. The majority of the complaints that are referred to ICE are complex and require a full investigation.

The Unit received additional resource during 2020/21 financial year to help reduce the time complaints wait to be brought into investigation, but Covid has adversely

affected the unit with staff re-deployed to priority front-line activities at the outset of the pandemic and recruitment plans delayed. It has also been affected by Covid-related sickness, self-isolation and bereavement.

For the 2020/21 reporting year, the average Resolution clearance time, from acceptance to case closure, was 6.2 weeks. The average time taken to allocate complaints that required investigation to an ICM, from acceptance to allocation, was 63.8 weeks. The average clearance time for complaints that required investigation (Settlements and ICE Reports), from allocation to an ICM to case closure, was 20.1 weeks.

For the reporting years 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 the average waiting times from case acceptance to case clearance (for all cleared cases) were: 65; 69; and 73 weeks respectively.

For the same reporting years, the single longest waiting times from case acceptance to case clearance in each reporting year were: 134; 153; and 160 weeks respectively. These cases are among the most complex and contentious and in addition may be subject to scrutiny and consideration by the Department before recommendations for redress are settled.

It should be noted that Customer satisfaction with the service is high with 82.6 per cent of customers who respond to the ICE survey stating that they were satisfied with the service they received.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Wendy Chamberlain:

[181445]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people who are claiming benefits as a result of long covid receive the correct claim.

Justin Tomlinson:

As research into the long-term health symptoms and impacts of COVID-19 is ongoing, we are collaborating across Government to monitor emerging evidence and consider our response.

People living with a condition arising from exposure to the COVID-19 virus can access the financial support that is available through Statutory Sick Pay, Universal Credit and New Style ESA. They are also able to access Personal Independence Payment in the same way as other people with long-term health conditions or disabilities. Disability benefits do not include or exclude by condition, instead they look at the needs arising from a long-term health condition or disability. People may be able to claim ESA or Pension Credit depending on their individual circumstances.

Claimants are offered additional support where appropriate alongside signposting to independent benefits calculators on GOV.UK. They can also get help through the Government funded Help to Claim scheme as well as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Citizens Advice Scotland to support them in receiving the benefits they are entitled to.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[178578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's Official Statistics entitled Benefit sanctions statistics to October 2020 (experimental), published on 23 February 2021, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the reduction in the use of benefit sanctions since March 2020 on trends in the number of social security benefit claimants seeking help from food banks in that time period.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[178579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's Official Statistics entitled Benefit sanctions statistics to October 2020 (experimental), published on 23 February 2021, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the reduction in the use of benefit sanctions since March 2020 on social security benefit claimants' (a) work search activity and (b) willingness to take up employment in that time period.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[178581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's Official Statistics entitled Benefit sanctions statistics to October 2020 (experimental), published on 23 February 2021, what plans her Department has to conduct a full evaluation of the lessons that can be learnt from the period of running the social security system with little use of such sanctions.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[179104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's Official Statistics entitled Benefit sanctions statistics to October 2020 (experimental), published on 23 February 2021, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the reduction in the use of benefit sanctions since March 2020 on the mental health of social security benefit claimants in that time period.

Mims Davies:

We have not made any assessment of the effect of the reduction in use of benefit sanctions since March 2020 and have no plans to do so.

We cannot isolate the effect of the reduction in the use of benefit sanctions as this has coincided with other changes to conditionality that took place over the same period, for example the three-month suspension of work search and availability requirements and the suspension of face-to-face claimant appointments. Together with the highly atypical economic circumstances we have experienced over this period, this would make any such assessment unreliable.

Work Coaches will continue to work with claimants to ensure claimant commitments are reasonable for claimants' circumstances.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[178652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's Official Statistics entitled Benefit sanctions statistics to October 2020 (experimental),

published on 23 February 2021, how many and what proportion of the 4,628 universal credit claimants under sanction in November 2020 had been continuously under such sanctions for more than seven months.

Mims Davies:

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

■ **Social Security Benefits: Ellesmere Port and Neston**

Justin Madders:

[181040]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many households were subject to the benefit cap in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency in each month from March 2020 to March 2021.

Mims Davies:

The published benefit cap statistics are currently available to November 2020. Statistics for the number of households capped in Universal Credit and Housing Benefit in February 2021 will be published on 22nd June 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-cap-statistics>

The available information on the number of households, receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, who were subject to the Benefit Cap, by month and Parliamentary Constituency, is published every three months and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ **Social Security Benefits: Payments**

Peter Kyle:

[179299]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has plans to reform benefits payments in order to protect recipients with complex needs from criminal exploitation.

Will Quince:

The Department currently has no such plans.

We take every care to prevent incorrect payments being made and to ensure that benefits are paid to the correct recipients; and that their payments are accurate from the outset of a claim.

Operational staff also have instructions on how to alert DWP's Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Team, who work closely with the National Crime Agency and the Home Office to investigate criminal activity, to potential cases of modern slavery, and receive guidance, for example, on raising awareness of the risks County Lines activity poses for our more vulnerable claimants who can be exploited by gangs.

Further information may be found in DWP's Universal Credit (UC) Guidance which covers all aspects of UC and its administration, including claims and payments. Updated chapters are deposited in the House of Commons Library periodically by the DWP and can be found via the following link:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/universal-credit-information-sources/>

■ State Retirement Pensions

Wendy Chamberlain: [181444]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) men and (b) women are receiving the new state pension; and how many and what proportion of those people receiving that benefit are receiving an amount in respect of a deceased spouse or civil partner.

Guy Opperman:

At August 2020, there were 1,103,080 men and 483,540 women in receipt of new State Pension (figures rounded to nearest 10).

It is not possible to provide further accurate detail.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Disability

Kate Hollern: [180991]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to support employment projects for disabled people through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: We recognise the barriers some disabled people face to employment, and my department provides a range of support including the Work and Health programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support.

The Chancellor announced at the November 2020 Spending Review that one portion the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will target places most in need across the UK, whilst a second portion of the Fund will target people most in need through bespoke employment and skills programmes for those who face labour market barriers. Final decisions regarding the design of the Fund will be published later this year.

The UK Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework later in 2021, which will outline the priorities of the fund, and confirm multi-year funding profiles at the next Spending Review.

■ Unemployment: Ethnic Groups

Preet Kaur Gill: [179346]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Office for National Statistics' labour market statistics data published in February 2021, what steps she is taking to tackle the disproportionate rise in unemployment among (a) Black

African, (b) Black Caribbean and (c) Black British people compared to white people in the UK from 2019 to 2020.

Mims Davies:

The Government is committed to levelling up and uniting the country, including improving the employment outcomes of people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Throughout these unprecedented times the Government has provided a crucial safety net to record levels of claimants, ensuring all our customers receive the support they need, when they need it.

We have focussed on providing financial and extensive support through our Plan for Jobs. This will protect, support and create jobs, targeting young people, the long term unemployed, and those in need of new training and skills. The Plan for Jobs includes the Kickstart scheme, an expanded youth offer, and the expansion of the Work and Health Programme, all offering new support to those, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds, who lose their job during the pandemic.

The Government is also considering the recommendations on how to increase opportunity and ensure fairness for all made in the recent independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report.

■ **Universal Credit: Publicity**

Kate Osamor:

[\[181077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will place in the Library the minutes, action log, or any written record of her Department's internal meetings on the DWP Universal Credit Take Up campaign that have taken place since 1 January 2021.

Will Quince:

The Department does not routinely place all notes of internal discussions in the Library.

However, to assist with transparency, and since November 2018, the Department has deposited Universal Credit Programme Board papers in twice-yearly batches to the House Library to provide information surrounding governance and key decision-making.

■ **Universal Credit: Young People**

Caroline Nokes:

[\[179065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to review the universal credit rate for young people who live alone.

Will Quince:

The Universal Credit rate for under 25s reflects the lower wages that younger workers typically receive. Universal Credit also includes separate elements to provide support for housing costs, children and childcare costs and support for disabled people and carers. These additional amounts are provided to claimants at the same level irrespective of age.

There are no plans to review this at present. OBR figures show we have injected over £8bn into the welfare system in 2020/21, and we have extended the £20 a week increase to Universal Credit for a further six months. This increase is supporting millions of people across the UK, including those under 25.

Caroline Nokes:

[179066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of making people under the age of 25 living in supported accommodation eligible for the work allowance under universal credit.

Will Quince:

There are no current plans to change eligibility for work allowances in Universal Credit. Work allowances are focussed on providing extra support for those with children or limited capability to work. All Universal Credit claimants who are in work and earn above any applicable work allowance will benefit from the single 63% taper rate which reduces their Universal Credit at a consistent and predictable rate and by less than they are earning.

To support young people into employment we are investing £2bn to support the creation of quality jobs via our Kickstart scheme, which is already creating thousands of high-quality jobs for young people.

On top of this, our DWP Youth Offer provides wrap-around support for 18-24 year olds in the intensive work search group, helping young people access provision stood up as part of the Plan for Jobs, alongside local work related provision.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Contingency Fund Advance

Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully): [\[HCWS924\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy having drawn an advance from the contingencies fund totalling £1,579,925,000 to enable expenditure on Covid-19 support packages for business to be spent ahead of the passage of the Supply and Appropriation Act in March 2021.

The funding is required for the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) (closed) addendum scheme, which provides grants of up to £3,000 per month to businesses which are legally required to close due to COVID-19 restrictions .

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £1,579,925,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £1,579,925,000 has been met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The cash advance will be repaid upon receiving Royal Assent on the Supply and Appropriation Act.

■ Contingent Liability Notification: Baglan Operations Limited and Baglan Group Companies

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng): [\[HCWS925\]](#)

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable Members to bring their attention to the details of a contingent liability following the provision of an indemnity from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to the Official Receiver acting in the insolvency of Baglan Operations Limited (BOL) and the wider Baglan Group companies.

It is normal practice when a Government Department proposes to undertake a contingent liability of £300,000 and above, for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Department concerned to present Parliament with a minute, giving details of the liability created and explaining the circumstances.

BOL entered liquidation on 24 March 2021 and owns a site hosting a gas generation plant (now closed) and operates a private wire which provides electricity to the Baglan Energy Park in Port Talbot. The Energy Park accommodates various businesses (primarily a paper product manufacturer - Intertissue), public sector buildings (Local Authority offices and a NHS medical centre) buildings, and a water pumping station.

The departmental minute I lay today is to notify Parliament retrospectively of the provision of an indemnity to the OR.

Departmental officials and I are aware of the presence of several chemical substances at the site that will require safe disposal. There is also a gas plant and 12km of pipeline that will require decommissioning. BOL supplies the electricity through a private electricity wire, which is exempt from being licensed. As it is licence-exempt, BOL is not capable of being covered by the energy regulator Ofgem's supplier of last resort arrangements or any energy special administration regime.

My Department has been monitoring this fast-moving situation since December 2020, working closely with the Welsh Government, Wales Office, the Insolvency Service, UK Government Investments (UKGI), and HM Treasury.

My Department has provided the OR with an indemnity in respect of:

- carrying out the proper performance of the OR's duties as liquidator of the Baglan Group companies;
- seeking the appointment of, engaging and instructing the Special Managers in respect of the Baglan Group companies; and
- maintaining, securing and funding the ongoing operation of the Baglan Group companies undertakings, and distributing the assets of the companies in the ordinary course of the OR's duties as liquidator of the Baglan Group companies.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal and I will be laying a Departmental Minute today containing a description of the liability undertaken.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Regulation of Football Index

Minister of State for Media and Data (Mr John Whittingdale):

[[HCWS929](#)]

I am announcing today that DCMS will appoint an independent expert to conduct a review of the regulation of the Football Index gambling product, up to the point where its operator's licence was suspended in March, and to make recommendations to government and the regulators.

Football Index's operator, BetIndex Limited, was granted a licence to provide online betting by the Gambling Commission in September 2015. The Commission began a formal review of this licence in May 2020 and suspended it in March 2021. The company is currently in administration. At the time of suspension, the product allowed customers (called traders) to place bets (shares) on the future performance of footballers. These bets lasted for three years, with payments called dividends being made according to a player's performance. The product evolved to let customers buy and sell bets with prices fluctuating according to demand.

The government is taking the situation regarding Football Index and the concerns of those affected by it very seriously. It is reported that many thousands of customers are

affected by the product's collapse, with some having lost very large sums. This review will aim to establish both how this situation came about and what lessons we can learn from it.

A principal purpose of the review will be to take an objective look at the decisions and actions of the Gambling Commission and any other relevant regulators, to provide a clear account of how the company's activities were regulated and identify if there are potential areas for improvement in how complex products are treated.

Its findings will form part of the evidence informing the Government's Review of the Gambling Act 2005, which was announced in December 2020. The Review is considering whether changes are needed to the regulatory framework around gambling, including the Commission's powers and resources and how it uses them. It is also looking at how novel and complex products should be licensed and regulated.

The Commission's regulatory investigation into BetIndex Ltd is continuing. This independent review is separate to that investigation and will be carried out and report in a way which will not compromise it. It will also be without prejudice to the ongoing administration proceedings, which among other things are looking at assets and liabilities of the company and recompense to customers.

Further details of the independent reviewer and terms of reference will be announced in due course. It is intended that the review will report publicly in the summer and will inform the wider Gambling Act Review. The Government aims to produce a White Paper setting out its findings from the review of the Gambling Act 2005 by the end of the year.

■ **Supporting the deployment of 5G and extending mobile coverage - Planning Update**

Minister for Digital Infrastructure (Matt Warman):

[\[HCWS930\]](#)

Now, more than ever, people need access to dependable and consistent mobile coverage where they live, work and travel.

We have committed to extend mobile geographical coverage across the UK with uninterrupted mobile signal on all major roads, and to be a global leader in 5G. That is why the government has agreed a £1 billion Shared Rural Network deal with the UK's mobile network operators to extend 4G mobile geographical coverage to 95% of the UK by 2025. The Government is also investing £200 million in a programme of 5G testbeds and trials to encourage investment in 5G so that communities and businesses can benefit from this new technology.

It is essential that the planning system can effectively support the delivery of the mobile infrastructure that we need. That is why in 2019 the Department for Digital Culture, Media & Sport and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published an in-principle consultation on proposed reforms to the permitted development rights governing deployment of mobile network infrastructure. We concluded that the proposed reforms would have a positive impact on the Government's ambitions for the deployment of 5G and extending mobile coverage, particularly in rural areas, where mobile coverage tends to lag behind more urban areas.

In July 2020 we announced that we would take forward the reforms, subject to a technical consultation on the detail of changes and including the appropriate environmental protections and other safeguards.

The Government has now published a [technical consultation](#) seeking views on proposals to:

- Enable the deployment of small radio equipment cabinets without the requirement for prior approval in Article 2(3) land (which include National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Conservation Areas), and allow greater flexibility for installing equipment cabinets in compounds;
- Allow for the strengthening of existing masts by permitting greater increases in the width and height of existing masts outside of Article 2(3) land, and the width of existing masts in Article 2(3) land, without prior approval; and further increases with prior approval;
- Enable building-based masts to be deployed closer to the highway on unprotected land; and, permit smaller masts and poles to be installed on buildings without prior approval outside of Article 2(3) land; and,
- Enable taller new ground-based masts to be deployed on all land subject to prior approval, with greater permitted heights outside of Article 2(3) land; and, permit the deployment of monopole masts up to a height of 15m without prior approval outside of Article 2(3) land.

The proposed changes will not apply to land on or within sites of special scientific interest, to listed buildings and their curtilage, or sites that are or contain scheduled monuments.

The consultation will run for 8 weeks, closing 14 June 2021.

These changes will support wider and enhanced coverage that will ensure all communities benefit, and will give greater certainty and speed over deployment of infrastructure, increasing investor confidence. They also aim to encourage the use of existing infrastructure and promote site sharing to reduce the impacts of new deployment.

We believe these proposals achieve an appropriate balance between supporting the Government's ambitions for 5G and mobile coverage, and ensuring that the appropriate environmental protections and safeguards are in place, particularly for protected landscapes.

Alongside the technical consultation, we will work with industry representatives, Ofcom, local authorities and rural stakeholders to develop a new Code of Practice on Mobile Network Development in England, to ensure the impact of new and upgraded mobile infrastructure is minimised and that appropriate engagement takes place with local communities.

As planning law is a devolved matter, any future legislative changes will apply to England only, but we will continue to work closely with the Devolved Administrations to ensure that

the planning regime continues to support the deployment of mobile infrastructure across the United Kingdom.

EDUCATION

■ Update on Skills Education

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):

[[HCWS927](#)]

As we build back better from the pandemic, we are announcing plans which build on the reforms set out in the *Skills for Jobs White Paper*, putting employers at the heart of plans to make sure people have the skills they need to get good jobs.

Today (20th April 2021) we are launching a consultation on flexi-job apprenticeships which will make it easier for employers from all sectors of the economy to benefit from the impact that apprenticeships can bring to their business. The consultation is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/flexi-job-apprenticeships-reshaping-the-role-of-apprenticeship-training-agencies>

Since 2015 we have transformed apprenticeships into a prestigious technical education programme that is launching people's careers, upskilling and retraining workers, and helping employers develop the skills they need to thrive. Apprenticeships are at the heart of the Government's plans to drive economic recovery, and we are already making £3,000 available to employers for each new apprentice they recruit until 31 September.

In September 2020 the Prime Minister set out his ambition to make apprenticeships more portable, reflecting the varied and flexible models of employment that we see in dynamic sectors such as the creative industries, digital and construction. The consultation we are launching today sets out our vision for flexi-job apprenticeships as a means to achieve this and to unlock the potential of apprenticeships in these sectors. We want to seek views on this vision, and on how flexi-job apprenticeships can meet the needs of employers and provide a high quality experience for apprentices.

At Budget on 3 March the Chancellor announced a new £7m fund for flexi-job apprenticeship schemes. This consultation is an important step in preparing to launch this fund in July and ensuring that it delivers a vital skills boost to sectors which need it.

Skills Accelerator Launched

As part of the Skills for Jobs White Paper, we have launched the Skills Accelerator. This is central to the White Paper's aim to give employers a central role working with colleges, other providers, and local stakeholders to shape technical skills provision so that it meets labour market needs. It will be piloted in 2021-22 to test how we can enable a shift towards the White Paper's vision of a more collaborative post-16 system with employers at its heart. During the pilot:

- Local plans will be developed by employer representative bodies in collaboration with colleges and other providers and through engagement with key local stakeholders. They will provide a framework to help colleges and other providers reshape their offer to tackle skills mismatches and ensure they are responding effectively to labour market needs.

Employer representative bodies are invited to come forward to lead these plans and will have access to funding to help them to do so. Applications to pilot these plans close on 25 May and successful applicants will be announced thereafter.

- £65m will be made available to local areas as a one-year pilot, to facilitate changes to provision that have been endorsed by local employers. Providers and employers will work together to increase the level of skills in the workforce, stimulating demand for better jobs and leading to increased innovation and productivity. The fund will provide capital and revenue for collaborative projects that will build providers' capacity to meet locally agreed skills priorities. Applications for pilot projects close on May 25, with successful projects announced thereafter.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 Update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): [\[HCWS932\]](#)

I would like to update the House on the establishment of the Government's new COVID-19 Antivirals Taskforce.

Following the success of the Vaccines and Therapeutics Taskforces, Her Majesty's Government is seeking to remain at the forefront of the battle against COVID-19 and further develop our standing as leaders in the Life Sciences sector. The new team will lead the search for novel oral antiviral treatments to provide additional protection for the UK population, particularly those currently deemed most vulnerable, and relieve pressure on the NHS.

The UK's Vaccine Programme – whilst immensely successful and vital in pandemic recovery – will not protect everyone. Vaccine effectiveness is not established in all groups of the UK population, and there will be some groups for whom vaccines may not be effective protection, so antiviral treatments will provide an alternative form of protection.

The aim of the Antivirals Taskforce is to search for the most promising novel oral antiviral medicines and speed up the process of development, manufacture and deployment, with the goal of having at least two of these drugs ready to deploy by the autumn.

We are still at a relatively early stage of the vaccine deployment programme. Our understanding of the implications that mutations of the virus may have on vaccine efficacy is developing all the time. Antivirals can be used for two key purposes: first, to inhibit the virus at an early stage to stop mild disease becoming serious illness. By inhibiting the virus at this stage, the drugs also prevent replication - both within an individual and from person to person – limiting the impact of and spread of COVID-19, relieving pressure on the NHS and supporting our ongoing return to normal life.

Second, antivirals may also be able to be used as post-exposure prophylactics, to minimise the spread of the disease where there has been contact with known, positive cases

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the UK has proven itself a world-leader in identifying and rolling out effective COVID-19 treatments – including the world's first treatment, dexamethasone, which has saved 22,000 lives in the UK so far and an estimated million worldwide. These treatments help the recovery of patients who have been hospitalised with COVID-19. The aim of an oral antiviral treatment is that it will be readily available for use outside of these settings - for example, in a patient's own home.

Building on the successful work of the Therapeutics and Vaccines Taskforces, the Antivirals Taskforce is bringing together the brightest minds from medicine, industry experts and across government and the life sciences to find a new, innovative treatment for patients to take at home. A short competition will be run to identify a suitable chair for the Taskforce.

We are already engaging with industry to identify antiviral compound candidates which could be ready for deployment in the autumn, and will update the House with the Taskforce's progress in due course.

HOME OFFICE

■ Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021)

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS926\]](#)

Section 19(1) of the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIM) Act 2011 (the Act) requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of every relevant three-month period on the exercise of her TPIM powers under the Act during that period.

The level of information provided will always be subject to slight variations based on operational advice.

TPIM NOTICES IN FORCE (AS OF 28 FEBRUARY 2021)

3

Number of new TPIM notices served (during this period) 0

TPIM notices in respect of British citizens (as of 28 February 2021) 3

TPIM notices extended (during the reporting period) 1

TPIM notices revoked (during the reporting period) 0

TPIM notices revived (during the reporting period) 0

TPIM NOTICES IN FORCE (AS OF 28 FEBRUARY 2021)

	3
Variations made to measures specified in TPIM notices (during the reporting period)	2
Applications to vary measures specified in TPIM notices refused (during the reporting period)	0
The number of subjects relocated under TPIM legislation (during this the reporting period)	2

On 22 February 2021 TPIM subject LF was sentenced to 2 years and 4 months having pleaded guilty to six counts of breaching his TPIM notice.

In accordance with the Act, Section 9 reviews of the TPIMs against JM and LF were heard at the High Court between 30 October and 10 November 2020. In a judgment published on 10 February 2021, the court upheld the necessity and proportionality of the TPIM notice and all of the measures specified within it against JM. LF only challenged the necessity and proportionality of two of the measures specified within the notice. In the judgment the court upheld the necessity and proportionality of both measures. This judgment can be found at:

www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2021/266.html

The TPIM Review Group (TRG) keeps every TPIM notice under regular and formal review. First quarter TRG meetings will be held between 16 and 23 March 2021.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Machinery of Government

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):

[HCWS928]

I am making this statement to bring to the House's attention the following Machinery of Government change.

Policy responsibility for the GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland campaign will transfer from the Department for International Trade to the Cabinet Office. This change will be effective immediately.

TRANSPORT

■ Roads Update

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[[HCWS931](#)]

The House will know that this Government takes the safety of our roads very seriously and has invested heavily in improvements to help prevent deaths and injuries. Great Britain has some of the safest roads in the world and, although per hundred million miles driven there are fewer deaths on smart motorways than conventional ones, we are determined to do all we can to help drivers feel safer and be safer on our roads – all our roads.

In March 2020, I published a *Smart Motorway Safety Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan*. The safety improvements in the 2020 Action Plan consisted of a package of 18 actions, costing £500 million, including the rollout of radar-based stopped vehicle detection (SVD) technology across the ALR motorway network and an additional £5 million on national and targeted communications campaigns to ensure drivers receive advice to help them keep safe. Furthermore, we have changed the law to enable automatic detection of vehicles driving in closed lanes, known as Red X violations. Highways England is upgrading all enforcement cameras across the smart motorway network to enable automatic detection of Red X violations which can then be enforced by the police.

One year on from the publications of the 2020 Action Plan, I commissioned a report from Highways England which sets out its progress on these 18 actions along with proposals about how those actions could be accelerated. Today Highways England has published its *Smart Motorways Stocktake First Year Progress Report 2021* which I will place in the libraries of both Houses. The report contains the latest safety data which updates analysis contained in the 2020 Stocktake report.

The report demonstrates significant progress against the 18 actions, which when delivered in full, will raise the bar on motorway safety. Over the past 12 months Highways England has: launched a major road safety campaign to give drivers clear advice about what to do in the event of breaking down; completed work to turn emergency areas orange so they are more visible to drivers and improved the signage letting drivers know how far they are from the next place to stop in an emergency; installed 10 more emergency areas on the M25 around London; held a public consultation on proposed changes to the Highway Code that will provide more information about motorway driving; continued to upgrade cameras so they can automatically detect Red X violations; and introduced radar-based stopped vehicle detection technology on stretches of the M3 and the M20, with work underway on the M1.

Highways England is now accelerating a number of actions so that the completion dates set out in Highway's England Strategic Business Plan 2020-25 are brought forward.

Most significantly, radar-based stopped vehicle detection technology will now be installed on all operational ALR motorways by September 2022, six months earlier than planned. Highways England has also made a commitment that no all lane running motorways will

open without radar technology to spot stopped vehicles, enable lanes to be closed where necessary, and get help to drivers quickly.

The data contained in the Highways England progress report continues to show that fatal casualties are less likely on all lane running motorways than on conventional ones, but we know drivers can feel less safe on roads without hard shoulders, which is why the Progress Report published today intends to accelerate a number of actions to provide reassurance to drivers. My statement of 24 March 2021 confirmed that the Office of Rail and Road is carrying out an independent review of the data to provide further analytical assurance and ensure that the conclusions arrived at are robust.

I would like to pay tribute to all those safety campaigners, in particular those who have lost loved ones, on their efforts to ensure that changes are made. The Government and Highways England will continue to work hard to improve road safety.

Attachments:

1. Smart Motorways Stocktake First Year Progress Repo [Smart Motorways Stocktake First Year Progress Report 2021.pdf]