



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 April 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:49 P.M., 22 April 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	5	DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	12
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	5	■ Tourism: Coronavirus	12
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	5	EDUCATION	12
■ Electricity Interconnectors: Costs	5	■ Children in Care: Prison Sentences	12
■ Housing: Energy	6	■ Children: Protective Clothing	13
■ Re-employment	7	■ Children: Social Services	14
CABINET OFFICE	7	■ Members: Correspondence	15
■ Blood: Contamination	7	■ National Tutoring Programme	15
■ Census: Standards	7	■ Physical Education	17
■ Coronavirus: Screening	8	■ Primary Education: Teachers	17
■ Equality: Construction	8	■ Pupil Premium: Coronavirus	18
■ Lead: Poisoning	9	■ Schools: Asbestos	19
■ Public Sector: Procurement	9	■ Schools: Complaints	20
■ Titan Airways: Contracts	9	■ Schools: Computers	20
CHURCH COMMISSIONERS	10	■ Teachers: Labour Turnover	21
■ Church of England: Farms	10	■ Vocational Guidance: Medicine	21
■ Hunting	10	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	22
COP26	11	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	22
■ Carbon Emissions	11	■ Construction: Materials	24
DEFENCE	11	■ Dangerous Dogs: Research	24
■ Afghanistan: Interpreters	11	■ Hare Coursing	24
■ Armed Forces: Training	12		
■ Babcock International: Pay	12		

■ Seals: Conservation	25	■ Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System	39
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	25	■ Hospitals: Construction	40
■ Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences	25	■ Members: Correspondence	40
■ Bangladesh: Overseas Aid	25	■ Mental Health Services: Social Services	41
■ Czech Republic: Russia	26	■ Mercaptamine Hydrochloride	42
■ East Africa: Pipelines	26	■ NHS Test and Trace	42
■ Eritrea: Ethiopia	27	■ NHS: Mental Health Services	42
■ Horn of Africa: Coronavirus	27	■ NHS: Staff	43
■ Iran: BBC World Service	28	■ Palliative Care	43
■ Jagtar Singh Johal	28	■ Palliative Care: Third Sector	44
■ Montenegro: Non-governmental Organisations	29	■ Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust: Finance	44
■ Nigeria: Politics and Government	29	■ Social Services: Mental Health Services	44
■ Overseas Aid	30	■ Social Services: Visits	45
■ Pakistan: Overseas Aid	32	■ Surgery: Sheffield City Region	45
■ South America: Politics and Government	32	■ Surgery: Waiting Lists	45
■ St Vincent and the Grenadines: Volcanoes	33	HOME OFFICE	46
■ Tigray: Armed Conflict	33	■ Airguns: Licensing	46
■ Uganda: Politics and Government	33	■ Asylum	46
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	34	■ Asylum: Clothing	47
■ Abortion: Prescription Drugs	34	■ Asylum: Finance	47
■ BSL Health Access: Finance	35	■ Crime: Rural Areas	49
■ Cancer: Coronavirus	35	■ Dangerous Driving: Greater London	49
■ Care Homes: Visits	36	■ Domestic Abuse: Females	49
■ Coronavirus Act 2020	36	■ Drugs: Organised Crime	50
■ Coronavirus: Screening	36	■ Firearms: Licensing	51
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	37	■ Offensive Weapons: Crime	52
■ Dementia: Prescription Drugs	38	■ Osime Brown	52
■ Health Services: Waiting Lists	39	■ Slavery	52

■ Social Rented Housing: Antisocial Behaviour	53	TRANSPORT	68
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	55	■ Bus Services	68
■ Buildings: Insulation	55	■ Bus Services: Fares	68
■ Community Development: Finance	55	■ Crossrail 2 Line: Haringey	68
■ Council Tax Reduction Schemes	56	■ Eurostar: Coronavirus	69
■ Domestic Abuse: Refuges	57	■ Motor Vehicles: Vehicle Number Plates	69
■ Environmental Impact Assessment	58	■ Northern Transport Acceleration Council	70
■ Leasehold: Ground Rent	58	■ Passenger Ships: Coronavirus	70
■ Local Government: Flags	59	■ Railways: Coronavirus	71
■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Contact Tracing	59	■ Railways: Electrification	72
■ Planning	60	■ Railways: Repairs and Maintenance	72
■ Regional Planning and Development	62	■ Screening: Coronavirus	73
■ Religious Buildings: Coronavirus	63	■ Shipping: Financial Services	73
■ Social Rented Housing: Antisocial Behaviour	64	■ Shipping: Job Creation	73
■ Towns Fund	64	■ Tonnage Tax	74
INTERNATIONAL TRADE	65	■ Travel: Coronavirus	74
■ Department for International Trade: Old Admiralty Building	65	TREASURY	74
JUSTICE	65	■ Corporation Tax	74
■ Prisons: Gender Recognition	65	■ Cycling: VAT	74
■ Prisons: Security	66	■ Digital Technology: Taxation	75
■ Prosecutions: Coronavirus	66	■ Financial Services: Asia	75
NORTHERN IRELAND	67	■ Households: Finance	76
■ Northern Ireland office: Contact Tracing	67	■ Ice Cream: VAT	76
■ Northern Ireland Office: Contact Tracing	67	■ Liverpool Victoria	76
		■ Mortgages: Coronavirus	77
		■ Premium Bonds	77
		■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme	78
		■ Small Businesses: Taxation	78
		■ Stamp Duties	79
		■ Valuation Office Agency	79

WALES	80	■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals	85
■ UK Trade with EU: Wales	80	■ REACH Independent Scientific Expert Pool	85
■ Wales Office: Contact Tracing	80	■ Rents	87
WORK AND PENSIONS	81	■ Social Security Benefits: Canada	87
■ Child Maintenance Service	81	■ Social Security Benefits: Cancer	87
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Ministerial Policy Advisers	82	■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus	88
■ Elections: Disability	83	■ Universal Credit	88
■ Employment and Support Allowance	83	■ Universal Credit: Deductions	89
■ Kickstart Scheme	84	■ Universal Credit: Scotland	89
■ Occupational Health	85		

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Claire Hanna:

[\[183312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to support a waiver on intellectual property right rules for covid-19 vaccines to facilitate global vaccine roll out.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK is among the biggest global donors on COVID-19, and committed to supporting rapid, equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

The UK does not consider waiving intellectual property (IP) rights to be an appropriate action to boost the manufacturing of safe, effective, and quality vaccines. The existing intellectual property framework has mobilised research and development to deliver a host of new medicines and technologies to detect, treat, and defend against COVID-19. The UK continues to engage in constructive and evidence-based discussions at the TRIPS Council on the waiver proposal, and to address the multiple factors outside of IP on which access to medicines depends.

■ **Electricity Interconnectors: Costs**

James Cartlidge:

[\[183225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the cost of the Western HVDC Link from Hunterston to Connah's Quay to date.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Western Link is a joint venture between National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) and Scottish Power Transmission (SPT), which become operational in 2017. It is an electricity transmission subsea link built primarily to transfer renewable energy from Scotland to homes and businesses in England and Wales, which Ofgem stated has cost £1.3 billion.

James Cartlidge:

[\[183226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the cost of SCD1, the proposed offshore HVDC link between Suffolk and Kent.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

SCD1, the proposed 2GW offshore HVDC link between Suffolk and Kent is planned to transfer renewable energy generated from offshore wind farms on the coast of East Anglia to demand within the south east of England, bypassing the most constrained areas of the network. National Grid Electricity System Operator's

Network Options Assessment (NOA) 2020/21 indicates a cost band for this project of £1 billion - £1.5 billion. The NOA 2020/21 analysis suggests SCD1 could provide significant economic benefit to multiple areas in the south and east regions as it can be configured to transfer power in both directions.

■ Housing: Energy

Colleen Fletcher:

[183166]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to help improve energy efficiency in homes in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government recently announced an extra £300 million of funding to be invested to cut greenhouse gas emissions from the nation's homes through energy efficiency and low carbon heating schemes, delivered through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Scheme and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). This brings the total government funding for energy efficiency and low carbon heating in 2021/22 to over £1.3 billion.

Through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme, £500m has now been granted to Local Authorities in Phase 1 and Local Energy Hubs for Phase 2. Delivery has begun and will upgrade the energy efficiency of around 50,000 homes of low-income households across England. The full list of projects awarded funding under the Local Authority Delivery scheme so far can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-homes-grant-local-authority-delivery-successful-local-authorities>.

In addition to the Local Authority Delivery scheme, the SHDF (Demonstrator) project launched in 2020 and has subsequently awarded £62m of funding to social landlords across England and Scotland. The full list of projects awarded funding under the SHDF (Demonstrator) scheme can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-housing-decarbonisation-fund-demonstrator-successful-bids>.

Building on the SHDF (Demonstrator), there will be around £160m of further funding for the first wave of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund in 2021/22. This will be launched in the autumn, and represents an increase from the £60m funding announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Autumn 2020 Spending Review.

In addition, the Home Upgrade Grant has been allocated an initial £150m to specifically support low-income households with upgrades to the worst-performing off-gas-grid homes in England. The Home Upgrade Grant is due to commence delivery in early 2022.

■ Re-employment

Grahame Morris: [\[183120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2021 to Question 164417, when the Government plans to respond to the Acas findings on fire and rehire shared with his Department's officials on 17 February 2021; and if he will place in the Library a copy of those findings.

Paul Scully:

The Department engaged ACAS to gather evidence of how fire and rehire is being used and they have concluded their work.

ACAS engaged with a range of groups, including employer bodies and trade unions, as well as professional bodies with advisory contact with employers, such as employment lawyers, accountants, and payroll services.

Officials are now giving this evidence due consideration, and the Government will communicate our response in due course.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Blood: Contamination

Allan Dorans: [\[179552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to extend compensation to (a) immediate family members and (b) others affected by the contaminated blood scandal.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the hon. Member to the [Written Ministerial Statement](#) of 25 March 2021.

■ Census: Standards

Rachael Maskell: [\[183201\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason there has been a delay in distributing paper census forms.

Rachael Maskell: [\[183202\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether people who have requested but not received paper Census 2021 forms will be subject to a fine.

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 PQ183201, 183202 [UKSA final response to PQs183201_183202 (1).pdf]

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Munira Wilson:** [\[181116\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what reports he has received of the Office for National Statistics sending out negative covid-19 test results for tests taken six or more weeks ago.

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 PQ181116 [UKSA's final response to PQ181116.pdf]

■ Equality: Construction**Dan Jarvis:** [\[182048\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with (a) the Chancellor of the Exchequer and (b) other Cabinet colleagues on the (i) feasibility and (ii) potential effect of introducing a gender quota requirement as part of Government contracts to help tackle sexism in the construction sector.

Dan Jarvis: [\[182049\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many women are employed by construction companies with Government contracts.

Julia Lopez:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not usually disclosed.

The Government fully recognises the importance of diversity and acknowledges that women are currently underrepresented in many occupations in the Construction and Built Environment sectors. The Construction Leadership Council recently published a Skills Plan for the sector that sets out a series of clear actions and commitments for both industry and Government to help tackle this.

We expect all suppliers in all sectors to lead by example by upholding the values of the Supplier Code of Conduct, including supporting key government corporate social responsibility policy areas, such as diversity and inclusion, sustainability, apprenticeships and skills development and addressing the gender pay gap.

Through our policy to extend the use of the Social Value Act, effective from 1 January, all major central government procurements will, where appropriate, explicitly evaluate social value.

The information on the number of women employed by construction companies with Government contracts is not held centrally.

■ Lead: Poisoning**Alex Sobel:** [\[181419\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many deaths have been officially attributed to lead poisoning in the last 10 years.

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 PQ181419 [UKSA's final response to PQ181419.pdf]

■ Public Sector: Procurement**Andrea Jenkyns:** [\[181344\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Department has to reform public purchasing procurement rules to promote domestic industry.

Julia Lopez:

The Government recognises the vital role that industry has played in helping to tackle the Covid-19 outbreak and in leading the recovery from the pandemic.

We have recently published our Green Paper setting out proposals and demonstrating the possibilities for public procurement rules reform. Our proposals are wide-ranging and are designed to better meet national needs by cutting red tape, reducing bureaucracy and helping to unleash wider social benefits from public money spent on procurement whilst respecting our international obligations.

Along with the above, we want British business to be in the best competitive position to win international contracts. To this end, our membership of the WTO Government Procurement Agreement gives British businesses access to £1.3 trillion in public procurement opportunities overseas.

■ Titan Airways: Contracts**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[178867\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the cost is to the public purse of the Government's leasing arrangement with Titan Airways.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[178868\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government's agreement with Titan Airways for the lease of A321 transport aircraft was put out to tender.

Julia Lopez:

Details of the contracts for the A321 will be published by the Government shortly. As always, the procurement decision was made with value for money for the taxpayer in

mind. The A321 will be substantially cheaper, and “greener” to operate than current arrangements and also offers significant value for money compared to the ad-hoc hire of private planes.

The lease agreement was achieved through the use of existing travel contract frameworks. A tender competition was run using those frameworks following advice from the Crown Commercial and Government Legal Services.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Church of England: Farms

Jim Shannon:

[\[178589\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what the average length of term agreed on farm business tenancies let by the Church Commissioners, other than in cases where a tenancy is replacing a previous tenancy let under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986, was in each of the last five years to 2020.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 14 April 2021]: In the last five years, ending with 2020, the average length of the term granted for new farm business tenancies over 50 acres across the Commissioners’ rural portfolio was:

2016	4.1
2017	4.9
2018	3.6
2019	3.5
2020	2.3

Such averages do not reflect the size of the holdings which were let during this period or the circumstances and rationale for each new farm letting.

■ Hunting

Luke Pollard:

[\[178571\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of suspending licences for trail hunting on land owned by the Church; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 14 April 2021]: In 2020 the Church Commissioners reviewed their policy on trail hunting and suspended any directly issued licences which previously permitted trail hunting. Where trail hunting continues to take place across

Commissioners' tenanted land (and which is beyond our direct control owing to the tenant's security of tenure) we are seeking to assist farm tenants with the regularisation of any informal trail hunting arrangements.

COP26

■ Carbon Emissions

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[181085\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to ensure that large polluting industries do not have an outsized influence on the climate ambition of the UK and other nations preceding and during COP26.

Alok Sharma:

I have set climate criteria for businesses who will be involved in COP26, including for our corporate sponsorship and for those organisations which have applied for space at COP26 itself.

The climate criteria include requiring businesses to commit to the most ambitious and robust action possible, joining the Race to Zero by committing to net zero by 2050 at the latest and setting science based targets to meet this goal.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Interpreters

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[181247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to ensure the safety of translators in Afghanistan.

James Heapey:

The Government is strongly committed to fulfilling its responsibilities to current and former locally employed staff in Afghanistan. That is why we developed a new Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which launched on 1 April 2021. It acknowledges and reflects the fact that the situation in Afghanistan has changed, and with it the potential risk to current and former Locally Employed Staff who worked for the UK Government over the past twenty years.

Under the new scheme, any current or former Locally Employed Staff who are assessed to be under serious threat [to life] will be offered priority relocation to the UK regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served. And local staff who have worked in roles which could have exposed their identities and placed them at risk of reprisals will be relocated to the UK by default.

The Defence Secretary is working with the Home Secretary as part of a cross Government effort, at pace, to make sure that those who have served alongside us in Afghanistan are looked after in the future. An announcement will be made shortly.

■ Armed Forces: Training**Jack Lopresti:** [\[180953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are assigned to training appointments in the (a) Royal Navy, (b) British Army and (c) Royal Air Force.

James Heappey:

The requested information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ Babcock International: Pay**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[183102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the pay of Babcock International workers in (a) England and (b) Wales who carry out the same duties in military bases in those countries.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence has made no comparative assessment. The pay, terms and conditions of Babcock International employees are a matter for the company.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Tourism: Coronavirus****Alex Sobel:** [\[183276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to publish the Tourism Recovery Plan.

Nigel Huddleston:

We intend to publish the Tourism Recovery Plan in late spring.

We are continuing to hold discussions across Government and with stakeholders, including via the Tourism Industry Council, to assess how this plan can support the sector's short and long term recovery from the pandemic.

EDUCATION**■ Children in Care: Prison Sentences****Dan Jarvis:** [\[183149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on average how many looked after children have received custodial sentences in each of the last 10 years.

Vicky Ford:

The information held by the department covers children aged 10 years or over, who were looked after for at least 12 months, who were convicted or subject to youth

cautions, or youth conditional cautions during each year. The figures are shown in the table below:

Number of children aged 10 years or over who were looked after for at least 12 months who were convicted or subject to youth cautions, or youth conditional cautions during the year in England [1]

YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH	NUMBER LOOKED AFTER FOR AT LEAST 12 MONTHS AGED 10 TO 17 AT 31 MARCH[2]	NUMBER CONVICTED OR SUBJECT TO YOUTH CAUTIONS, OR YOUTH CONDITIONAL CAUTIONS DURING THE YEAR[2]
2020	39,620	1,160
2019	38,090	1,280
2018	36,730	1,510
2017	35,090	1,590
2016	33,120	1,640
2015	31,800	1,630
2014	30,650	1,690
2013	29,840	1,830
2012	29,790	2,070
2011	30,280	2,200

Source: SSDA903

The latest information on children looked after in England 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>.

[1] Figures include children aged 10 to 17 years who have been continuously looked after for at least 12 months as at 31 March. Figures exclude children who were looked after under an agreed series of short-term placements.

[2] Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10.

■ **Children: Protective Clothing**

Andrew Rosindell:

[178882]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits for social development among children of ceasing the use by children of facemasks in schools.

Nick Gibb:

It is vital that all pupils can attend school to minimise the long-term impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on their education, wellbeing, and wider development. This is why enabling all pupils to return to face to face education has remained a national priority as we begin to relax restrictions.

To support the return to full attendance on 8 March 2021, the Department published updated guidance for schools, which included updated advice on face coverings. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

As the guidance outlines, where pupils in Year 7 and above are educated, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors, and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained.

Since 8 March and following an ongoing review of the available evidence and in line with public health advice, we also continue to recommend that face coverings should be worn in classrooms by staff and those in Year 7 and above unless social distancing can be maintained.

In primary schools, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and adults in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible. Children in primary school should not wear face coverings.

The best available scientific evidence is that, when used correctly, wearing a face covering may reduce the spread of COVID-19 droplets in certain circumstances, helping to protect others.

We recognise that the wearing of face coverings may impact communication. The decision to continue with this additional precautionary measure of face coverings in classrooms is based on the latest public health advice balanced with intelligence on the impacts of face coverings and is a cautious approach that will help limit the risk of transmission. We will seek to remove face coverings at the first safe opportunity given the negative impact they may have on communication in the classroom.

Based on the current state of the COVID-19 outbreak and the positive progress being made, it is expected that face coverings will no longer be required for both staff and pupils in classrooms, or by pupils in all communal areas. This is subject to a further review process of the face covering policy as part of step 3 of the roadmap (no earlier than 17 May) based on the latest scientific evidence and advice.

■ Children: Social Services**Christian Wakeford:****[183318]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by Serenity Welfare entitled Lives transformed, potential fulfilled, published in April 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the finding in

that report that adequate provision of care and early interventions for vulnerable children and young people by local authorities could unlock £7 billion by 2030.

Vicky Ford:

The department has received a copy of the report and will study the findings with interest.

The report highlights that local authorities can make savings through reducing the number of children in care. I am committed to enabling as many children as possible to stay at home, in safe and stable family environments, so that fewer children are taken into care. That is why the 'Strengthening Families, Protecting Children' programme is investing £84 million over five financial years, from 2019-20 to 2023-24, to support 17 local authorities with high or rising numbers of children in care. These local authorities will be supported to embed one of three models, developed by Leeds, Hertfordshire, and North Yorkshire, that have the most promising evidence from the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme of safely reducing the number of children being taken into care.

We are also investing a further £17 million through the 'Supporting Families: Investing in Practice' programme, enabling local authorities to help keep families safe by embedding Family Drug and Alcohol Courts, Family Group Conferencing, and the Mockingbird Family Model. We are working with the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care to evaluate the impact of these programmes. The findings from these programmes, alongside the recommendations made by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care – which was launched on 15 January 2021 to take a fundamental look at the needs, experiences, and outcomes of the children it supports – will inform our future strategy for children's social care.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[178949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 28 January 2021, reference ZA55341, regarding the re-opening of schools.

Nick Gibb:

I can confirm that a response, ref ZA55341, has been sent to the hon. Member for West Lancashire.

■ **National Tutoring Programme**

Huw Merriman:

[\[181329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure former teachers that are not registered with a teaching agency are able to participate in the Government's national tutoring programme.

Nick Gibb:

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) is an ambitious scheme that will provide additional, targeted support for those children and young people who have been hardest hit from disruption to their education as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

There is extensive evidence that tutoring, by trained tutors who may or may not be qualified teachers, is one of the most effective ways to accelerate pupil progress, can lead to positive impacts and can boost catch up for lost teaching time by much as 3 to 5 months.

High quality tuition is one of the fundamental principles of the NTP, and the Department has worked closely with delivery partners to ensure it can be delivered across the programme.

Whilst we recognise that the education and experience of tutors is important to the delivery of high quality tuition, even tutors with relevant qualifications will require training to ensure that delivery is in line with the model offered by the Tuition Partners' pillar of the NTP.

Opportunities to become a NTP tutor are available through approved Tuition Partners who are responsible for recruiting, training, and deploying tutors. Further information on each of our tuition partners can be found here: <https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/ntp-tuition-partners/ntp-approved-tuition-partners>.

Kate Green: **[183134]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children have been allocated a tutoring place under the National Tutoring Programme and across how many schools; how many of those children have started to receive tutoring; and how many of those children are eligible for the pupil premium.

Kate Green: **[183135]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the National Tutoring Programme, how many academic mentors are in place across how many schools; how many children are in receipt of mentoring support; and how many of those children are eligible for pupil premium funding.

Nick Gibb:

The National Tutoring Programme is an ambitious scheme that will provide additional, targeted support for those children and young people who have been hardest hit from disruption to their education as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

There is extensive evidence that tutoring is one of the most effective ways to accelerate pupil progress, and we want to extend this opportunity to disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.

Over 196,000 pupils have been enrolled to receive tutoring from 4,727 schools. Of those enrolled, over 93,000 have commenced tutoring of which 45% are eligible for pupil premium funding.

We have placed 1,074 active mentors across 946 schools who have supported over 23,000 pupils. 83% of placements have been in schools with a greater than average proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium.

■ Physical Education

Catherine West:

[\[183230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department (a) has taken and (b) is planning to take to ensure that school children have adequate access to physical education as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased and children have returned to in-person teaching.

Nick Gibb:

Physical Education (PE) plays a key role in pupils' physical and mental wellbeing. It is a foundation subject in the National Curriculum at all four key stages and we expect schools to teach it to all pupils as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

During COVID-19 restrictions schools have the flexibility to decide how PE will be provided to pupils whilst following their measures of control. The Department's guidance sets out how schools can continue to provide PE, including making it clear that indoor lessons are allowed. It also signposts advice from the Association for Physical Education and the Youth Sport Trust is supporting schools to adapt the teaching of PE. Remote physical education lessons are also available from Oak National Academy.

We are also working closely with Swim England and Royal Life Saving Society UK to support schools to continue to provide swimming and water safety lessons for their pupils, which is a compulsory part of the primary PE national curriculum.

■ Primary Education: Teachers

Ben Bradley:

[\[180590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of men in primary teaching.

Nick Gibb:

The Government aims to attract and retain highly skilled and talented individuals, including men, through effective pay structures, financial incentives, and by ensuring that teaching remains a sustainable and rewarding career.

The teacher pay increases in recent years are making a substantial difference to the competitiveness of the early career pay offer. This academic year, starting salaries have already increased by 5.5%, with the majority of other teachers receiving 2.75%. The Department is also committed to increasing starting salaries nationally to £30,000.

Alongside this, the Department is introducing a new application service for teacher training, which has been designed and extensively tested with a diverse range of potential applicants, to ensure it helps remove barriers to potentially great teachers, including men, applying for initial teacher training (ITT) courses.

The Department's 'Every Lesson Shapes A Life' recruitment campaign is targeted at audiences of students, recent graduates, and potential career changers inclusive of

all genders, and we take every effort to ensure that our advertising is fully reflective of this across the full range of marketing materials we use.

As well as recruiting new teachers, it is important the Department retains male teachers in primary schools. To do this, we are working to make sure that all new entrants to teacher training have the best possible start to the early stage of their career.

This is why, from September 2020 onwards, new trainee teachers will be entitled to at least three years of evidence-based professional development and support, starting with ITT, based on the new ITT Core Content Framework (2019). The new ITT Core Content Framework sets out a core minimum entitlement for all trainees describing the fundamental knowledge and skills that all new entrants to the profession need to effectively teach and support all children.

Following on from their training, from this September all new teachers will be entitled to two years of funded high-quality professional development including the support of a dedicated mentor, through the Early Career Framework reforms. Schools will receive additional funding so new teachers can spend time away from the classroom for this extra training and mentoring. Together, these reforms will ensure that all new teachers will develop the skills, expertise and confidence they need to thrive in the classroom.

■ Pupil Premium: Coronavirus

Barry Gardiner:

[\[178762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has plans to update data held by his Department on the number of children that qualify for free school meals to ensure that pupil premium grant funding reflects the increase in the number of children whose families are eligible for that funding as a result of the economic consequences of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

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

As part of the October census, schools are required to submit information on free school meals (FSM) eligibility for all of their pupils. The move to using the October census for the pupil premium should not affect the information submitted by schools as part of the census. The only circumstance in which amendments can be made to the October census is if there is an error in the numbers. We look into such cases on a case by case basis when they are reported to us.

Pupil premium will continue to be based on "Ever6 FSM", whereby all pupils eligible for free school meals at the time of the October census, or at any point in the previous 6 years, will attract pupil premium funding. Per pupil funding rates will be the same as in 2020-21. As a result, we expect a typical school to see an increase in

pupil premium funding from 2020-21 to 2021-22 as more children have become eligible for free school meals as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, and for total pupil premium funding to increase from £2.4 billion in 2020-21 to more than £2.5 billion in 2021-22. In addition to this, the Government announced a further £300 million for a one-off Recovery Premium which will be allocated to schools based on the same methodology as the pupil premium. In this way, schools with more disadvantaged pupils will receive larger amounts.

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

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

■ Schools: Asbestos

John McDonnell:

[178779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to prioritise the replacement of Consortium of Local Authorities Special Programme (CLASP) schools in the School Rebuilding Programme to ensure that teachers and schoolchildren are safe from asbestos.

Nick Gibb:

The Department takes the issue of asbestos in schools very seriously, and is committed to supporting schools, local authorities and academy trusts to fulfil their duty to manage asbestos safely. Expert advice from the Health and Safety Executive is that if asbestos is unlikely to be damaged or disturbed then it is best managed in situ. We are clear that if asbestos does pose a safety risk and cannot be effectively managed in situ, then it should be removed from schools.

Since 2015, the Government has allocated over £9.5 billion, including an additional £560 million in financial year 2020/21 to those responsible for school buildings for essential maintenance and improvements, including removing or encapsulation when it is the safest course of action to do so.

In February, we announced the first 50 schools to benefit from the new School Rebuilding Programme as part of a commitment to 500 projects over the next decade. School Rebuilding Programme investment is targeted on the basis of buildings' condition. A full explanation of the methodology used to prioritise the first 50 schools has been published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme>.

The Department intends to consult later this year on the approach to prioritising schools for the longer-term programme. Further details will be set out at that time and

we would welcome the views of the school sector and other interested parties, including on whether particular types of building should be prioritised.

■ Schools: Complaints

Julian Sturdy: [\[178732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the advice his Department issued to schools on delaying answering parental complaints until schools had re-opened after covid-19 restrictions were eased, what steps his Department took to ensure that parents were informed of the effect of that advice on reducing the time available to them to subsequently make appeals to (a) the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) and (b) other bodies.

Julian Sturdy: [\[179093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) has not extended the six month deadline for complaint submission to 12 months to reflect disruption caused by the covid-19 outbreak, in line with the Department for Education's deadlines.

Nick Gibb:

During COVID-19 restrictions, the Department published school complaint guidance on GOV.UK and provided advice on telephone helplines, and in writing, when parents or carers requested advice on appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Tribunal and other bodies.

There was no specific advice given in this guidance regarding appeals to the SEND Tribunal as this is a separate process and does not require completion of the school's complaints procedure to proceed. The timescale for registering an appeal with the SEND Tribunal has remained unchanged throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Schools: Computers

Dan Jarvis: [\[183151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops had been supplied to schools under the Get Help with Technology programme and predecessor programmes aimed at supporting schools through the covid-19 outbreak, by each local education authority in the UK as of (a) 1 September 2020, (b) 20 December 2020 and (c) 1 April 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including making 1.3 million laptops and tablets available for disadvantaged children and young people.

To date, over 1.29 million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, academy trusts, local authorities and further education colleges.

The Department has partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help over 30,000 disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering over 75,000 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home.

Data on the number of laptops, tablets and 4G routers distributed by the Get Help with Technology Programme to local authorities has been published periodically over the duration of the programme and can be found through this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/laptops-and-tablets-progress-data-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

■ Teachers: Labour Turnover

Dan Jarvis:

[183150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recent National Education Union polling showing that one in three teachers in the UK plans to leave the profession within five years.

Nick Gibb:

It is a top priority of the Government to ensure that we continue to attract, retain and support the great teachers we need to educate the next generation. The Government is moving forward with delivery of the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy that was published in January 2019. This includes commitments to reduce teacher workload, improve continuing professional development, and create greater opportunities for flexible working.

We have started to roll out the Early Career Framework (ECF) – the biggest teaching reform in a generation – providing the foundations for a successful career in teaching, backed by up to £130 million a year in funding when fully rolled out. Early roll-out began in autumn 2020 and is taking place in selected areas: the North East, Greater Manchester, Bradford, and Doncaster.

The new initial teacher training (ITT) Core Content Framework, which was implemented from September 2020, is a mandatory core minimum entitlement for all trainees and will work coherently with the ECF to ensure all new teachers benefit from at least 3 years of evidence-based training, across ITT and into induction.

We are also launching new National Professional Qualifications from September 2021, offering high-quality professional development for teachers and school leaders at all levels, from those who want to develop expertise in specialist areas of teaching practice, to those leading multiple schools across trusts.

■ Vocational Guidance: Medicine

Sir Greg Knight:

[183085]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to encourage more secondary school pupils to consider pursuing a career in (a) medicine and (b) the NHS, particularly in areas where NHS recruitment is low; and if he will make a statement.

Gillian Keegan:

It is essential that young people have information on a wide range of jobs and careers so that they can make informed choices. The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) connects schools and colleges with employers from a variety of sectors, including medicine and the NHS, to provide meaningful encounters with the world of work for young people. They do this through their Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hubs, in collaboration with Local Enterprise Partnerships who tailor support according to local labour market information.

Thirteen NHS Trusts, including Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals, which are all large healthcare employers, are part of CEC's Cornerstone employers' group. Cornerstone employers are major employers who target support for young people in disadvantaged areas. Four in five schools and colleges in England have adopted the eight Gatsby Benchmarks of good careers guidance. These include learning from career and labour market information, encounters with employers and employees, and experiences of workplaces. 3.3 million secondary aged school and college students now benefit from regular and meaningful employer encounters – an increase of 70% in two years.

From September this year, T Levels in Health and Healthcare Science are being introduced. During these two-year programmes, students will develop the core knowledge and skills that are needed for entry to a range of healthcare occupations. Both T Levels include a minimum of nine weeks working with an employer on an industry placement.

The National Careers Service provides independent, professional advice on skills and the labour market. Secondary school pupils can find information on a variety of careers, including those in medicine and the NHS, on the National Careers Service website. Young people aged 13 to 18 can also access ongoing in-depth guidance via local telephone-based advisers and web chat.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Mark Pawsey:****[914633]**

What steps his Department is taking to support local authorities in tackling (a) littering and (b) fly-tipping.

Rebecca Pow:

In recent years, we have bolstered local authorities' powers to tackle litter and fly-tipping. We have increased and introduced new penalties for littering and fly-tipping and given councils the power to stop and seize vehicles of suspected fly-tippers. We also continue to campaign to raise awareness of the impacts of littering to support behaviour change and we are providing funding of just under a million pounds to help 44 local authorities purchase new litter bins.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[914634\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the effect of the commercial extraction of peat compost on the Government's ability to meet its net zero carbon target.

Rebecca Pow:

We are committed to ending the use of peat in horticulture in England and achieving our net zero target. In early February 2021, we held roundtables for groups of stakeholders to discuss potential measures to end the use of horticultural peat. We intend to publish a formal consultation in 2021 on further measures to end its use.

In 2019, peat extraction accounted for an estimated 2.4 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions in the UK, or 0.5% of the UK's total. For England, the figure is 0.2 million tonnes. All peat extraction in England will cease by 2042 at the latest, in advance of the UK's target to be net zero by 2050.

Dr Jamie Wallis: [\[914636\]](#)

What steps he is taking to progress the Red Meat Levy Redistribution Scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

The Red Meat Levy Redistribution Scheme came into operation on 1 April 2021. It enables the transfer of levy, collected at slaughter, between the English, Scottish and Welsh levy bodies. This will recognise that in some cases, animals have spent some of their life and gained some of their value in another part of Great Britain. The levy will be apportioned on how long animals have spent in each country.

Dr James Davies: [\[914637\]](#)

What steps he is taking to reduce tobacco litter.

Rebecca Pow:

The most effective way to tackle smoking related litter is by reducing the prevalence of smoking in the first place. The Government has committed to publish a new tobacco control plan for England later this year, to deliver its ambition of a smoke-free country by 2030. We have also recently announced our intention to explore regulatory options to ensure that the tobacco industry takes sufficient financial responsibility for the toxic litter created by its products.

Kate Osborne: [\[914638\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the (a) adequacy and (b) safety of the workforce in food supply chains.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra works closely with other Government departments to ensure there is access to adequate numbers of suitably skilled domestic and migrant workers across the agri-food chain.

Defra, the Home Office and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, work together to ensure that businesses adhere to the stringent requirements set for ensuring safety and wellbeing of seasonal agricultural workers.

The Health and Safety Executive requires harvesting work in a field to be assessed by the farmer, or contractor, to determine risks, both to workers and others.

■ **Construction: Materials**

Bob Blackman: [\[179046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to consult the construction industry on the proposed Extended Producer Responsibility for certain construction materials set out in the Government's waste and resource strategy published in 2018.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government remains committed to reviewing and consulting on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and other measures for certain Construction and Demolition sector products by the end of 2025. Stakeholder engagement will commence shortly. The Government is engaging with the sector through the industry-led Green Construction Board, including supporting the production of a roadmap to zero avoidable waste for the construction sector. This is due to be published in the next few months.

■ **Dangerous Dogs: Research**

John Healey: [\[183061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 30 June 2020 to Question 64852 on the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, on what date the Government commissioned research by Middlesex University into dog attacks is planned to be published.

Victoria Prentis:

Middlesex University's draft report on measures to reduce dog attacks and promote responsible ownership was submitted to Defra in March this year. The report is currently being peer reviewed and will be finalised in light of peer review comments. Our intention is to publish the final report later this year.

■ **Hare Coursing**

Sir Greg Knight: [\[183082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will increase the range and scope of penalties available for hare coursing offences including (a) extending the seizure and forfeiture powers in relation to dogs and vehicles and (b) enabling full kennelling costs to be recovered from defendants; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

We are determined to continue our efforts to prevent illegal hare coursing. In consultation with stakeholders and others we are exploring a number of options for additional measures and will continue to keep these under review.

■ Seals: Conservation

Luke Pollard:

[\[183283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 April 2021 to Question 179538 on Seals, what (a) funding and (b) other Government resources have been allocated to the Give Seals Space campaign.

Rebecca Pow:

The Seal Alliance received a grant of £75,700 from Defra's £40m [Green Recovery Challenge Fund](#) which has been used to support the '[Give Seals Space](#)' campaign.

Government officials have also been working with the Seal Alliance to help increase the reach of this government-backed campaign to ensure the impact of human disturbance on these vulnerable marine mammals is minimised.

Further information on the campaign can be found on the [Seal Alliance website](#).

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[183238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the budget is for the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict team in 2021-22.

Nigel Adams:

The portfolio agreed by the Foreign Secretary will focus our investment and expertise on issues where the UK can make the most difference and achieve maximum strategic coherence, impact, and value for money. We will now work through what this means for individual programmes, in line with the priorities we have identified.

■ Bangladesh: Overseas Aid

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[183111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the Official Development Assistance his Department disbursed to Bangladesh for the financial years (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018, (e) 2019 and (f) 2020.

Nigel Adams:

Bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided to Bangladesh by the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office - the predecessors of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which was formed in September 2020 - between 2015 and 2019 are set out in the table below.

Year	BILATERAL ODA (MILLION)	
	DFID	FCO Total DFID + FCO
2015	£157.5	£5.5 £163.0
2016	£143.7	£4.1 £147.8
2017	£167.1	£5.0 £172.1
2018	£183.2	£3.4 £186.6
2019	£242.2	£9.0 £251.2

ODA figures are published annually, in Statistics for International Development. Figures for 2020 will be published in Autumn 2021.

■ Czech Republic: Russia

Lisa Nandy:

[\[183132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of recent allegations made by the Government of the Czech Republic on the involvement of Russian intelligence operatives in the destruction of an ammunition storage depot at Vrbitice on 16 October 2014; and what discussions he has had with his European counterparts on that matter.

Wendy Morton:

The UK stands in full support of our Czech allies, who have exposed the lengths that the Russian intelligence services will go to in their attempts to conduct dangerous and malign operations in Europe. This is part of a pattern of behaviour by Moscow, which includes the Novichok attack in Salisbury. We are as determined and committed as ever to bring those responsible for the attack in Salisbury to justice, and commend the actions of the Czech authorities to do the same. Russia must desist from these actions, which violate the most basic international norms. The UK will continue to work with allies to call out Russia's malign behaviour where we see it.

■ East Africa: Pipelines

Stephen Doughty:

[\[183153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) environmental sustainability, (b) security risks and (c) geopolitical effect of the proposed East African Crude Oil Pipeline; and whether the Government has provided any support to that project.

James Duddridge:

The UK is not directly involved in the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project. The UK has previously engaged with the Governments of Uganda and Tanzania in support of the project and provided assistance to UK companies bidding for commercial contracts related to the EACOP, but this ceased when the announcement of our fossil fuel policy change was made in 2020.

■ **Eritrea: Ethiopia****Stephen Doughty:**[\[183157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) presence and (b) reported actions of (i) regular and (ii) irregular Eritrean troops in Ethiopia.

James Duddridge:

We remain concerned about the impact of the continued fighting in Tigray on the wider stability in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. As I made clear to the Eritrean Ambassador on 16 March, and through joint statements at the Human Rights Council and by the G7 on 2 April, Eritrea's role in the Ethiopian conflict is particularly concerning. There are numerous reports of atrocities involving Eritrean forces, and the presence of Eritrean forces is fuelling insecurity. These forces must leave Ethiopia immediately, in line with the commitment made by Prime Minister Abiy in his announcement on 26 March. We are closely monitoring the situation and are clear that their withdrawal must be swift, unconditional and verifiable. We have yet to see any evidence that Eritrean forces are leaving Tigray and will continue pressing for this commitment to be delivered.

■ **Horn of Africa: Coronavirus****Stephen Doughty:**[\[R\] \[183154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government is providing for covid-19 prevention and treatment in the Horn of Africa.

James Duddridge:

The UK has committed £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines, of which the UK is one of the largest bilateral donors. In the Horn of Africa, more than 2.5 million vaccine doses have been received by Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti through the COVAX AMC, to date. At national level, bilateral programming in the Horn has been adapted to respond to COVID-19, and through the regional Tackling Deadly Diseases in Africa Programme, the UK has contributed £20 million to the African Union's continental response to COVID-19.

As well as relationships with national governments, the FCDO has also strengthened its engagement with regional bodies, such as the African Centre for Disease Control and the World Health Organisation (WHO) Africa Regional Office. The FCDO is

tracking assessments of country preparedness and working at national and regional levels to support efforts to build country capacity to deliver vaccines and monitor vaccine roll-out, ensuring high risk groups are prioritised.

■ **Iran: BBC World Service**

Lisa Nandy: [\[183129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the ongoing criminal charges issued by the Iranian authorities against BBC Persian staff; and what representations he has made to his Iranian counterpart on that matter.

Lisa Nandy: [\[183130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the harassment and intimidation of (a) BBC Persian staff and (b) other independent journalists and their families in Iran; and what representations he has made to his Iranian counterpart on that harassment.

Lisa Nandy: [\[183131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the freezing of assets of BBC Persian staff, former staff and contributors by the Iranian authorities; and what representations he has made to his Iranian counterpart on that matter.

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. These actions by the Iranian authorities contravene multiple international human rights obligations, including restrictions on media freedom.

We continue to regularly raise this harassment directly with the Iranian government, as well as in multilateral fora, including the Human Rights Council. In October 2020, at the UN Third Committee, 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. We will continue to call out these violations for as long as Iran commits them.

The British Government is committed to the promotion of media freedom. Journalists must be able to investigate and report independently.

■ **Jagtar Singh Johal**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[183239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Indian counterpart on the (a) reported sentencing of UK

citizen Jagtar Singh Johal to the death penalty and (b) need for a full investigation into Mr Johal's allegations of torture.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government takes all allegations of human rights violations very seriously and raises concerns with the local authorities where appropriate. We regularly raise Mr Johal's case directly with the Government of India, including his allegations of torture, his right to a fair trial, and concerns about delays to legal proceedings against him. The UK Government is opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. We raise this opposition with India regularly as part of discussions on human rights concerns.

We have emphasised to the Government of India the need for Mr Johal's torture allegations to be fully investigated. The Foreign Secretary raised Mr Johal's case with the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, on 15 December 2020. The Secretary of State for International Trade raised the case with the Indian Minister for Law and Justice, Ravi Shankar Prasad, on 5 February. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, last raised Mr Johal's case with the Indian High Commissioner on 16 April 2021. He also raised Mr Johal's case with the Indian Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kishan Reddy, and with Minister Prasad on 15 March.

■ **Montenegro: Non-governmental Organisations**

Catherine West:

[\[183227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Montenegrin counterpart on alleged attacks and criticisms of non-governmental organisations in that country.

Wendy Morton:

During discussions in January with the Montenegrin Foreign Minister, I welcomed the new Montenegrin government's commitment to making the reforms required for deeper Euro-Atlantic integration. Our Embassy in Podgorica is in regular contact with civil society to hear their concerns and is working with them on a range of projects to strengthen democratic institutions. The Montenegrin government is working cooperatively with a number of NGOs on some issues, although other NGOs are concerned that this may limit the sector's ability to hold the government to account

■ **Nigeria: Politics and Government**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[183155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the security and humanitarian situation in north east Nigeria following recent attacks and the displacement of population in the Damasak area.

James Duddridge:

We are deeply concerned by the security and humanitarian situation in North East Nigeria where terrorist groups, including Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa,

continue to conduct attacks on local communities. Recent attacks on Damasak in Borno State, in which civilians, humanitarian workers and facilities were targeted, have led to a worsening humanitarian situation, and the displacement of local residents and internally displaced people to Niger or other areas of North East Nigeria. The British High Commissioner in Abuja has publicly condemned the attacks. As the UK Government has repeatedly made clear, humanitarian workers should never be a target.

We are committed to helping Nigeria tackle the threat posed by the terrorist groups in North East Nigeria. We are providing significant humanitarian and stabilisation assistance to support affected communities, including those who have been displaced.

■ Overseas Aid

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[183108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the Official Development Assistance his Department disbursed to fragile and conflict affected states for the financial years (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018, (e) 2019 and (f) 2020.

James Cleverly:

All ODA spending is published in the Statistics on International Development (SID). The SID National Statistics report, published on the gov.uk website, provides an overview of all official UK spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA). This includes breakdowns by country and sector. UK ODA figures for 2020 will be published in Autumn 2021, via Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020.

The SID publishes a country total for each of the Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS) states, but does not produce a total figure for FCAS states. Historically, DFID has spent over 50% of its ODA in fragile states. The most up to date published data on DFID ODA spend in fragile and conflict affected states is available on the government page for DFID results (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-results-estimates-2015-to-2020>). Supporting the development of fragile states will remain a priority for FCDO.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[183112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the Official Development Assistance his Department disbursed where supporting family planning was the main objective of that assistance for the financial years (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018, (e) 2019 and (f) 2020.

Wendy Morton:

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) official aid spend disaggregated by sector code for 2018 and 2019 can be found in the Statistics on 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>

FCDO spend on family planning for 2020 will be available in Autumn 2021

Yasmin Qureshi:

[183113]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the official development assistance budgets for education projects throughout the world that did not target gender equality, for the financial years (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018, (e) 2019, and (f) 2020.

Wendy Morton:

UK aid activities are reported to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and are screened against the gender equality policy marker. This is a measurement of the proportion of aid that supports gender equality and women's empowerment. An activity can be marked as 'principal' if gender equality is the main objective of the programme, or as a 'significant' if gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the programme.

UK ODA spend on bilateral allocable activities is made publicly available through the *OECD statistics portal*. Figures for total UK Bilateral ODA spend on Education, not specifically gender equality marked as "Principal" or Significant", by year up to 2019, can be found via the portal. Figures for 2020 are not available as yet.

Advancing gender equality and women's and girls' rights are a core part of this Government's mission and we remain steadfast in our commitment to this agenda. The UK's Gender Equality Act 2014 (an amendment to 2002 International Development Act, IDA), legally requires all overseas development funding to meaningfully consider the impact of how it will contribute to reducing gender inequality.

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[183123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the UK's total Official Development Assistance budget was allocated to sexual and reproductive health and rights (a) including family planning and reproductive, maternal, and neonatal health and (b) excluding child health as calculated using the Muskoka 2 methodology in (i) 2017, (ii) 2018 and (iii) 2019.

Wendy Morton:

All Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) official aid spend can be found in the Statistics on International Development UK Aid report at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/statistics-on-international-development>

The latest Muskoka2 donor estimates were published as part of the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights in the Donor Delivering Report and cover 2016 to 2018. The report is available at:
<https://www.epfweb.org/node/90>

A more detailed Muskoka2 donor estimates report covering 2002-2017 is available at:
<https://datacompass.lshtm.ac.uk/id/eprint/1526/>

An updated Muskoka2 report is expected to be published on the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine datacompass website later this year. Musoka2 estimates are not available for 2019 onwards due to reporting timeframes of multilateral agencies and external data compilation.

■ Pakistan: Overseas Aid

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[183110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the Official Development Assistance his Department disbursed to Pakistan for the financial years (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018, (e) 2019 and (f) 2020.

Nigel Adams:

Since 2015, the UK Government disbursed the following amount of Overseas Development assistance in Pakistan: £374 million in 2015, £463 million in 2016, £402 million in 2017, £331 million in 2018 and £305 million in 2019. 2020 figures are being finalised.

■ South America: Politics and Government

Catherine West:

[\[183228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taking to promote and support good governance and democracy in South American countries.

Wendy Morton:

Promoting democracy and defending democratic freedoms is a fundamental part of the UK's foreign policy. We believe that strong democratic institutions and accountable government, which uphold universal rights and the rule of law, are key building blocks for secure and prosperous states. The way we act to support democracy in each country is different, and dependent on the context and needs of the country concerned. Our approach is practical, based on an understanding of where and how we can affect positive change.

In the Americas, we support a wide range of democracy-building initiatives, including funding NGOs that increase citizen participation, promoting inclusion of marginalised groups, providing training for legal professionals, promoting freedom of expression, and strengthening political parties and parliaments. As a 'force for good,' the UK will continue to work with its allies, including championing and strengthening democracy through international bodies like the UN.

■ St Vincent and the Grenadines: Volcanoes**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[183065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support he is providing to UK citizens who wish to be evacuated from St Vincent in response to the volcanic activity on that island.

Nigel Adams:

We are monitoring the situation in St Vincent and the Grenadines closely and our thoughts are with those affected by the eruptions. This is a distressing time for British Nationals there and we have provided support to those who have contacted us. We have supported 7 British Nationals who took up an offer of a transfer from St Vincent to St Maarten on a Royal Caribbean ship which left St Vincent on 16 April and arrived in St Maarten on 17 April. To meet the ship, and assist these British Nationals on arrival in St Maarten, a 5 person UK Rapid Deployment Team arrived on St Maarten in the afternoon of 16 April. We encourage British Nationals to consult our Travel Advice. Those in need of assistance should contact Consular officials at the British High Commission in Bridgetown.

■ Tigray: Armed Conflict**Layla Moran:**[\[183271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of Eritrea's reported military actions in Tigray on the stability of the Horn of Africa.

James Duddridge:

We remain concerned about the impact of the continued fighting in Tigray on the wider stability in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. As I made clear to the Eritrean Ambassador on 16 March, and through joint statements at the Human Rights Council and by the G7 on 2 April, Eritrea's role in the Ethiopian conflict is particularly concerning. There are numerous reports of atrocities involving Eritrean forces, and the presence of Eritrean forces is fuelling insecurity. We have also received reports of Eritrean troops wearing Ethiopian National Defence Force uniforms, as well of new Eritrean forces deploying, both of which are deeply concerning. Eritrean forces must leave Ethiopia immediately, in line with the commitment made by Prime Minister Abiy in his announcement on 26 March. We are closely monitoring the situation and are clear that their withdrawal must be swift, unconditional and verifiable. We have yet to see any evidence that Eritrean forces are leaving Tigray and will continue pressing for this commitment to be delivered.

■ Uganda: Politics and Government**Stephen Doughty:**[\[183156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations the UK High Commissioner has made to the Government of Uganda on

alleged disappearances of and attacks on opposition activists and journalists in that country.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is very concerned about the treatment of opposition candidates and their supporters in the run-up to and since the Ugandan elections. We are particularly disturbed by continued reports of people who are missing or arbitrarily detained. This does not provide for an open political landscape within which democracy can flourish and Uganda can prosper.

Our High Commissioner in Kampala has repeatedly raised concerns about opposition supporters going missing or being arbitrarily detained directly with the Ugandan authorities. I [Minister Duddridge] also raised this in my call with the Ugandan Foreign Minister, Sam Kutsea, on 21 April. We have pressed publicly and privately for information on missing persons to be released and due process to be followed. We welcome the Minister for Internal Affairs' recent update to Parliament regarding those currently in detention, but now need to see all those in detention released or charged. As a long-standing partner to Uganda, the UK will continue to press for the rights of all Ugandans to be upheld.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion: Prescription Drugs

Carla Lockhart:

[\[178575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether medical practitioners are required to wait until 14 days have elapsed before submitting the HSA4 form following an electronic consultation to dispense home medical abortion pills or whether that form can be submitted at any point within the 14-day period of those pills having been dispensed.

Carla Lockhart:

[\[178577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how long a medical practitioner is required to wait before submitting an HSA4 form after dispensing medical abortion pills by post or through a clinic for patients to take at home; how complications as a result of taking those pills can be reported after an HSA4 form has already been submitted; and whether in the event that such complications are later reported there is a process in place to ensure that that HSA4 form is amended to record those complications.

Helen Whately:

In accordance with the Abortion Act and the Abortion Regulations 1991, all abortions performed in England must be notified to the Chief Medical Officer within 14 days of the procedure. There is no requirement for the practitioner to wait until day 14 to notify the abortion.

Any complication known to the practitioner terminating the pregnancy, at the time the notification is submitted, should be recorded on the Abortion Notification (HSA4)

form. All serious incidents should be reported by the provider to their commissioner, the Care Quality Commission and other relevant organisations in line with the serious incident framework published by NHS England and NHS Improvement which is available at the following link:

<https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/serious-incident-framework/>

We acknowledge that there are limitations with the data provided on HSA4 forms as complications that occur after treatment may not be known to the registered medical practitioner and may not be reported. We are planning to examine, with partner organisations, how well these systems are working in relation to recording complications arising from abortions and whether improvement is required.

■ BSL Health Access: Finance

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[173095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to renew funding for BSL Health Access.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: There are no current plans to extend funding for the British Sign Language (BSL) Health Access service. It was established independently of the National Health Service by SignHealth in April 2020 as part of the charity's response to COVID-19. NHS England and NHS Improvement provided a one-off grant so this service could continue until the end of March 2021 to provide additional BSL interpretation in health services during the second wave of COVID-19.

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. They have also commissioned a rapid review into access to BSL interpretation in NHS services, which is near completion.

■ Cancer: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[183167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on cancer (a) diagnosis and (b) care and treatment in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) Coventry, (iii) the West Midlands and (iv) England.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has not made a recent formal assessment.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Bill Esterson:

[\[180966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the equity of quarantine requirements for care home staff and care home residents following visits home.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: Staff are essential workers required to provide care for residents. They are regularly tested for Covid-19 and use personal protective equipment while working. Residents who have visited out are asked to isolate to prevent risk of COVID-19 transmission in a closed setting at high risk of outbreaks with severe consequences. The additional risk posed by returning residents in contrast to staff coming into work, is that for residents, the care home is the full-time home – they generally move freely around the home and do not wear personal protective equipment. When the data shows it is safe, the Government wants to go further and allow more visits for more people to take place outside of the care home.

■ Coronavirus Act 2020

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[173164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the continued need for Care Act 2014 easements in the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: The Care Act 2014 easements provision in the Coronavirus Act 2020 was intended as a temporary measure to help local authorities continue to meet the most urgent needs in the face of COVID-19. Our most recent two-monthly review of the provision sought views from across the adult social care sector, including care providers, local authorities, and groups representing recipients of care and support. This review concluded that the easements are no longer needed. For this reason, we considered it appropriate to expire the provision and regulations were laid on 21 April 2021 using the draft affirmative procedure.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Sir Graham Brady:

[\[183067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the rate of positive swab tests for covid-19 among people who have received both doses of a vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Data on effectiveness of two doses of COVID-19 vaccine will be published in due course, once larger numbers of the population have been vaccinated with two doses and sufficient time has elapsed for an effect to be monitored.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[178807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support organisations that are tackling the spread of disinformation related to the roll-out of the covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has established a new cross-sector Counter Disinformation Policy Forum, bringing together industry, civil society and academia to improve responses to mis/disinformation and prepare for future threats. In November 2020, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care held a joint roundtable with social media platforms, civil society and health experts. Social media platforms were asked to commit to further action to reduce the spread of harmful and misleading narratives, particularly around the COVID-19 vaccine and to promote National Health Service advice. Following this, Facebook, Youtube and Twitter have introduced changes that focus on limiting the spread of false information.

Andrew Griffith:[\[179745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people admitted to hospital with covid-19 (a) had not received a covid-19 vaccination, (b) had received a single covid-19 vaccination and (c) had received both vaccinations in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information is not held in the format requested.

Alex Norris:[\[181092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all GPs are aware of the update to JCVI guidance on prioritisation of adults for the covid-19 living with immunocompromised clinically extremely vulnerable people.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: The National Health Service has written to all general practitioner practices setting out how vaccines will be offered to this group and how eligible individuals are to be identified. A separate 'Operational Guide' has been created setting out more details and how the NHS plans to maximise uptake in this group. The NHS has also written to all Medical Directors setting out the steps needed to identify immunosuppressed individuals in secondary care.

Alex Norris:[\[181093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish data on the roll-out of the covid-19 vaccine to adult household members of immunocompromised clinically extremely vulnerable groups.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: We do not yet have a specific timeline for publishing this data. Information on the vaccination programme is regularly reviewed and new datasets are added as available.

Sajid Javid:**[182035]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have received a covid-19 vaccination in Bromsgrove constituency on the most recent date for which information is available.

Nadhim Zahawi:

On 15 April 2021 NHS England and Improvement published data showing that between 8 December 2020 and 11 April 2021, 56,146 people in Bromsgrove had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This data is published at the following link:

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

Sir Graham Brady:**[183069]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what account his Department is taking of the prevalence of false positive results when assessing the efficacy of covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England (PHE) is considering the impact of false positives on vaccine efficacy estimates, as part of its vaccine monitoring work. Several vaccine effectiveness studies, including PHE's, use both repeat virology swabs and antibody testing to help exclude false positives.

■ Dementia: Prescription Drugs**Stephen Timms:****[180914]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the number of doses of anti-psychotic medication prescribed for people with dementia has increased during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Timms:**[180915]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the changes in the level of anti-psychotic medication prescriptions in dementia care in recent periods of covid-19 lockdown; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: NHS Digital publishes monthly data on the prescribing of anti-psychotic medication for people diagnosed with dementia. The number of people with a diagnosis of dementia that also had a prescription for an anti-psychotic medication was 42,942 in February 2021 or 10% of those on the Dementia Register. The trend has been stable over the last 12 months. The data does not include information on the level of doses of the medication prescribed.

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the NHS Digital data and take steps to understand the patterns in prescribing and potential reasons for trends being seen.

■ Health Services: Waiting Lists

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[181279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Statistical Press Notice published on 15 March 2021, how many and what proportion of the 387,885 referral to treatment patients that have been waiting more than 52 weeks to start treatment have been waiting longer than (a) 18 months and (b) two years.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 April 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently collating referral to treatment data from April 2021, which will be published on 10 June. This data will be published in weekly time bands from 52 weeks to more than 104 weeks.

■ Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System

Robert Halfon:

[\[183121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy for the boundaries of the Herts and West Essex Integrated Care System to remain unchanged on 1 April 2022 as one of the national exceptions to the proposal to align integrated care systems with upper tier local authority boundaries set out in the White Paper on Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all.

Robert Halfon:

[\[183122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to section 2.1 of the 2021-22 priorities and operational planning guidance: Implementation guidance 25 March 2021, what the criteria is for determining exceptions to the proposal that Integrated Care System boundaries are changed to be consistent with upper tier boundaries from April 2022; and whether Herts and West Essex Integrated Care System meets those criteria for exception due to Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow being on the Essex and Hertfordshire boundary.

Edward Argar:

Following discussions between the Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement, integrated care system (ICS) boundaries which are not aligned with local authority boundaries are being reviewed to ensure future arrangements can support effective partnership working between the National Health Service and local government. Hertfordshire and West Essex ICS has been identified as one of the areas included in this boundary review. 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 NHS bodies, local authorities and other stakeholders in the affected areas in order to appropriately assess any potential effects a change of ICS boundaries in an area may have, this will include consideration of any potential impact on service providers.

■ Hospitals: Construction

James Wild: [\[181458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2020 to Question 99137, on Hospitals: Construction, when he plans to publish the (a) selection criteria and (b) bid process for schemes to be included in the new hospitals building programme.

Edward Argar:

We are currently finalising the process and selection criteria for the additional eight schemes that will be part of our new hospitals programme and plan to announce further detail in the coming weeks.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper: [\[180452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is able to take to secure a response to the letter dated 5 February 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire to Sir Simon Stevens, Chief Executive at NHS England on the proposed transfer of community services from Liverpool Community Health to Bridgewater Community Health Foundation Trust, ref number ZA55419.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement have advised that they responded to the hon. Member on 15 April.

John Penrose: [\[180455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 10 February and 15 March 2021 on behalf of constituent Stephen Watters on the impact of covid-19 on people affected by dementia.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 21 April 2021.

Afzal Khan: [\[181423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton of 12 March 2021 on covid-19 vaccine uptake among Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 April 2021]: We replied to the hon. Member's letter on 20 April 2021.

Rosie Cooper:[\[182027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on NHS Health Reforms dated 26 February 2021, reference ZA55715.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 22 April 2021.

■ Mental Health Services: Social Services**Barbara Keeley:**[\[181225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department has provided to support the mental health of the social care workforce during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 20 April 2021]: To support the wellbeing of social care workers, we have worked alongside the National Health Service and other organisations to provide a package of emotional, psychological and practical resources for the workforce. This includes support helplines, guidance, bereavement resources and a bespoke package of support for registered managers.

Barbara Keeley:[\[181226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish any impact assessments undertaken on mental health support provided to the social care workforce during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 20 April 2021]: We have not undertaken any such impact assessments to date.

We have worked alongside the National Health Service and other organisations to provide a package of emotional, psychological and practical resources for the social care workforce. We are engaging with social care stakeholders to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of staff and that the right support is available.

Barbara Keeley:[\[181227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the social care workforce is provided with mental health training.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 20 April 2021]: The Workforce Development Fund enables employers to access funding to support the development of their workforce's knowledge and skills, including mental health training. We have also commissioned

Skills for Care to create a package of support for registered managers which includes support for mental wellbeing.

■ Mercaptamine Hydrochloride

Tim Loughton: [\[178754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has been made of the potential merits of making mercaptamine hydrochloride eye drops available through the NHS.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 15 April 2021]: Current clinical commissioning policy is that mercaptamine hydrochloride eye drops are not recommended to be available as a treatment option through routine commissioning for corneal cystine deposits, following the prioritisation process undertaken by NHS England and NHS Improvement in July 2020. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement have determined that there is sufficient clinical evidence to consider commissioning mercaptamine hydrochloride eye drops. This treatment will therefore be considered at the Clinical Priorities Advisory Group prioritisation meeting in May 2021, along with a number of other treatments being considered for funding.

■ NHS Test and Trace

Caroline Lucas: [\[164412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2021 to Question 89669, on Coronavirus: Contact Tracing, for what reason he will not be publishing the full NHS Test and Trace organisation structure at this point.

Helen Whately:

Given the imminent transition to the UK Health Security Agency and the changing nature of NHS Test and Trace during the pandemic we have not published its organisation structure to date. However, the organogram for the senior leadership team in NHS Test and Trace as of 31 March is attached.

Attachments:

1. Senior Leadership Organogram [REDRAFTED ATTACHMENT PQ164412 redraft.pdf]

■ NHS: Mental Health Services

Barry Gardiner: [\[178766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mental health support he is providing to NHS workers who are treating covid-19 patients.

Helen Whately:

We have funded a comprehensive package of support that includes a dedicated staff helpline, specialist bereavement support and free access to mental health and wellbeing apps. The NHS People Plan, published in July 2020, also puts staff wellbeing at its core and includes appointing a wellbeing guardian in every National

Health Service organisation, free parking and support to work flexibly and take time off. This is strengthened further by the mental health and wellbeing hubs being set up across the country that are providing rapid outreach and assessment services to help frontline staff.

■ NHS: Staff

Dr Rupa Huq:

[180566]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support single parent NHS staff working unsociable hours with childcare and ensure they have access to affordable overnight childcare provisions.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: We encourage employers to use their local discretion and flexibility to be as supportive as possible of their staff in meeting their childcare needs. Guidance on supporting staff with childcare responsibilities during the pandemic is available on the NHS Employers website at the following link:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing/supporting-staff-with-childcare-responsibilities>

Employers are required to consider flexible working arrangements for all staff in the workplace, including those with caring commitments. This is covered in Section 33 of the NHS Terms and Conditions Handbook, which available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/tchandbook/part-5-equal-opportunities/section-33-balancing-work-and-personal-life>

■ Palliative Care

Mr David Davis:

[178798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS England issue guidelines on when GPs should start discussions with their patients on end of life care; and whether (a) budgetary factors and (b) underlying health conditions are considered as part of the decision to begin those discussions.

Mr David Davis:

[178799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS England issue guidelines on when GPs should start discussions with their patients on end of life care; and whether age is the primary factor taken into account when starting those discussions.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 April 2021]: Guidance on undertaking discussions with patients on end of life care is provided by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Identification of any person approaching the end of life and decisions on when to begin discussions on end of life care and support need to be considered on an individual basis.

■ Palliative Care: Third Sector**Rachael Maskell:** [\[142999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of the State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of ringfenced funding to ensure that local authorities are able to fund voluntary sector children's palliative care providers to sustainably provide short respite breaks for seriously ill children.

Helen Whately:

There are no plans to make this specific assessment.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to assess the social care needs of disabled children and young people and to provide respite care where necessary. Where it is appropriate, local authorities can fund respite care provided by hospices, either as a short-term stay or as a service provided to the child or young person in the family home by the hospice team. Local authorities and clinical commissioning groups regularly liaise to plan and commission the most appropriate package of respite care for the children and young people with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions in their area.

■ Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust: Finance**James Wild:** [\[181459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much capital funding has been allocated to Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn Trust to manage reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete plank issues in each year since 2015.

Edward Argar:

Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust has been allocated £20.695 million in 2021-22 to directly address the most immediate problems on its estate with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) planks. The Standing Committee on Structural Safety first issued an alert regarding RAAC planks in May 2019 and National Health Service trusts subsequently undertook survey work in 2020. Therefore, no other central funding was allocated for this specific purpose prior to this date.

■ Social Services: Mental Health Services**Barbara Keeley:** [\[180460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional mental health support his Department is providing to the frontline social care workforce during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: We have worked alongside the National Health Service and other organisations to provide a package of emotional, psychological and practical resources for all care workers. This package includes support helplines, guidance, bereavement resources and a bespoke package of support for registered

managers. We have also worked with the sector to ensure that wellbeing resources and best practice advice are streamlined and easier to navigate.

■ **Social Services: Visits**

Fiona Bruce:

[\[180466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy that local authorities should be facilitating social contact visits in adult social care settings in the same way as those visits are being facilitated in care homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 April 2021]: Maintaining opportunities for visiting and spending time together is critical for the health and wellbeing of people in care homes and wider adult social care settings. It is important to recognise the diversity of these environments and the different needs of the people who live there. For these reasons, the care homes guidance is not directly transferable to other settings.

On 30 March, we published an update to our visiting guidance for supported living and extra care. Many of the principles are also relevant to other types of supported housing. This guidance sets out the default position that visits should be supported and enabled wherever it is safe to do so and explains how providers can work with the people they support to develop arrangements for visiting that mitigates these risks.

■ **Surgery: Sheffield City Region**

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [\[183148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients are waiting for operations postponed as a result the covid-19 outbreak in the Sheffield City Region.

Edward Argar:

Data on postponed care is not collected centrally.

■ **Surgery: Waiting Lists**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[184507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional funding he plans to allocate to NHS Trusts to tackle the backlog of elective surgery in (a) England and (b) York in addition to the £1 billion allocated to such surgery announced in the November 2020 Spending Review.

Edward Argar:

There are currently no planned additional funding announcements. However, we continue to engage with the National Health Service about funding needs.

HOME OFFICE**■ Airguns: Licensing****Rachael Maskell:**[\[183200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken as a result of the Government consultation on air weapons licensing undertaken in 2017.

Kit Malthouse:

We published the outcome of our earlier air weapons review along with proposals for new controls in England and Wales, as part of the firearms safety consultation which ran from 24 November 2020 to 16 February 2021. We received over 12,000 responses to the consultation and we will consider these carefully before publishing the Government response.

There are existing controls on both air weapons and crossbows. Retailers are banned from selling crossbows to persons under 18 and legislation is in place to deal with those who use crossbows as a weapon. We keep the legislation on bladed articles and offensive weapons, including crossbows, under review.

It is already an offence to sell or let on hire air weapons or their ammunition to those under 18 years of age, or for a person under the age of 18 years to purchase or hire an air weapon or ammunition. In relation to storage, the firearms safety consultation proposed strengthening the offence of failing to take 'reasonable precautions' so that whenever under-18s are on the premises, this must include locking an air weapon out of sight when not in use and storing the ammunition separately.

■ Asylum**Navendu Mishra:**[\[181134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the (a) performance of the National Referral Mechanism process and (b) effect of that mechanism on people applying for asylum.

Victoria Atkins:

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) has lifted thousands of modern slavery victims out of dangerous situations of exploitation, putting them in a position where they can begin to rebuild their lives. We know that the system is currently facing challenges, therefore it is right that we learn lessons and consider how we can continue to support victims in a way that is sustainable and centred on their needs. The Government has established the NRM Transformation Programme, which will address the challenges that the current system faces by resetting the system of identification and support. Building on the successes of recent NRM reforms, the NRM Transformation Programme will make sure genuine victims have their cases settled promptly, receive support tailored to their needs, and are empowered to move on with their lives. We intend the NRM to be a world-class system that effectively identifies and delivers needs-based support for victims of modern slavery.

Where relevant, individuals are able to claim asylum whilst they are being supported by the NRM. Potential victims and victims of modern slavery are eligible for support through the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC), including accommodation and financial support. Where appropriate, some support services may be delivered by the asylum support system for asylum seeking victims

Confirmed victims of modern slavery who are also asylum seekers may be eligible for a grant of leave as a confirmed victim of modern slavery, but this usually only needs to be considered if the asylum claim is refused. The published policy can be found on gov.uk ([Discretionary leave considerations for victims of modern slavery](#)) and gives a number of examples in which a grant of discretionary leave is appropriate.

As part of the New Plan for Immigration announced on 24 March 2021, we are consulting on a proposal that would enable confirmed victims with long-term recovery needs linked to their modern slavery exploitation to be considered for a grant of temporary leave to remain to assist their recovery. This builds on our end-to-end needs-based approach to supporting victims. We would also make clear that temporary leave to remain may be available to victims who are helping the police with prosecutions and bringing their exploiters to justice.

■ Asylum: Clothing

Dawn Butler:

[\[183092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's expenditure of £5,415.90 at Primark in September 2020 for the purpose of clothing people seeking asylum, which company her Department procured to distribute that clothing.

Chris Philp:

Dangerous and unnecessary crossings of the Channel are made by migrants in small boats, which are often overloaded. Many of those arriving in this way are soaking wet and at significant risk of hypothermia if not changed into dry clothes quickly. The Home Office has a duty of care to those migrants and ordinarily has sufficient stocks of dry clothing on hand for arriving migrants. However, last September saw an unprecedented number of migrant arrivals in small boats and supplies ran low, requiring emergency replenishment from a local retail outlet. This is the basis of the expenditure at Primark quoted here. As the clothing was distributed directly to arriving migrants by HO officials, no third party company was employed in the distribution.

■ Asylum: Finance

Dan Carden:

[\[183263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has put in place to avoid the homelessness and rough sleeping of vulnerable migrants who have been in receipt of section 4 support and accommodation during the covid-19 outbreak when the ban of evictions ceases.

Dan Carden: [\[183264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) notice and (b) additional support her Department plans to give to (a) local authorities and (b) other relevant stakeholders supporting vulnerable individuals prior to the ending Section 4 support and the restarting of evictions.

Dan Carden: [\[183265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what advice he has received from Public Health England on the implications for the health of (a) migrants, (b) communities and (c) the public to cease provision of support under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and restart evictions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Dan Carden: [\[183266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many decisions to discontinue section 4 support her Department plans to issue weekly in (a) Liverpool and (b) the Liverpool City Region in response to a resumption of cessations of support as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Chris Philp:

All failed asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute can obtain accommodation from the Home Office under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, provided they take reasonable steps to leave the UK or show there is a temporary obstacle preventing their departure. No failed asylum seeker therefore needs to be homeless. Failed asylum seekers should leave the UK and return to their country of origin - support will be given to them to do that via voluntary return or we will seek an enforced return.

Decisions to stop providing accommodation to failed asylum seekers who refuse to take steps to leave the UK, despite being able to, were suspended in November last year following the introduction of new Covid-19 restrictions. Now that step 2 of the Government's Covid-19 Recovery Roadmap has been reached (from 12 April) this blanket pause on all cessations of support has been replaced by an approach that allows them to take place on a case by case basis, though initially with a cap on the total number of cessations that can be made per week (175) and exceptions for those who are pregnant, elderly and clinically vulnerable. This approach will initially apply to those accommodated in England only, but is expected to be rolled out to the rest of the UK, subject to further discussions with officials in the devolved administrations. The policy approach has been developed following discussions with Public Health England, representatives of local authorities and NGOs.

The Home Office has been informing local authorities about the new policy approach, through letters and meetings and there will be further communication in the coming weeks. It is not possible at this stage to assess how many decisions are likely to be made in respect of individuals currently accommodated in Liverpool or other areas, as this depends on a range of factors, including whether the individuals now agree to leave the UK and can therefore remain in Home Office accommodation until their

departure is arranged. As the picture becomes clearer data will be shared with individual local authorities on the likely volumes of such cases in their areas.

■ **Crime: Rural Areas**

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[183081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to improve the tackling of rural crime and ensure effective co-ordination across different police force areas; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

I recognise the importance of tackling rural crime, which is why the Government is recruiting an additional 20,000 police officers over the next three years to ensure that the public are protected against crime, including rural crime. To further support with existing efforts, the Government also provides regular funding to the police's National Wildlife Crime Unit.

It is the responsibility of Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables to ensure that the police priorities reflect those of their communities and that resources, including these new officers are deployed accordingly.

■ **Dangerous Driving: Greater London**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[183089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Metropolitan Police are enforcing road traffic laws to protect cyclists from dangerous drivers.

Kit Malthouse:

Enforcement of road traffic laws is an operational matter for the Metropolitan Police Commissioner in conjunction with local policing plans.

■ **Domestic Abuse: Females**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[181024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to support women and girls against domestic abuse during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

There is no place for domestic abuse in our society. Home should be a safe place, but for many people sadly this is not the case. That is why this government is committed to ensuring that those who are experiencing harm or living in fear of abuse at home are able to seek support and refuge.

We know that victims of domestic abuse may feel particularly vulnerable at this time, which is why last year the Government launched our #YouAreNotAlone awareness raising campaign to signpost support available. The campaign has reached over 30 million UK adults and has been seen by over 130 million followers on social media.

In January, we also launched the 'Ask for ANI' Codeword scheme to enable domestic abuse victims to seek victim focussed support, including engagement with specialist victim support services and the police as necessary. Over 5,000 pharmacies across the nation are now participating in the scheme, and the scheme has been used by over 60 victims and survivors.

We have provided unprecedented new funding to victim support services to ensure that they have the capacity to provide support to victims and adapt their operational capacity in light of the impacts of the Pandemic. To that end we have awarded £27 million in additional funds to support domestic abuse services last financial year alone, comprising £25 million from the government's £76 million in emergency funding for the most vulnerable in society, and an extra £2 million from the Home Office in April 2021 to bolster the capacity of domestic abuse organisations affected by the pandemic.

In November 2020 we announced a further £11 million towards a range of services offering practical and emotional help – allowing domestic abuse and specialist rape organisations to recruit more staff, adapt to remote counselling methods during the pandemic and keep helplines open for longer. This funding extends all the way into March of this year, covering the most recent period of national lockdown restrictions.

This financial year the Ministry of Justice has also announced in February that victims of rape and domestic abuse will be helped by a major £40m funding boost for specialist support services.

We continue to work closely with the police, victim support services and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to better understand the scale of harm and how best to support victims throughout the Pandemic, and our transition out of social distancing measures.

Our landmark Domestic Abuse Bill - due to achieve Royal Assent this Spring - will further strengthen our response to perpetrators and improve our protection to victims, as will the publication of our domestic abuse strategy and linked violence against women and girls strategy later this year.

■ Drugs: Organised Crime

Peter Kyle:

[\[183213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the (a) scale and (b) nature of the criminal practice known as cuckooing in (i) England and (ii) Wales; what steps her Department has taken to tackle that practice; and what (A) financial, (B) technical and (C) other resources her Department is making available to tackle that crime.

Kit Malthouse:

Cuckooing is a form of exploitation that devastates lives. This Government takes all forms of exploitation seriously and is determined to tackle it.

We recognise that the use of cuckooed addresses remains a feature of county lines gangs' activities. We work closely with law enforcement partners on this issue through our £25m County Lines Programme. Through our programme, we are funding the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) to improve the intelligence picture and co-ordinate the national law enforcement response, including related exploitation and vulnerability. 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 where Cuckooing will be highlighted.

In addition, on 20 January 2021, the Government announced £40m dedicated funding for FY 21/22 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 £25m county lines programme. The funding has already seen more than 3,400 people arrested, more than 550 lines closed, drugs with a street value of £9 million and £1.5 million cash seized, and more than 770 vulnerable people safeguarded.

■ **Firearms: Licensing**

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[183083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to increase the duration of firearms certificates; and if she will make a statement.

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[183084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the current processing time for the licensing and re-licensing of firearms; and what steps she plans to take reduce those processing times.

Kit Malthouse:

The duration of firearm and shotgun certificates is five years. We have no plans to increase the duration of these certificates at present. However, firearms licensing is kept under review and we will consider the duration of firearm and shotgun certificates following improvements to the arrangements for medical checks which are underway.

The administration of firearms licensing is an operational matter for police forces. The Government recognises that some firearms applications are inevitably being affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The National Police Chiefs Council has been in contact with forces and I understand that during these exceptional times forces may need to flex their response but will maintain a business as usual approach wherever possible. I am aware that forces are rightly giving priority to renewal applications as those applicants are already in possession of firearms. The position is expected to ease as the national restrictions are lifted.

■ Offensive Weapons: Crime

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[182085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Government plans to publish its response to the public consultation on the draft statutory guidance on measures in the Offensive Weapons Act.

Kit Malthouse:

We intend to publish the statutory guidance on measures in the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 shortly, and in advance of these measures coming in to force later this year. Commencement of the Act was paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures put in place to keep people safe, and to avoid placing significant additional burdens on the courts, police, retailers and delivery companies at a difficult time.

With the easing of lockdown restrictions we are now able to take forward the action necessary to allow for commencement later this year.

■ Osime Brown

Rachael Maskell: [\[183196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to oversee the release Osime Brown and ensure he receives the support he requires.

Chris Philp:

It is well documented in the media that Mr Brown served a five-year sentence for robbery, attempted robbery and perverting the course of justice.

Mr Brown was released on Immigration Bail at the end of his custodial sentence under the supervision of the Probation Service while his appeal against deportation continues. It would be inappropriate to comment further on his case while legal proceedings are ongoing.

No action would be taken to deport an individual while there are outstanding legal barriers that would prevent their removal from the UK and until all outstanding representations have been considered. We only ever return foreign national offenders who we and, where applicable, the courts are satisfied do not need our protection and have no legal basis to remain in the UK.

Where a foreign national has made a valid in time application prior to deportation action being taken and they have an in-country right of appeal, they may retain the rights and conditions attached to a previous grant of leave until any appeal against the refusal of a human rights or protection claim is concluded.

■ Slavery

Gareth Davies: [\[181467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to encourage institutional investors to consider modern slavery risks inherent in wider investment portfolios under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Gareth Davies:

[\[181468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many civil proceedings for non-compliance by financial institutions under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 have been (a) applied for and (b) granted since the introduction of that legislation.

Victoria Atkins:

Under the landmark transparency provisions contained in section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the UK became the first country in the world to require certain commercial organisations to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery, including institutional investors who fall within scope of the requirement.

The Government regularly engages with businesses, investors, civil society and industry experts to collaborate on best practice and promote key measures to tackle modern slavery. The Home Office's statutory guidance, *'Transparency in Supply Chains: a Practical Guide'*, emphasises that it is crucial that large organisations are transparent and accountable, not just to investors but to other groups including employees, consumers and the public, whose lives are affected by their business activity. The Government also supports ShareAction's Workforce Disclosure Initiative (WDI) and provided £200,000 of funding in 2020/21. The initiative has mobilised investors with \$6.5 trillion of assets under management to call for transparency from multinational companies on how they manage their workforce.

In the meantime, to further enhance transparency, in March 2021 the Government launched an online GOV.UK registry for modern slavery statements. This new service enables investors, consumers, NGOs and others to scrutinise the effectiveness of the actions being taken and monitor progress across sectors over time. Within the first month of launching, statements covering c. 8,000 organisations have already been submitted to the registry.

If an organisation fails to publish a statement, the Secretary of State can seek an injunction to require compliance. This power has not been used to date. However, following the transparency in supply chains consultation, the Government has committed to an ambitious package of changes to section 54, including introducing financial penalties for organisations who fail to meet their statutory obligations to publish annual modern slavery statements. These measures require primary legislation and will be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

■ Social Rented Housing: Antisocial Behaviour

Navendu Mishra:

[\[181135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of injunctions that have been issued for anti-social behaviour in (a) England and (b) Stockport during (i) 2015 and (ii) 2020; and whether there has been a decrease in the number of those injunctions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Navendu Mishra: [\[181137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Community Trigger Mechanisms that have been (a) requested and (b) implemented by local authorities in (i) England and (ii) Stockport since 2014.

Navendu Mishra: [\[181138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Community Trigger Mechanism policy since its introduction in 2014.

Navendu Mishra: [\[181139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of restorative justice when dealing with anti-social behaviour in (a) England and (b) Stockport.

Navendu Mishra: [\[181140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Community Protection Notices local authorities have issued in respect of anti-social behaviour in (a) England and (b) Stockport in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides flexible powers to authorities in local areas. As the powers are local in nature, the Home Office does not centrally collate data on the use of powers under the 2014 Act.

Data on injunctions that have been issued for incidents relating to anti-social behaviour is not collated centrally or published.

The Home Office does not collate data on the use of the Community Trigger mechanism. The 2014 Act includes a statutory duty for relevant bodies in a local government area to publish, at least annually, the number of applications for Community Trigger reviews received, the number of times the threshold for review was not met, the number of reviews carried out, and the number of the reviews that resulted in recommendations being made.

The Home Office updated statutory guidance in January 2021 to support local authorities to make effective use of the powers in the 2014 Act and provide enhanced clarity on the Community Trigger process. The 2014 Act and the statutory guidance also supports agencies determine whether restorative approaches are appropriate, depending on the specific behaviour.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Buildings: Insulation****Mike Amesbury:**[\[183282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Government plans to publish its response to the consultation on Review of the ban on the use of combustible materials in and on the external walls of buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

On 20 January 2020 we launched a public consultation including proposals to expand the scope of the in-effect ban of combustible materials in and on the external walls. This also included proposals with regards to laminated glass as well as other exemptions. The consultation closed on the 25 May 2020. We continue to analyse the responses, and will be publishing a Government response to the consultation.

Olivia Blake:[\[183316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what additional funding he will make available to businesses affected by unsafe cladding who have a shortfall in funding as a result of the effect of state aid de minimis rules.

Christopher Pincher:

In order to operate funds for the remediation of unsafe cladding prior to the end of the United Kingdom and European Union transition period on 1 January 2021 the Government was required to adhere to EU State aid rules. As set out in the answer to the Hon Member's previous question of 11 March 2021 ([UIN 167376](#)), the EU State aid De Minimis rules includes a maximum threshold of €200,000 that a business can receive in funding over a three year period. EU State aid rules no longer apply in the United Kingdom, except for aid in scope of the Northern Ireland Protocol, and so do not apply to applications for Government funding for cladding remediation made after 1 January 2021. The Department has written to applicants detailing the implications of the new subsidy control regime on their applications, and will publish updated guidance shortly. We continue to process applications in adherence with the new subsidy rules.

We are aware of instances where State aid rules have resulted in deductions to the funding provided through the remediation fund for applications before 1 January 2021, and are working closely with applicants to ensure unsafe cladding is remediated as quickly as possible. It is not permitted to provide additional funding to businesses to compensate for deductions which have been made in order to adhere to State aid rules.

■ Community Development: Finance**Stuart Anderson:**[\[181443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support constituents in applying for community funding via the schemes administered by his Department.

Luke Hall:

At Budget, the UK Government launched three new investment programmes to support communities across the country.

The UK Community Renewal Fund aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches and will invest in skills, community and place, local business and supporting people into employment. Details on how to apply can be found in the prospectus published at Budget. In Great Britain, the lead authority of each of the 100 priority places will receive capacity funding to help them with the required bid coordination and appraisal for that place.

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK. The prospectus published at Budget provides guidance for local areas on how to submit bids for the first round of funding for projects starting in 2021-22. Capacity funding will also be allocated to the local authorities measured as highest need in England, and all local authorities in Scotland and Wales to build a new relationship with the UK Government. This will support the relevant local authorities to develop bids and ensure that investment is targeted where it is needed most.

The new £150 million Communities Ownership Fund will help ensure that communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can support and continue benefiting from the local facilities, community assets and amenities most important to them. The first bidding round for the Community Ownership Fund will open in June 2021. A full bidding prospectus will be published alongside this, which will be the key reference document for communities in developing and submitting bids

■ Council Tax Reduction Schemes**Navendu Mishra:****[181145]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many households were claiming under local council tax support schemes in (a) England, (b) the North West and (c) Stockport in the most recent period for which figures are available; and what additional support is available to local authorities that have experienced an increase in claimants for council tax support during that period.

Luke Hall:

Data on local council tax support claimants at the end of each quarter, at both England and local authority level, is available in this published table:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/961905/LCTS_claimants_2020-21_Q3.xlsx

Through the local tax income guarantee, the Government is compensating councils for 75% of irrecoverable losses in council tax and business rates income for 2020-21, including those as a result of increased local council tax support claimants. We are also providing councils with £670 million of new funding to enable them to continue providing local council tax support in 2021-22, at a time when caseloads may be higher than in previous years.

■ Domestic Abuse: Refuges

Naz Shah: [\[183187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on domestic abuse refuge providers that own their property and are licensed as Houses of Multiple Occupation of the Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Mandatory Conditions of Licences) (England) Regulations 2018.

Naz Shah: [\[183188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of refuge providers in England own their own property; and what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the licensing regime on those providers.

Naz Shah: [\[183189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether local authorities can exercise discretion with regards to the maximum number of persons who are permitted to reside in rooms within refuge accommodation licensed as a House of Multiple Accommodation.

Naz Shah: [\[183190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what consultation took place with domestic abuse refuge providers before reforms were made to the Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Mandatory Conditions of Licences) (England) Regulations 2018.

Eddie Hughes:

Under House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) legislation, rooms in licensable HMOs that are under 6.51 square metres cannot be used as sleeping accommodation by one person. Local housing authorities have discretion to consider local circumstances and require higher standards within HMO licence conditions, but must not set lower standards.

The purpose of this legislation is to reduce overcrowding in HMOs. The Government consulted extensively on the changes to HMO licensing at the time and there was broad support for the extension of scope of mandatory HMO licensing.

The Department does not hold information on the number of domestic abuse safe accommodation providers, including refuges, that own their own property.

My Department is working with local authorities to raise standards across the private rented sector, to protect vulnerable tenants, including those living in HMOs.

■ Environmental Impact Assessment

Helen Hayes:

[\[183217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he plans to take to ensure that changes to environmental assessment regulations do not undermine the (a) Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, (b) other environmental objectives and (c) targets set under the forthcoming Environment Bill.

Christopher Pincher:

As part of wider reforms of the planning system as set out in the 'Planning for the Future' White Paper, the Government has committed to reviewing the current systems of environmental assessment to make them more accessible, easier to understand, simpler to execute and with fewer unnecessary delays. At the same time the Government has been clear that this reformed system will maximise environmental benefits, recognising the importance of our domestic and international obligations for environmental protection.

MHCLG and DEFRA officials worked closely together on the development of Environment Bill policies, and this close co-operation is continuing in the reforms to environmental assessment. The Government sees these reforms as a key way of ensuring that the planning system will be fit and able to contribute to the achievement of its 25 Year Environment Plan, the targets that are being developed as set out in the Environment Bill, and other existing environmental targets.

The Government is currently working on its response to the 'Planning for the Future' consultation, and will release more information on environmental assessment and the wider planning reforms.

■ Leasehold: Ground Rent

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[181200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress his Department has made with plans to allow leaseholders to extend their lease for 990 years with zero ground rent.

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.

Under the current system, too many leaseholders find the process for extending their lease or buying their freehold (a process known as enfranchisement) too complex, lacking transparency and prohibitively expensive.

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'.

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.

■ **Local Government: Flags**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[180936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has had discussions with relevant stakeholders on requiring the St. Georges' Cross to be flown from local authority buildings on St. George's Day.

Luke Hall:

The Government attaches great importance to the history and traditions of this country and recognises that the flying of the St George's Cross on St George's Day will be an important act of celebration for many people. Individuals, local authorities and other organisations may fly national flags, including the St George's Cross, whenever they wish, without the need for planning permission. It is for local authorities themselves to agree their own flag flying policies and I would welcome English councils marking St George's Day by flying his historic flag.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Contact Tracing**

Chris Green:

[\[181309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government has provided funding or resources to investigate the potential for his Department to make use of the NHS Test and Trace database system.

Chris Green:

[\[181310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to work with the NHS Test and Trace database system.

Chris Green:

[\[183170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions have been had with his ministerial colleagues, if any, to work with the NHS Test and Trace database system.

Luke Hall:

Government has not provided funding or resources to investigate the potential for MHCLG to make use of the NHS Test and Trace database system. MHCLG does not use or access identifiable Test and Trace data and has no current plans to do so. Test and Trace data is sensitive health data shared with local authority public health teams on an exceptional basis to support contact tracing and containment of Covid-19, and to provide relevant support to those required to self-isolate. We continue to work with DHSC, the data-owners, to provide guidance to local authorities on how best to use the data

Ministers and officials from my Department have regular discussions with counterparts in other government departments on a range of matters relating to local government.

■ Planning**Steve Reed:**[\[183158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 15 April 2021 to Question 179133 on Planning, when he plans to announce which aspects of the reforms his Department plans to legislate for.

Christopher Pincher:

The Planning for the Future White Paper proposes significant changes to the focus and processes of planning, to secure better outcomes - including improving our precious countryside and environment, and increasing the supply of land for new, beautiful homes, and sustainable places

Our consultation received over 44,000 responses - showing just how important this is to people. We will publish a response setting out our decisions on the proposed way forward, ahead of introducing legislation.

Steve Reed:[\[183159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what training his Department provides to Government Ministers on how Ministers are advised to interact with the planning system.

Christopher Pincher:

On appointment, planning Ministers in MHCLG are provided with training regarding their role in dealing with planning casework before they undertake any duties in that regard.

Steve Reed:[\[183160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department last undertook a review of the rules for how Government Ministers interact with the planning system.

Christopher Pincher:

Current Guidance on Planning Propriety Issues was published in 2012. This guidance was reviewed recently, and new guidance is expected to be published shortly.

Helen Hayes: [\[183214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's consultation, Planning for the Future, which closed on 29 October 2020, what steps his Department has taken to facilitate cross-sector consultation to develop policy proposals on planning reform in advance of the Planning Bill.

Helen Hayes: [\[183215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's consultation, Planning for the Future, which closed on 29 October 2020, which sectors his Department invited to participate in its co-production or policy sprint discussions on reform of the planning system; and if he will publish a full list of all of the organisations that have (a) been invited to participate and (b) attended co-production or policy sprint discussions to date.

Helen Hayes: [\[183216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's consultation, Planning for the Future, which closed on 29 October 2020, which environment sector organisations his Department invited to take part in its policy sprint exercises ahead of the forthcoming Planning Bill.

Helen Hayes: [\[183218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's consultation, Planning for the Future, which closed on 29 October 2020, whether he has met with representatives of the house building and construction industry as part of its co-production or policy sprint on reform of the planning system since that consultation closed.

Helen Hayes: [\[183219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's consultation, Planning for the Future, which closed on 29 October 2020, what opportunities his Department has put in place to invite full and fair representation of all sectors to engage in cross-sector policy development dialogue on planning reform matters ahead of the Planning Bill.

Helen Hayes: [\[183220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has required any attendees to withhold from disclosing information on the organisations or individuals present during the co-production or policy sprint process carried out by his Department ahead of the forthcoming Planning Bill; and what was discussed at those meetings.

Helen Hayes: [\[183221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department's response to its consultation on Planning for the Future, which closed on 29 October 2020 will include further policy proposals that will be open to public consultation.

Christopher Pincher:

Our Planning for the Future White Paper was published in August 2020. It sets out our vision for a reformed planning system which would be simpler, quicker and more accessible for communities to engage with, providing a more certain system for all.

Alongside the publication, we ran an extensive series of roundtables with representatives from across the planning system, including with local authorities, SMEs, environmental groups, heritage bodies and representatives from civil society.

In addition, the accompanying consultation received over 44,000 responses – providing valuable feedback on our proposals and demonstrating just how important this is to people.

Since the close of the consultation, we have continued to regularly engage with stakeholders. This has included representatives from local government, as well as the planning, development and environmental sectors, statutory consultees, and other users of the planning system. Their perspective and knowledge have been vital in helping us to develop and refine the ideas set out in the White Paper, and we look forward to continuing to engage with a wide range of stakeholders throughout this process.

As we are in an active state of policy development, I hope you will appreciate that we are not able to share further details at this time. We will publish a response to the consultation setting out our next steps shortly, which will provide a basis for further engagement with the sector.

■ Regional Planning and Development**Preet Kaur Gill:****[183240]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 15 April 2021 to Question 179333, which Government departments have published performance metrics for the Government's levelling up agenda; and which departments are in the process of developing performance metrics for that agenda.

Luke Hall:

Levelling up all areas of the country remains at the centre of Government's agenda. The Spending Review established a set of provisional priority outcomes and metrics across all departments and policy areas which have been published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents> .

These outcomes are now being embedded by departments into Outcome Delivery Plans, which will set out strategy and planning information for delivering the priority outcomes and for delivering on strategic "enabling" activities that are crucial to successful delivery.

■ Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**Sam Tarry:**[\[181158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to publish further guidance on the full reopening of places of worship during the covid-19 outbreak.

Eddie Hughes:

Faith communities across the country have steadfastly observed nationwide restrictions and we are immensely grateful for their support and cooperation. I am pleased that, in large part because of the outstanding work of faith leaders and the efforts of their communities to observe guidance and keep people safe, places of worship have been able to remain open - including for communal worship - during recent restrictions.

The Guidance for the Safe Use of Places of Worship was updated on 12 April to reflect measures to ease restrictions from Step 2 of the Roadmap. We will keep the guidance updated as decisions on further Steps in the Roadmap are taken, and continue to support faith communities to understand and implement guidance to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sajid Javid:[\[182034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ease the covid-19 restrictions on singing inside places of worship.

Alex Cunningham:[\[183136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it his policy to allow singing in churches in step three of the covid-19 road map.

Eddie Hughes:

We understand the importance of singing to all of our faith communities but, due to the transmission of COVID-19 through droplets and airborne particles, it has been essential to limit this to control the spread of the virus. We have been working closely with the Places of Worship Taskforce and faith communities to facilitate this and are grateful for their support.

Currently singing can take place outdoors on the grounds of a place of worship and this can include the congregation taking part. Indoors it is currently only possible for small groups of singers to perform, and the congregation cannot join in. It is important that we take a cautious approach in easing restrictions, so that we can see the impact of the steps we are taking before moving to the next step. For that reason, we will continue to keep guidance and restrictions under review, in line with the changing situation. As soon as we are able, we will update our advice further. We do not wish to keep restrictions in place for any longer than we have to. This is in line with wider guidance for performing arts across all sectors.

■ Social Rented Housing: Antisocial Behaviour

Navendu Mishra: [\[181136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many injunctions (a) local authorities and (b) social housing providers sought for anti-social behaviour in (a) England and (b) Stockport during (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Eddie Hughes:

MHCLG does not collect information on the number of applications made by local authorities or social landlords in respect of injunctions concerning anti-social behaviour.

The Government is committed to tackling anti-social behaviour. The Social Housing White Paper sets out proposals to support the victims of anti-social behaviour by clarifying the responsibilities that police, local authorities and their landlords have in tackling anti-social behaviour. This will signpost tenants to the most relevant agency where they can receive the most appropriate support to deal with the issues they are facing.

■ Towns Fund

Steve Reed: [\[183161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether a Member of Parliament is permitted to chair a Town Deal Board.

Luke Hall:

MPs are members of Town Deal Boards and they are permitted to chair those boards, provided that there is local agreement. In general, however, Town Deal Boards have chosen to appoint private sector chairs. The [Towns Fund Prospectus](#) and [further guidance](#) published by the department both provide further detail on the role and responsibilities of the Town Deal Board Chair.

Steve Reed: [\[183162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 15 April 2021 to Question 179135 on Towns Fund: Standards, whether he plans to publish the referenced governance reviews.

Luke Hall:

Governance reviews are carried out for all Town Deal Boards prior to offering Town Deals. Where any recommendations are made, they must be actioned before Heads of Terms are signed for those deals. The reviews are an internal process carried out by MHCLG officials and there are no plans to publish them.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Department for International Trade: Old Admiralty Building****Emily Thornberry:**[\[178927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the business case for her Department's move to the Old Admiralty Building was prepared (a) before or (b) after the decisions to (i) transfer her ministerial responsibilities for the GREAT campaign to the Cabinet Office and (ii) provide her Department with support from the Cabinet Office on the coordination of cross-Government positions on trade issues.

Greg Hands:

The Old Admiralty Building (OAB) is the first Government Hub delivered by the London Whitehall Campus Programme, which aims to consolidate and rationalise the Government's London estate. The Department for International Trade (DIT) and the Government Art Collection are tenants of the Hub in OAB and the Government Property Agency (GPA) is the landlord.

The GPA drafted and submitted the Full Business Case covering costs for both GPA and DIT for the completion and fit out of the Old Admiralty Building, including the Department for International Trade's move costs. The business case was submitted by GPA in November 2019 and the Finance addendum submitted in January 2020.

The transfer of ministerial responsibilities for GREAT to the Cabinet Office was formally confirmed on 20 April 2021. There is no link between this transfer and the business case for DIT's move to Old Admiralty Building.

JUSTICE**■ Prisons: Gender Recognition****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[183091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many biologically male (a) prisoners and (b) prison staff have a Gender Recognition Certificate.

Alex Chalk:

No data is held centrally on the number of prisoners or prison staff with Gender Recognition Certificates (GRCs) in English and Welsh prisons. Neither group is obliged to disclose that they have a GRC.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and the Ministry of Justice are actively pursuing ways to improve data relating to gender and gender identity, whilst also continuing to respect the rights and privacy of those who hold Gender Recognition Certificates. This year's transgender annual data collection exercise will, for the first time, collect anonymised information on the number of prisoners known to hold GRCs in the prison estate and this information will be published within the Offender Annual Equalities Report in the autumn.

■ Prisons: Security**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[183090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to revise the policy on the searching of prisoners, staff and visitors.

Alex Chalk:

The national policy on the searching of prisoners, staff and visitors (PSI 07/2016 – Searching of the Person) is currently under review and a revised version is intended to be published later this year. Due to the anticipated lengthy discussion and consultation process, there is not a set timeline at this stage.

In reviewing the policy, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has consulted with the Government Legal Department and HMPPS Equalities Team. Further consultation will be undertaken with contributing groups including HMPPS women's group. The new policy will be compliant with the Equality Act 2010, Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the European Convention on Human Rights.

■ Prosecutions: Coronavirus**Alex Cunningham:**[\[183138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will review the use of the single justice procedure for charges made under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Chris Philp:

The government has no plans to review the use of the Single Justice Procedure for these offences.

This is a quicker and more straightforward procedure for prosecutors dealing with these types of cases, and there are clear safeguards in place which ensure that it is only used in appropriate circumstances. A defendant must agree to this process being used and they always have the option to instead have their case heard in open court. A magistrate can also refer a case to open court if they deem it would not be appropriately dealt with using the Procedure.

Alex Cunningham:[\[183139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions made under the Coronavirus Act 2020 in relation to Schedule 22 on Powers to issue directions relating to events, gathering and premises have been resolved through the single justice procedure 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.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Northern Ireland office: Contact Tracing**

Chris Green: [\[181300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has allocated any financial or other resources from his Department's budget to investigate potential future uses by his Department of the NHS Test and Trace database system.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Northern Ireland Office is not the lead UK Government Department responsible for the NHS Test and Trace database system, therefore does not allocate resources, including financial resources to investigate future uses of the system. The lead department is the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC).

■ Northern Ireland Office: Contact Tracing

Chris Green: [\[181301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether his Department plans to use the NHS Test and Trace database system.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Northern Ireland Office is not the lead UK Government Department responsible for the NHS Test and Trace database system and does not therefore develop policy relating to the use of the system. The lead department is the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Chris Green: [\[181302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on using the NHS Test and Trace database system.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I speak regularly with Cabinet and Ministerial colleagues across Government to discuss a wide range of mutual issues, including the NHS Test and Trace database system. However, the Northern Ireland Office is not the lead UK Government Department responsible for the NHS Test and Trace database system policy. The lead department is the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC).

As health is a devolved matter, the Department for Health Northern Ireland make their own decisions on testing and tracing, however there is continued UK-wide engagement to ensure a coordinated and collaborative approach.

TRANSPORT■ **Bus Services**

Lilian Greenwood: [\[183125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the National Bus Strategy, what criteria the Government plans to use to make an assessment of whether a bus journey is socially necessary.

Rachel Maclean:

The National Bus Strategy sets out how we expect Local Transport Authorities in collaboration with bus operators to deliver more comprehensive, socially necessary services, including services to smaller and isolated places and more services in the evenings and at weekends.

We will issue further guidance on the meaning and role of socially necessary services in due course.

■ **Bus Services: Fares**

Lilian Greenwood: [\[183124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the National Bus Strategy, what steps the Government plans to take to implement low flat fares in cities and towns.

Rachel Maclean:

The National Bus Strategy sets out that within cities and towns, we want low flat fares (or maximum fares and daily price caps) to be the norm. Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs), which we expect local transport authorities to produce by the end of October, will need to set out ambitious visions for travel by bus, meeting the goals and expectations in the strategy. BSIPs will influence the share of the £3 billion transformation that each authority receives, and we will expect to see fares policy as an integral part of the plans. We will publish detailed guidance on preparing BSIPs shortly.

■ **Crossrail 2 Line: Haringey**

Catherine West: [\[183229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the economic effect on Haringey of delays in the progress of proposals for Crossrail 2.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Transport projects are kept under continual review. Given current affordability constraints, Transport for London has confirmed that they are not in a position to prioritise investment in Crossrail 2, and the Government has agreed that they will stop development work on the project. No assessment has been made of the economic effect on Haringey.

■ Eurostar: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[181395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 April 2021 to Question 176004, what was discussed in those meetings.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[181396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 April 2021 to Question 176004 on Eurostar: Coronavirus, when those meetings took place.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government continues to hold regular discussions on Eurostar's financial position with the French Government, both at Ministerial and Official levels. Most recently, officials from both Governments met on 12th April to discuss Eurostar's finances.

Both governments recognise that Eurostar's services bring significant economic benefits for both the UK and France and we will continue to work with the company as we work towards the recovery of international travel when it is safe to do so.

We will continue to engage with Eurostar to understand what further support or measures the company, its shareholders and lenders will take to stand behind the company to address its current financial challenges.

■ Motor Vehicles: Vehicle Number Plates

Kerry McCarthy: [\[183093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which vehicles are eligible for green number plates.

Rachel Maclean:

Green number plates may only be displayed on vehicles with zero tailpipe emissions, such as full battery or hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[183094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that ineligible vehicles are not fitted with green number plates.

Rachel Maclean:

It is an offence for the registered keeper of a vehicle to display a number plate incorrectly, which includes displaying a green number plate on a vehicle that is not zero tailpipe emissions. Government continues to work with stakeholders, to ensure industry and consumers are aware of the requirements around displaying green number plates.

■ Northern Transport Acceleration Council

Dan Jarvis: [\[183147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will convene an urgent meeting of the Northern Transport Acceleration Council to discuss the work of the Manchester Recovery Task Force.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I will convene a meeting of the Northern Transport Acceleration Council to take place once local elections have taken place. I have asked my officials, including the Acceleration Unit, to arrange a date.

■ Passenger Ships: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [\[181036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with cruise ship operators on covid-19 testing arrangements on board.

Justin Madders: [\[181037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether there will be any independent checks to ensure that the covid-19 quarantine arrangements for cruise ship staff which are advertised by Cruise Ship Operators are complied with.

Justin Madders: [\[181038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with SAGE on potential covid-19 transmission risks between cruise ship customers and crew.

Robert Courts:

Cruise ship operators will follow the UK Chamber of Shipping's Covid-19 Framework for cruise, published in October last year. It has been designed to mitigate the risks and effects of Covid-19 onboard. Cruise operators using the Framework will be verified by a competent, independent third party to ensure their COVID-19 Management Plans meet the standards contained in the Framework. In addition to this, cruise vessels operating from UK ports with UK passengers will also be subject to an Expanded Inspection by surveyors of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). This will provide additional assurance that the requirements of the Framework are being adhered to.

The Covid-19 Framework for cruise sets out a number of procedures designed to protect passengers and address the risk of transmission. This includes a requirement for both passengers and crew to present a negative Covid-19 test prior to embarkation. As we look ahead to the restart of cruises, my Department will continue to support and facilitate engagement between Public Health England (PHE), Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the cruise sector to ensure industry testing protocols remain robust for both passengers and crew.

Cruise ship operations and restart have been discussed with the relevant experts and organisations who are represented on SAGE. My Department has engaged with the

DHSC, PHE, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on transmission risks and mitigations to Covid-19.

■ Railways: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[181393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reassure rail passengers as covid-19 lockdown measures are eased.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In stations across the country, the industry has taken active steps to encourage passengers to practise social distancing such as train/station announcements and floor stickers, manage passenger flows and increase cleaning regimes. We have been working closely with operators to ensure that there are appropriate procedures in place and clearly communicated to passengers. For instance, passengers are urged to use the whole length of the train to board to avoid overcrowding in one carriage. Operators are continuing to exploring ways to promote social distancing further through other methods, such as Advance ticket purchases and 'reservation only' seats.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[181397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March 2021 to Question 174247, what changes in (a) services and (b) safety procedures have been made by (i) CrossCountry and (ii) Merseyrail since the easing of covid-19 restrictions on 12 April 2021.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[181398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March 2021 to Question 174247, what changes in (a) services and (b) safety procedures have been made by (i) Avanti West Coast, (ii) London Northwestern Railway and (iii) West Midlands Railway since the easing of covid-19 restrictions on 12 April 2021.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[181399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March 2021 to Question 174247, what changes in (a) services and (b) safety procedures have been made by (i) c2c, (ii) Greater Anglia and (iii) Stansted Express since the easing of covid-19 restrictions on 12 April 2021.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[181400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March 2021 to Question 174247, what changes in (a) services and (b) safety procedures have been made by (i) Chiltern Railways, (ii) Great Western Railway and (iii) Heathrow Express since the easing of covid-19 restrictions on 12 April 2021.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[181401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March 2021 to Question 174247, what changes in (a) services and (b) safety procedures have been

made by (i) East Midland Railway, (ii) Great Northern and (iii) ThamesLink since the easing of covid-19 restrictions on 12 April 2021.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[181402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March 2021 to Question 174247, what changes in (a) services and (b) safety procedures have been made by (i) London North Eastern Railway, (ii) Northern and (iii) TransPennine Express since the easing of covid-19 restrictions on 12 April 2021.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[181403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March 2021 to Question 174247, what changes in (a) services and (b) safety procedures have been made by (i) South Western Railway, (ii) southeastern and (iii) Southern since the easing of covid-19 restrictions on 12 April 2021.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

From 12 April, train operating companies have increased their service levels from 70 per cent of pre-pandemic levels to around 75 per cent. With Government support, operators continue to refine their safety procedures including advice to the public about social distancing, the cleaning of trains and stations, and the wearing of face coverings.

■ Railways: Electrification

Catherine West: [\[183231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what engagement his Department has had with international partners on best practices for increasing the electrification of the rail network in the UK.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Departmental ministers and officials meet with international partners to discuss issues of mutual interest, which sometimes includes electrification practice. For example, the Rail Minister recently discussed electrification with representatives of the government of Poland. Rail industry research into efficient electrification and Network Rail-led advice to the Department about the decarbonisation of the railway both consider international practice.

■ Railways: Repairs and Maintenance

Karin Smyth: [\[181330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 April 2021 to Question 174890, when he plans to publish an updated Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline list, which was last updated on 21 October 2019.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We will be publishing an update to the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline in the near future.

■ Screening: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[\[181446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce the cost of private covid-19 tests required for international travel.

Robert Courts:

The government recognises that the cost of these tests can be high and is reviewing all options available to reduce the cost of Covid-19 tests, including working with the travel industry and private testing providers to further reduce the cost of travel for the British public while ensuring international travel is as safe as possible.

Testing post-arrival remains an important tool in our wider measures to manage the risk of imported cases of Covid-19, as well as allowing us to identify variants of concern, however the Government is clear that we want the tests to be as cheap and convenient as possible.

■ Shipping: Financial Services

Alan Brown:

[\[181063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing to the maritime sector to develop competitive green finance products and standards for green maritime finance in line with the Government's Maritime 2050 strategy.

Robert Courts:

The Department recognises the vital role that green finance plays in supporting the UK's transition to a clean and resilient economy. Our Clean Maritime Plan, represents the Government's route map for achieving net zero emissions in domestic shipping by 2050. Through our Clean Maritime Plan, we will continue to work with the British banking sector, industry and across Whitehall to encourage the provision of finance towards zero emission shipping technology, development and manufacturing, supporting the Prime's Minister's Ten Point Plan for a green industrial revolution. Further plans for maritime decarbonisation will be included in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, which is due to be published this year.

■ Shipping: Job Creation

Ruth Jones:

[\[181438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of creating a seafarer job creation target for new UK Ratings and Officers.

Robert Courts:

The Maritime 2050 strategy has made recommendations on promoting and increasing employment and training but no targets have been set.

■ Tonnage Tax**Ruth Jones:** [\[181439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on reform of Tonnage Tax.

Robert Courts:

As part of the standard role of government, the Department for Transport regularly meets with colleagues in HMT to discuss a range of maritime measures including the Tonnage Tax regime

■ Travel: Coronavirus**Julian Sturdy:** [\[183128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what urgent steps his Department is taking to (a) work with test providers to reduce the costs of compulsory PCR tests for UK residents travelling overseas prior to the projected reopening of international leisure travel from 17 May 2021 and (b) assess the potential merits of using (i) lateral flow tests and (ii) other cheaper alternatives to PCR testing for overseas travellers.

Robert Courts:

The government recognises that the cost of tests for international travel can be high and is currently reviewing all options available to reduce the cost of Covid-19 tests. This includes working with the travel industry and private testing providers to further reduce the cost of travel while continuing to protect public health and monitor variants of concern.

Testing post-arrival remains an important tool in our wider measures to manage the risk of imported cases of Covid-19, as well as allowing us to identify variants of concern, however the Government is clear that we want the tests to be as cheap and convenient as possible.

TREASURY**■ Corporation Tax****Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[183223\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he supports the US administration's recent proposal for a global minimum corporate tax rate.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given on 20 April to UIN 178895.

■ Cycling: VAT**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[181319\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review the level of VAT levied on the Cycle to Work scheme following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

John Glen:

There are no current plans to change the VAT rate on the Cycle to Work Scheme. VAT registered businesses are normally able to reclaim any VAT incurred on the purchase of bicycles and safety equipment provided to their employees under the scheme.

■ Digital Technology: Taxation**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[181360\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to prevent large technology firms from passing on the Digital Services Tax to online retailers who use their platform.

Jesse Norman:

The Digital Services Tax is a tax that ensures providers of search engines, social media platforms, and online marketplaces pay UK tax that reflects the value they derive from UK users.

It is for businesses to decide their pricing strategies and how those strategies take account of taxes to which they are liable.

It remains the Government's aim to agree a comprehensive multilateral solution on the taxation of digital companies, and to remove the Digital Services Tax once this is implemented.

■ Financial Services: Asia**Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[181345\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress his Department has made on pursuing reform of financial services regulation to support participation in growing markets in Asia.

John Glen:

HM Treasury engages with a range of countries in Asia through established and regular economic and/or financial dialogues, where financial services regulation is a key theme. This encompasses Economic and Financial Dialogues with China and India, and Financial Dialogues with Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and South Korea. Through these dialogues HM Treasury has built new and deeper financial services relationships with Asia's financial centres, helping to facilitate the participation of firms in our respective jurisdictions and to agree new market connectivity initiatives. The UK's cooperation with Japan has also been enhanced via the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Where applicable additional information about these dialogues is published on www.gov.uk, including the via joint outcomes statements and in HM Treasury's annual reports.

■ Households: Finance**Richard Fuller:**[\[181229\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to increase the number of households that have financial reserves to cover basic costs for three or more months.

John Glen:

It is important that consumers have sufficient financial resilience to be able to manage short-term shocks to income or expenditure to help avoid these events causing them to fall into financial difficulty or problem debt.

The Government is committed to supporting people at all income levels and at all stages of life to save, including working families and individuals on low incomes, to put money aside for a rainy day. The Help to Save scheme was launched in September 2018 and is intended to support working people on low incomes and in receipt of certain benefits to build their financial resilience while also encouraging them to develop a regular, long-term savings habit.

The Government has also agreed to maintain record levels of debt advice funding for the Money and Pension Service in 2021-22 to help people in problem debt get their finances back on track.

■ Ice Cream: VAT**Claire Hanna:**[\[183311\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to include ice cream products sold in ice cream parlours in the temporary VAT reduction for the hospitality sector.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) was introduced on 15 July 2020 to support the cash flow and viability of about 150,000 businesses and protect over 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors. Ice cream served for consumption on the premises in ice cream parlours or other food establishments will benefit from the reduced rate.

The reduced rate has been extended until 30 September 2021, after which a reduced rate of 12.5 per cent will apply for a further six months, until 31 March 2022.

■ Liverpool Victoria**Gareth Thomas:**[\[182012\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the proposed demutualisation of Liverpool Victoria; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

In my role as Economic Secretary I have been a champion of the mutuals sector. It is clear to me that mutuals bring something different to other forms of running a business, with their clear focus on delivering the services their members need.

However, assessing the impact of the sale of LV= Life and Pensions business to Bain Capital is a matter for the financial services regulators.

The sale will be supervised by both the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA). As part of their work, the regulators will assess the overall suitability of Bain Capital to manage insurance business, including its financial position and the skills and experience of its workforce.

The proposed transaction also involves steps which require sanction by the Court. The Court processes involve a number of safeguards which are designed to ensure that policyholders are kept informed and their interests protected. These include appointment of an independent expert acting in the interests of policyholders and who will assess the impact on policyholders and report to them.

■ Mortgages: Coronavirus**Dawn Butler:**[\[182018\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to support people struggling with mortgage payments as a direct result of the covid-19 pandemic.

John Glen:

Working with the FCA, the Government introduced mortgage payment deferrals to provide certainty to homeowners who needed it during the initial stage of the Covid-19 pandemic, and approximately 2.75 million mortgage payment deferrals have been provided to UK borrowers, benefiting people across the country with the period of respite this offered.

While the application deadline for mortgage payment deferrals ended on the 31 March, any existing payment deferrals can remain in force until 31 July, or until an individual borrower reaches their six month maximum entitlement. All credit file reporting will return to normal once payment deferrals have ended.

Following the closure of the application period for mortgage payment deferrals, the FCA have set out detailed guidance which stipulates that firms should continue to provide tailored support and forbearance options for borrowers facing new or ongoing financial difficulties. Borrowers struggling with mortgage repayments should reach out to their lender at the earliest opportunity to discuss the options available to them.

■ Premium Bonds**Anthony Browne:**[\[181462\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the £50,000 maximum limit of investment in Premium Bonds to provide an additional incentive to invest and support the post-covid economy.

John Glen:

The current Premium Bond investment limit is £50,000, which is also set out in UK legislation. In line with NS&I's operating framework, when setting the Premium Bond investment limit, HM Treasury and NS&I must strike a balance between the differing needs of savers, taxpayers and the wider financial sector. While some customers may wish to invest more than the current limit in Premium Bonds, raising the limit can lead to the scheme becoming dominated by a small number of people with large investments. Customers are sensitive to taking part in a prize draw in which some people hold a very large number of bonds. NS&I offer a number of other savings products with a higher investment limit than that of Premium Bonds.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme**Anne Marie Morris:****[183152]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance his Department published before the Budget on 3 March 2021 on the requirement to have filed a 2019-20 self-assessment tax return by 2 March 2021 in order to be eligible for the fourth Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant.

Jesse Norman:

The Government announced at Budget on 3 March that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue until September, with a fourth and a final fifth grant. This provides certainty to business as the economy reopens and means the SEISS continues to be one of the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world.

The Chancellor also announced that the fourth and fifth SEISS grants would be based on 2019-20 Self-Assessment tax returns and individuals must have submitted their 2019-20 tax return by 2 March 2021. This date balances access for the vast majority of eligible self-employed individuals, with the duty to protect the taxpayer against fraud as the details of the SEISS grants became public.

HM Revenue & Customs waived the late filing penalty for Self-Assessment tax returns filed online by 28 February to provide relief to all self-assessment taxpayers and agents at a time of unprecedented pressure. The statutory filing deadline of 31 January did not change.

Further information about the fourth grant is available in recently published guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme>.

■ Small Businesses: Taxation**Andrea Jenkyns:****[181346]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to simplify the tax code (a) in general and (b) for SMEs.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to a tax system that is simple to understand and easy to comply with for all its users, while also tackling avoidance and evasion and ensuring fairness.

Since 2010, the Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) has offered independent advice and recommendations on making the tax system simpler and easier to interact with for taxpayers. In March 2021, the Government commenced the first statutory five-year review of the OTS, to ensure it is as effective as possible.

Changes to the tax system can have a wide impact, and so any reform needs to be well planned, incorporating the wider views of its users. As such, the Government published a call for evidence in March 2021, seeking input on how to modernise the tax administration framework, as part of the 10-year Tax Administration Strategy.

Stamp Duties**Olivia Blake:**[\[183317\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to allow people to reclaim the additional stamp duty charge where those people have (a) purchased a second home with the intention of selling the first, (b) been unable to sell that home as a result of cladding-related issues and (c) been unable to reclaim the three per cent additional property stamp duty charge paid on the purchase of the second property.

Jesse Norman:

A refund of the higher rate of SDLT paid can be claimed if an old main residence is sold within three years of the purchase of the new main residence. For most people, three years is enough time to sell a previous main residence. However someone who purchases a new main residence on or after 1 January 2017 will still be eligible to apply for a refund if exceptional circumstances meant they were unable to sell their previous main residence in three years and they sold the property as soon as possible after those exceptional circumstances ended.

Where a person is not permitted to sell a previous main residence, such as due to fire safety issues, the circumstances are likely to be considered exceptional. HMRC will consider each case on its own merits.

Valuation Office Agency**Rachael Maskell:**[\[183198\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that the time taken for Valuation Office Agency assessments is not affected when large units are split into multiple small units to assist with the economic recovery of city centres.

Jesse Norman:

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) actively monitors work volumes and prioritises any hardship cases. The VOA also flexes its resources to meet any changing demand.

Ratepayers can request changes to their rating assessment, such as splits into multiple units, by using the VOA's Check and Challenge service. The system is designed to provide resolution as early as possible in the process.

At "Check" ratepayers should provide the revised facts about the property. Once validated or agreed, an assessment can be changed at that stage. If the facts are not agreed, or the ratepayer believes the valuation is incorrect, they can move on to Challenge.

The majority of cases are settled at Check, without the need for ratepayers to Challenge. About 70% are settled at Check and the VOA aims to clear Check cases within three months.

The VOA publishes statistics on Checks, Challenges and assessment reviews (for England) against the 2017 Rating List. The figures at 31 December 2020 can be found at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/non-domestic-rating-challenges-and-changes-2017-and-2010-rating-lists-december-2020.

WALES

■ UK Trade with EU: Wales

Ruth Jones:

[\[181432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps he is taking to support Welsh businesses subject to non-tariff barriers to trade with the EU.

Simon Hart:

The Government remains committed to ensuring that all businesses are able to seize the opportunities our new trading relationship with the EU brings. We have successfully agreed wide-ranging provisions that seek to facilitate trade by avoiding unnecessary regulatory, non-tariff, barriers between the two parties and 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.

My ministerial colleagues and I across government have been speaking directly to businesses across the country through department-led roundtables and other engagement fora, to develop a shared understanding and plan for the future. These engagements have been integral in supporting businesses most affected by our new trading relationship with the EU, helping them to adjust and continue to successfully compete on a global stage.

■ Wales Office: Contact Tracing

Chris Green:

[\[181303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, whether he has allocated any financial or other resources from his Department's budget to investigate potential future uses by his Department of the NHS Test and Trace database system.

Simon Hart:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales is not the lead UK Government Department responsible for the NHS Test and Trace database system and does not therefore develop policy relating to the use of the system. The lead department is the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Chris Green:[\[181304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, whether his Department plans to use the NHS Test and Trace database system.

Simon Hart:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales is not the lead UK Government Department responsible for the NHS Test and Trace database system and does not therefore develop policy relating to the use of the system. The lead department is the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Chris Green:[\[181305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on using the NHS Test and Trace database system.

Simon Hart:

I discuss a wide range of issues relating to the Coronavirus pandemic with Cabinet colleagues on a regular basis. However, The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales is not the lead UK Government Department responsible for the NHS Test and Trace database system policy. The lead department is the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC).

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Child Maintenance Service

Hywel Williams:[\[183086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of improving the clarity of information in the Child Maintenance Service's written communications to service users.

Guy Opperman:

The Department and the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) regularly review the Services offered to customers, including written communications. In 2018 we identified the top ten letters sent by CMS and worked with partners to simplify them; this included, removal of duplication and simplifying the language where appropriate, whilst moving key messages up front so they could be easily identified and understood by customers.

We have also implemented several improvement suggestions from Independent Case Examiners, including clarification of the complaints process and communication with employers

We have reduced the volume of letters being sent to customers, focusing instead on fewer, clearly worded letters that can be used across the board.

In addition, the DWP External Communications team continually review letters to ensure they meet the agreed communications standard which comprises: using plain English, no jargon, no Latin words and no contractions. Whilst making sure the message is clear, helpful, respectful and positive.

Hywel Williams:

[183088]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Child Maintenance Service takes to monitor the efficacy of its communication practices with service users.

Guy Opperman:

We are committed to ensuring our communications with claimants are clear, accurate and understandable. Using customer insight, we continuously improve our letters and take into account all the feedback we receive, analysing complaints and customer calls to further understand and focus out improvement activity, including customer testing of the messages within our letters.

The Department Customer Charter provides the standard against which all aspects of service delivery are measured. Measurement against these standards is conducted via customer surveys are carried out regularly with customers across all contact channels and customers are asked specifically about our communication practices under the 'easy access' and 'keeping you informed' elements of the Charter.

Customer satisfaction levels and feedback recorded against these measures are utilised to continually improve our services.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Ministerial Policy Advisers

Jonathan Reynolds:

[182046]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the details of all meetings held by special advisors in her Department since her appointment as Secretary of State.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 21 April 2021]: The information requested is not centrally collated.

The Government publishes an unprecedented amount of transparency data; departments publish quarterly details of Ministers and Permanent Secretaries meetings' with external organisations, and Special Advisers' meetings with senior media executives.

Published transparency returns can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwp-special-advisers-hospitality-and-gifts#2020>

■ Elections: Disability

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[176034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what Government support is available to disabled candidates at the upcoming local elections given that the Access to Elected Office fund and EnAble fund are no longer active.

Justin Tomlinson:

It is the Government's ambition to see more disabled people in public office. We have been clear that the responsibility for supporting disabled candidates sits with political parties, and they should lead the way in improving diverse representation.

Government will continue to discuss the representation of disabled people in politics with parties and encourage them to put in place their own arrangements to attract and support disabled candidates.

■ Employment and Support Allowance

David Linden:

[\[183256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants of (a) new style and (b) contribution-based employment and support allowance were in the assessment phase when their payments were stopped as a result of reaching the end of the 365 day time-limit since March 2020.

David Linden:

[\[183257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants of (a) new style and (b) contribution-based employment and support allowance are in the assessment phase as at 19 April 2021; and how and many what proportion of those claimants are awaiting a face-to-face assessment.

Justin Tomlinson:

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

The available statistics for ESA WCA by month of claim start (to June 2020) for initial assessment outcomes, including those still in progress, and assessment outcome by month of decision to September 2020, are published here:

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

We recognise that Work Capability Assessments (WCAs) have unfortunately not been completed for some contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants as quickly as we would have liked due to the pressures presented by the pandemic.

The Honourable gentleman might be aware that face-to-face assessments for WCAs will resume from May across England and Scotland, and will do so in Wales from the point on their roadmap when socialising indoors is allowed. This will initially be for those who we have been unable to fully assess by other channels.

Throughout the pandemic we have continued to assess people on paper evidence as usual, using this route whenever possible. We also introduced telephone assessments in June 2020 in a phased approach, with limited outcomes in the first instance, that allowed us to build capability and improve processes. Since the beginning of February all outcomes have been available in telephone assessments, and we are now in the process of completing second telephone assessments for people who previously had a telephone assessment but no outcome. The combination of these assessment channels will enable us to ensure that claimants receive their correct benefit entitlement as quickly as possible.

If, following their assessment and the subsequent decision, an ESA claimant is entitled to a higher rate of benefit, payments are backdated where appropriate so that they do not lose out. Where an individual's contributory ESA ends, if they require further financial support, they may be able to claim Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Drew Hendry: [\[182069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of expanding access to the Kickstart Scheme to enable small and medium sized enterprises to use that scheme.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 21 April 2021]: The Department for Work and Pensions' Kickstart Scheme is already open for small and medium employers, as well as larger ones, to offer jobs to young people. On 3rd February 2021, we removed the requirement for an application to the Scheme to contain a minimum of 30 jobs. This means that employers have greater choice in how they participate regardless of the number of Kickstart jobs they are seeking to offer. All employers also have the option of applying through one of the 900 approved Gateway organisations supporting Kickstart. Sole traders can also participate in the scheme by applying through one of our approved Gateway Plus organisations.

Drew Hendry: [\[182070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions officials in her Department have had with representatives of (a) chambers of commerce and (b) local authorities on registering as gateway providers to enable local small and medium sized enterprises to use the Kickstart Scheme.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 21 April 2021]: Officials from the Department for Work and Pensions have had discussions with organisations and employers across the country about involvement in the Kickstart Scheme. This includes the Scottish and Welsh governments, mayoral combined authorities and local authorities and chambers of commerce.

We are delighted that these discussions have resulted in more than 900 organisations being approved as Gateways for the Kickstart Scheme including around 35 members of the British Chambers of Commerce network. There are also over 100 Local Authorities approved to be Kickstart Gateways. We closed applications to organisations seeking to be a new Gateway.

Since 3rd February we have also removed the 30 job minimum requirement for direct applications to Kickstart. This will make the scheme accessible to even more employers – especially smaller ones - giving them choice about whether to apply direct or via one of the approved Kickstart Gateways. We continue to engage with employers to maintain the high interest in the scheme with over 180,000 jobs approved to date.

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.

■ Occupational Health

David Linden: [\[183260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish her Department's timetable for publishing its response to the Government's consultation, Health is everyone's business: proposals to reduce ill health-related job loss.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is considering the timing of the response in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A response will be available as soon as possible.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[183099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether personal independence payment awarded on appeal will be extended in the same manner as awards secured on initial application.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the Right Hon member to the answer I gave on 15 April 2021 to Question [179256](#).

■ REACH Independent Scientific Expert Pool

Ruth Jones: [\[181427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what safeguards are in place to ensure that the secretariat of the REACH Independent Scientific Expert Pool operates with adequate independence from the rest of the Health and Safety Executive.

Ruth Jones:

[181428]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number and composition of experts that will be recruited to the REACH Independent Scientific Expert Pool.

Mims Davies:

As set out in the statement on use of independent scientific knowledge and advice ([Agency statement on transparency and the use of independent scientific knowledge and advice \(ISA\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)) the secretariat for the REACH Independent Scientific Expert Pool (RISEP) will be provided by the HSE. However, the work of this secretariat is limited to organisation, and support of RISEP experts in administration and protocol matters. Agendas and notes of Challenge Panels involving RISEP members will be made public, with accredited stakeholders also in attendance to ensure transparency.

In establishing independent scientific knowledge and advice within the UK REACH system, experts from HSE (as the Agency with UK REACH) and the Environment Agency (EA) used experience and “hands-on” knowledge of their work within the EU REACH scientific expert process (on the Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) and the Committee for Socio-Economic Analysis (SEAC)). This enabled HSE to define the skills and experience necessary to ensure robust independent scrutiny and challenge to produce high-quality opinions, to inform decisions by the Secretary of State for Defra with the consent of Ministers for Wales and Scotland. The REACH SI mandates the Agency to include information about the qualifications or relevant experience that are suitable in order to provide knowledge and advice to the Agency within the statement produced on the use of independent scientific knowledge and advice ([Agency statement on transparency and the use of independent scientific knowledge and advice \(ISA\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)).

The actual composition of experts used to help the Agency produce specific opinions will be dependent on the type of dossier – for instance for an environmentally driven restriction any Challenge Panel would be made up of more independent environmental scientists than human health. All opinions will be looked at on a case-by-case basis. We have not set a minimum number of experts, but as a contingency we have ensured that we are able to co-opt members of other committees should we need to so. However, due to the large response we have had to the recruitment it is thought that this will not be required.

HSE was also able to use discussions with stakeholders and prioritisation exercises with Defra, and officials from the Scottish and Welsh governments to inform decisions around the number of experts required within the process on the basis of estimates of the numbers of restrictions and applications for authorisation expected.

■ Rents

Sir Geoffrey Cox: [\[180451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of housing providers inflating rents, and therefore amounts received from local authorities for providing housing, by means of intra-company sales at inflated values.

Will Quince:

DWP is working closely with MHCLG to develop a package of measures to improve the oversight of supported housing, including ensuring quality standards and value for money for taxpayers.

The supported housing sector provides essential accommodation and support for the most vulnerable members of society to live as independently as possible in their community.

Most supported housing is provided by well-run providers/landlords with a strong social mission, whilst providing high quality care and support services themselves or through third parties.

■ Social Security Benefits: Canada

Andrew Gwynne: [\[183095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the (a) Foreign Secretary, (b) Secretary of State for International Trade and (c) Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Canadian Government's request for a reciprocal social security agreement.

Guy Opperman:

There have been no discussions on the Canadian Government's request for a reciprocal social security agreement.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[183096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions were held with the Government of Canada before the UK Government that Government's request for a reciprocal pensions uprating agreement.

Guy Opperman:

The UK has not had any recent discussions with the Government of Canada on reciprocal pensions uprating agreements.

■ Social Security Benefits: Cancer

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[183250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people living with cancer in Wales had a DS1500 medical condition report submitted by their clinicians in each quarter of 2020.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[183251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people living with cancer in England had a DS1500 medical condition report submitted by their clinicians in each quarter of 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The DS1500 can be completed by a terminally ill patient's doctor or other healthcare professional and returned to DWP. The doctor or healthcare professional provides information about their patient's condition, including its clinical features and ongoing or planned treatment on the DS1500. The DS1500 is not a claim form in itself and is not a requirement to support a claim under the special rules for terminal illness.

A DS1500 can be completed during the claim process for various benefits: Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Universal Credit (UC), Attendance Allowance (AA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[183100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) suspending and (b) raising the benefit cap during the covid-19 outbreak to allow the uplift to reach a greater number of children at risk of poverty.

Mims Davies:

I refer the Rt. Hon Member to my response to question [182023](#).

■ Universal Credit**Sir George Howarth:** [\[180405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an (a) assessment of whether universal credit adequately covers the cost of living for recipients and (b) estimate of the number of universal credit applicants who access food bank services.

Will Quince:

No assessment of foodbank use has been made. There is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage at a constituency or national level.

Universal Credit is a flexible, personalised benefit which responds to people's circumstances. It includes separate elements to provide support for housing costs, children and childcare costs and support for disabled people and carers. UC entitlement automatically increases when someone's income falls, meaning that claimants are better supported. Spring '20 forecasts estimated that when fully rolled out, UC will be £2 billion per year more generous than the support it replaces.

Throughout the pandemic we have targeted our support to those most in need by raising the living wage, spending hundreds of billions to safeguard jobs, boosting welfare support by billions and introducing the Covid Winter Grant Scheme (now the Covid Local Support Grant).

■ Universal Credit: Deductions

Ms Karen Buck: [\[183058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of universal credit claimants have deductions from their payment as a result of repaying (a) budgeting loans and advances, (b) universal credit advances, (c) universal credit overpayments, and (d) tax credit overpayments in each month from March 2019 to the most recent month for which data is available.

Ms Karen Buck: [\[183059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average deduction from universal credit payments is for (a) budgeting loans and advances, (b) universal credit advances, (c) universal credit overpayments and (d) tax credit overpayments in each month from March 2019 to the most recent month for which data is available.

Will Quince:

The information requested is provided in the attached spreadsheet.

We carefully balance our duty to the taxpayer to recover overpayments with our support for claimants. Steps are in place to ensure deductions are manageable; this month we further reduced the cap on deductions from Universal Credit awards to 25% and lengthened the payback period from 12 months to 24 meaning in effect someone can receive 25 payments over 24 months.

From 3rd April 2020, deductions from Universal Credit for some government debt, such as Tax Credits, benefit overpayments and Social Fund Loans were suspended for 3 months, which resulted in many claimants seeing an increase in the amount they received while allowing staff to prioritise processing the unprecedented number of new benefits claims.

Customers can contact DWP if they are experiencing financial hardship in order to discuss a reduction in their rate of repayment, depending on financial circumstances.

Attachments:

1. Attachment for PQ 183058 and 183059 [Universal Credit Claims with deductions.xlsx]

■ Universal Credit: Scotland

David Linden: [\[183254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will provide a breakdown of universal credit adverse sanction decisions by main medical condition or disability in Scotland in each financial year since 2017.

Mims Davies:

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