



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 23 July 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:40 P.M., 23 July 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.  
 Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Construction: Billing

**Laurence Turner:**

[\[270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to his Department's consultation entitled Retention payments in the construction industry, published on 24 October 2017, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing the policies proposed in that consultation.

**Sarah Jones:**

Small businesses are essential to our economic success.

This Government is committed to take action on late payments to ensure small businesses and the self-employed are paid on time. The practice of cash retentions can create problems for contractors in the construction supply chain, due to late and non-payment. Any policy solution must be a sustainable one that works for the industry.

#### ■ Grievance Procedures

**Jerome Mayhew:**

[\[678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has plans to simplify the process for employees to raise grievances against (a) their employer and (b) fellow staff.

**Justin Madders:**

The Acas statutory Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures provides basic practical guidance to employers, employees and their representatives and sets out principles for handling disciplinary and grievance situations in the workplace. As part of our Plan to Make Work Pay we will work with Acas to consider whether there is a need to update procedures in this area.

#### ■ Horizon IT System: Compensation

**Sarah Dyke:**

[\[718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his expected timetable is for when sub-postmasters impacted by the Horizon IT System will start receiving letters on compensation entitlements.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Government is committed to ensuring justice and financial redress is delivered as swiftly as possible for postmasters affected by the Horizon IT Scandal, whether that is through the redress schemes that are already operating or the new scheme which we intend to launch before the end of this month for those whose convictions

have been overturned by the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act and the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences (Scotland) Act.

## ■ **Motor Vehicles: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Robin Swann:**

[\[789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department will have discussions with the (a) Motor Ombudsman and (b) Ford on (i) wet belt engine problems and (ii) resolution of consumer cases relating to those problems.

**Justin Madders:**

Consumers experiencing issues with Ford wet belt engines should contact Ford or the retailer directly to resolve the issue. Consumers can also contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133 for advice. If consumers are unable to resolve issues directly, the Motor Ombudsman, which is independent of government, can investigate and seek a resolution.

The Driver and Vehicle Standard Agency (DVSA) has and continues to investigate issues with Ford wet belt engines, including where raised directly by owners. The DVSA will continue to engage with Ford to better understand the reasons for failure and have the power to require Ford to take safety recall action if evidence suggests it is necessary.

## ■ **Post Offices**

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support high street post office counter services.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Post Office is an essential service in communities across the country. The Government is committed to finding ways to strengthen the Post Office, through consulting with sub-postmasters, trade unions and customers. This will include supporting the development of new products, services and business models that will help reinvigorate the high street.

## ■ **Public Houses: Newcastle-under-Lyme**

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he plans to take to support pubs in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties currently benefit from 75 per cent business rates relief, up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business for 2024-25. The small business multiplier is frozen at 49.9p for 2024/25.

The government identified that the current business rates system disincentivises investment, creates uncertainty and places an undue burden on our high streets. In

England, the government will replace the business rates system, so we can raise the same revenue but in a fairer way.

The British Business Bank supports SMEs to grow by improving their access to finance, through the Growth Guarantee Scheme which offers a 70% government guarantee on loans.

We will establish Skills England which will have a new partnership with employers at its heart and will reform the apprenticeship levy, a key ask of hospitality businesses.

## ■ Public Houses: Rural Areas

**Sir John Hayes:**

[595]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help support pubs in rural areas.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties currently benefit from 75 per cent business rates relief, up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business for 2024-25. The small business multiplier is frozen at 49.9p for 2024/25.

The government identified that the current business rates system disincentivises investment, creates uncertainty and places an undue burden on our high streets. In England, the government will replace the business rates system, so we can raise the same revenue but in a fairer way.

We will establish Skills England, a new partnership with employers at its heart and reform the apprenticeship levy, a key ask of hospitality businesses.

The English Devolution Bill will establish a new framework for English devolution. It will give local leaders the tools they need to drive growth, including empowering communities with a strong new 'right to buy' for valued community assets, such as empty shops and pubs.

## ■ Shops

**Sir John Hayes:**

[21]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help support small shops.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties currently benefit from 75 per cent business rates relief, up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business for 2024-25. The small business multiplier is frozen at 49.9p for 2024/25, protecting over a million ratepayers from bill increases.

The British Business Bank supports SMEs to grow by improving their access to finance. The Growth Guarantee Scheme offers a 70% government guarantee on loans to SMEs of up to £2 million in Great Britain, and £1 million in Northern Ireland and is available until the end of March 2026.

## ■ Small Businesses

**Jerome Mayhew:** [\[676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what employee thresholds his Department uses to classify what is a (a) micro, (b) small and (c) medium sized firm.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Employee thresholds used by this department to classify micro, small and medium-sized firms are shown in the table below:

TYPE OF FIRM	EMPLOYEE THRESHOLD
Micro	0 to 9 employees
Small	10 to 49 employees
Medium	50 to 249 employees

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Government Departments: Facilities

**Mr Adnan Hussain:** [\[754\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to take step increase the insourcing of facilities management services in Government departments and agencies.

**Georgia Gould:**

Government Departments aim to secure value for money in meeting their facilities management requirements. The evaluation of either an in-house, outsourced, or a delivery model which is a combination of insourced and outsourced components will be evaluated on price and quality including the social value impacts such as tackling regional inequality with new skills and jobs, or ensuring those in disadvantaged groups have equal chance to become part of a diverse, resilient workforce. A minimum overall weight of 10% in the overall score is ascribed to Social Value.

## DEFENCE

### ■ AWACS

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of a fleet of three E-7 Wedgetail aircraft in delivery of (a) sovereign AEW&C capability, (b) the UK's NATO commitments and (c) both concurrently.

**Maria Eagle:**

The upcoming Strategic Defence Review will consider the threats Britain faces, the capabilities needed to meet them, the state of UK Armed Forces and the resources available. It will ensure a 'NATO-first' policy is at the heart of Britain's Defence plans.

**EDUCATION****■ Childcare: British National (Overseas)****Daisy Cooper:**[\[401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to extend free childcare to holders of British National (Overseas) passports working in the UK.

**Stephen Morgan:**

This government is determined to make early years the department's top priority, reset its engagement with the sector and set every child on the journey to improved life chances. The government will say more about plans for early education and childcare in due course.

The current position is that families with British National Overseas status can access:

- The universal 15 hours free childcare entitlement, which is available to all 3 and 4 year old children, regardless of parental circumstances.
- 15 hours entitlement for parents of 2 year olds in receipt of additional support, which is available if their child has an education, health and care plan, or is in care or adopted in England and Wales. They are also eligible for these hours if their household income after tax is no more than:
  - o £26,500 for families outside of London with one child
  - o £34,500 for families within London with one child
  - o £30,600 for families outside of London with two or more children
  - o £38,600 for families within London with two or more children

The entitlements for children of working parents are not within the definition of 'public funds' in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 or the Immigration Rules. However, there are requirements in the Childcare (Free of Charge for Working Parents) (England) Regulations 2022 for the parent, or one of the parents, not to be subject to immigration control. This means that where both parents have no recourse to public funds, they will not be eligible for these entitlements. However, if there are two parents and just one of them is subject to immigration control, the family will still be eligible for the entitlements provided they meet the other eligibility criteria.



## ■ Private Education: Fees and Charges

**Gregory Stafford:** [394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish all (a) papers and (b) assessments on the potential impact of charging VAT on independent schools' fees on (i) SEND provision, (ii) local authorities and (iii) state schools.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The government is working to carefully consider the impact of charging VAT on independent schools' fees. This government will undertake appropriate analysis and assessment to support this process.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Private Education

**Sarah Green:** [307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on ensuring that the needs of children receiving specific provision for SEND within the private school system are taken into account as part of any consultation to introduce VAT on fees.

**Sarah Green:** [308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she (a) has had and (b) plans to have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on consulting stakeholders that may be affected by the introduction of VAT on private school fees.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The department regularly engages with the Chancellor of the Exchequer about a range of issues. The government recognises the importance of continuing a positive relationship with representatives of the sector to better support outcomes across the whole education system.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Fuel Poverty: Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy

**Melanie Ward:** [547]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what proportion of households spent more than 10 percent of their household income on energy bills in Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy constituency in each of the last 10 years.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

DESNZ has responsibility for the measurement of fuel poverty in England. The latest estimates of fuel poverty in England are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>

Fuel poverty is a devolved matter and different metrics of fuel poverty are used in the Devolved Administrations.

## ■ Solar Power: Land Use

**Alicia Kearns:**

[218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Written Statement on Solar and protecting our Food Security and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land, published on 15 May 2024, HCWS466, whether it is his policy to retain the guidelines set out in that statement.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Written Ministerial Statement made in May by the previous government did not change the policy on this matter that is set out in the relevant parts of the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Renewable Energy and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It quoted extracts from that NPS and the NPPF. Decisions on solar that is Nationally Significant Infrastructure will be guided by the NPS in full, noting there are transitional provisions in place as the NPS was only designated this January. The NPPF will continue to be a material consideration for Local Authority planning decisions on solar.

**Llinos Medi:**

[720]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to his Oral Statement of 18 July 2024 on the Clean energy superpower mission, Official Report, columns 188-191, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of new solar infrastructure on (a) food security, (b) local economies and (c) the natural environment when developing the Government's Land Use Framework and Spatial Energy plan.

**Michael Shanks:**

The planning system provides important checks and balances when new solar infrastructure is built, including environmental surveying and statutory environmental and habitat impact assessments.

The biggest risk to food security and the natural environment is the climate and nature crisis. That is why the government is committed to 2030 clean power, including rapidly expanding solar power generation in the UK.

As part of our efforts to become a clean energy superpower, we are commissioning a Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP), which will be the first ever GB-wide spatial energy plan. DEFRA are the lead department for the Government's Land Use Framework, and officials from the Department are supporting their work to ensure the two plans are consistent.

## ■ Tidal Power

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[602]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he plans to take to ensure domestic manufactured content is embedded in tidal stream projects.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government continues to engage with tidal stream industry on maintaining high levels of UK content in tidal stream projects.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of setting a one gigawatt deployment target for tidal stream energy for 2035.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government will continue to review the merits of setting a target for tidal stream deployment and will continue to engage with stakeholders on this.

Tidal stream is a home-grown industry of considerable promise, and the UK remains the world leader in tidal stream generation technologies, with over half of the world's deployment of this innovation situated in UK waters.

**■ Tidal Power: Finance****Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the minimum ringfence for Tidal Stream projects to £30 million for Allocation Round 6 of the upcoming Contracts for Difference auction.

**Michael Shanks:**

The minimum budget for tidal stream was set in March at £10m.

The Secretary of State will confirm his decision on whether to increase the AR6 budget by 1st August, before the AR6 bidding window opens.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Agriculture Horticulture Development Board and Agriculture Development and Research Service****Sarah Dyke:**[\[213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with representatives of the (a) Agriculture Horticulture Development Board and (b) Agriculture Development and Research Service on the potential merits of providing Government funding to those bodies.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) is a Non-Departmental Public Body and is funded through a statutory industry levy collected from farmers, growers and processors. AHDB delivers its work through sector plans that are formed through consultation with its levy payers. From 1 April 2024 levy rates have been

raised by up to 25%, increasing AHDV's annual budget by up to £10 million and boosting the level of support to the farming industry.

Levy payers greatly value AHDB's independence and industry focus. This independence stems from the fact that AHDB does not receive direct funding from Defra. Defra officials continue to work closely with AHDB to ensure it is meeting its statutory obligations. There are ongoing discussions regarding opportunities for Defra and AHDB to co-fund mutually beneficial projects through a specific partnership arrangement.

The Agricultural Development Advisory Service (ADAS) is a privately owned agricultural and environmental consultancy and research business. It has access to Government funding through tendering on a commercial basis for Defra research and consultancy contracts – a recent example being ADAS securing the contract for the Countryside Stewardship Scheme monitoring programme.

### ■ Agriculture: Seaweed

**Ben Maguire:**

[255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance his Department issues to the Marine Management Organisation on (a) informing and (b) consulting local communities before determining marine licence applications for seaweed farms.

**Emma Hardy:**

Defra has not issued any current guidance to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). The MMO follows the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA) when considering how to engage and consult with local communities affected by marine developments, including seaweed farm applications. The Act requires that there must be publication of notice of an application for a marine licence, in a manner that the MMO considers most likely to bring the proposal to the attention of people with an interest in it. The licensing authority must have regard to any representations which it receives from any person having an interest in the outcome of the application.

**Ben Maguire:**

[256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made of an assessment the adequacy of public (a) information and (b) consultation by the Marine Management Organisation in relation to marine licence applications (i) MLA/2023/00307 and (ii) MLA/20243/00308 in Port Quin Bay and (iii) MLA/2022/00180 in Port Isaac Bay.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Marine Management Organisation's (MMO) statutory powers for marine licensing are set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA). Licensing decisions made by MMO are done so independently of Defra (unless they meet certain criteria which could permit them to be referred to the Defra Secretary of State for determination), therefore, an assessment of these marine licence applications has not been carried out by Defra.

Link to the MMO Framework Document:

[MMO framework document - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

## ■ Agriculture: Soil

**Andrew Bowie:** [391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to support independent certification of agricultural land classification soil surveys by an appropriate body.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Government is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of all commitments made by the last government to ensure they align with our new priorities and will have a beneficial effect. A decision regarding this specific policy will be made in due course.

## ■ Animal Housing

**Jeremy Corbyn:** [593]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will (a) make an assessment of the potential merits of banning the use of farrowing crates and (b) hold a public consultation on such a ban.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

We are firmly committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare and will work closely with the farming sector to deliver high standards.

## ■ Animal Products: Imports

**Jeremy Corbyn:** [591]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to ban the import of hunting trophies.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The government committed in its manifesto to banning the import of hunting trophies.

## ■ Cats: Animal Breeding

**Sir John Hayes:** [13]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ban the breeding of cats which are predisposed to conditions that cause pain and suffering.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 (the Regulations), anyone in the business of breeding and selling cats as pets needs to have a valid licence issued by their local authority. Licensees must meet strict statutory minimum welfare standards which are enforced by local authorities who have powers to issue, refuse, vary or revoke licences.

Defra has been working on a post-implementation review of the Regulations. This review considers whether the Regulations have met their objectives, and where there could be scope to further improve the protections they provide.

### ■ **Cats: Smuggling**

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[12\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to prevent kitten smuggling into the United Kingdom.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government is committed to introducing the most ambitious boost in animal welfare in a generation. We are considering the most effective ways to deliver this and will be setting out next steps in due course.

### ■ **Environment Agency**

**Adam Jogee:** [\[417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the enforcement powers of the Environment Agency.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Environment Agency publishes an annual Review of Activities Regulated by the Environment Agency setting out details of enforcement action taken. The most recent of these reports was published in March this year and sets out statistics demonstrating the effectiveness of the regulatory activities of the Agency, including enforcement.

In relation to waste crime, the Environment Agency's has a wide range of investigatory and enforcement powers, including powers of entry, powers to search and seize evidence and to access communications data. Further regulatory reform is underway. The Environment Agency also has powers to sanction offenders using Variable Monetary Penalties (VMPs).

In addition to the formal review, individual incidents and criminal investigation provide the regulators opportunity to learn lessons and identify further ways to frustrate the efforts of those who are determined to make profits, breaching environmental controls with no regard to their impact on the environment and local people.

### ■ **Flood Control: Lowestoft**

**Jess Asato:** [\[418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with the (a) hon. Member for Lowestoft and (b) Coastal Partnership East on flood protection at (i) Pakefield Cliffs and (ii) Lowestoft town.

**Emma Hardy:**

I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area. I would be happy to meet and discuss these matters further. My office will be in touch to make suitable arrangements.

■ **Fly-tipping****Jim Shannon:****[82]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of instances of fly tipping in the last six months.

**Emma Hardy:**

Local authorities in England are required to report fly-tipping incidents and enforcement actions to Defra, which are published annually at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/env24-fly-tipping-incident-and-actions-taken-in-england>. This excludes the majority of private-land incidents.

Data for the 2023/24 reporting year will be published later this year.

■ **Furs: Trade****Jeremy Corbyn:****[592]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to respond to the consultation entitled the Fur market in Great Britain, published on 31 May 2021.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Ministers are reviewing policies, which will be announced in the usual way, including the consultation on the Fur Market in Great Britain. Defra is continuing to build the evidence base on the fur sector. This includes commissioning our expert Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) on what constitutes responsible sourcing of fur. The report that they produce will support our understanding of the fur industry and help inform our next steps.

We have some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and this Labour Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation.

■ **Office for Environmental Protection****Adam Jogee:****[471]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Office for Environmental Protection.

**Emma Hardy:**

This Government is committed to protecting the environment. We look forward to positive engagement with the Office for Environmental Protection. Their wide-ranging work is vital in supporting the environmental outcomes we all want to see, including restoring nature, and cleaning up Britain's rivers, lakes and seas.

**■ Water Supply: Lead****Rachael Maskell:** [619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure water companies assess the levels of lead in domestic drinking water supplies.

**Emma Hardy:**

Water companies are required to risk assess drinking water supplies from source to tap. Where there is a risk of lead in the water exceeding 10mg/l, water companies will treat the water with orthophosphate which reduces lead leaching significantly. In 2023, only 0.35% of these breached the standard for lead. In these instances, water companies will provide public health advice to consumers impacted and, where necessary, will look to replace the pipework owned by them.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate has provided advice for consumers to better understand if they have lead pipe in their home and how to reduce the risk, for example by running water to remove standing water in the pipes before use ( <https://www.dwi.gov.uk/lead-in-drinking-water/> ). If consumers think there is a risk to their supply, they can request a lead test from their water company.

**Rachael Maskell:** [620]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of instructing water companies to test all households in receipt of water if it is determined that lead is present in their water source.

**Emma Hardy:**

Water companies are responsible for drinking water quality to the boundary of a consumer's property. The domestic plumbing system is the responsibility of the home/building owner and therefore there may be limitations, such as access constraints, which limit the ability to sample at every customer tap. Though, water companies are required to risk assess drinking water supplies from source to tap and will, where appropriate required, treat water.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate has provided advice for consumers to better understand if they have lead pipe in their home and how to reduce the risk, for example by running water to remove standing water in the pipes before use ( <https://www.dwi.gov.uk/lead-in-drinking-water/> ). If consumers think there is a risk to their supply, they can request a lead test from their water company.

**■ Water Supply: York****Rachael Maskell:** [621]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with water companies on the replacement of water pipes to households in which lead has been found in the household water supply in York constituency.



**Emma Hardy:**

The Secretary of State has already met CEOs of all 16 water companies, including Yorkshire Water, setting out his expectations from the Government going forward. The Secretary of State and the Minister for Water and Flooding will have further conversations with water company chief executives in due course, including with Yorkshire Water, on a range of issues.

On 11th July 2024, Ofwat published its Draft Determinations for 2025-2030 outlining that Yorkshire Water will spend just over £7 billion to deliver significant improvements in performance. This includes £77 million to be spent on improving water quality, which includes replacing lead pipes in the company's network.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ **Gaza: Ceasefires****Claire Hanna:**[\[201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help negotiate a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

This Government is determined to do all we can to help bring the conflict in Gaza to an end and make progress towards long-term peace and security in the Middle East. We are pushing for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the upholding of international law and protection of civilians, and unfettered humanitarian access to enable a rapid increase of aid into Gaza.

During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel and the OPTs on 14-15 July he met with Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Herzog, and Prime Minister Mustafa amongst others. The Prime Minister also spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority on Sunday 7 July. The Foreign Secretary has also discussed the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the need for an immediate ceasefire, with regional and international partners.

We want a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution: a safe, secure Israel alongside a viable, sovereign Palestinian state.

■ **Gaza: Ceasefires and Hostage Taking****Andrew Pakes:**[\[397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department plans to take to help (a) secure an immediate ceasefire and (b) the release of hostages in Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

This Government is determined to do all we can to help bring the conflict in Gaza to an end and make progress towards long-term peace and security in the Middle East.

We are pushing for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the protection of civilians and unfettered humanitarian access to enable a rapid increase of aid into Gaza. We want a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution: a safe, secure Israel alongside a viable, sovereign Palestinian state.

The Foreign Secretary discussed these issues with Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Herzog, PM Mustafa and others during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 14-15 July. He also met with the families of those murdered and taken hostage by Hamas and assured them that the UK will continue to push for an immediate release of all hostages.

## ■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

**Andrew Pakes:**

[396]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the security of UK-funded humanitarian projects in Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

UK funding is delivered mainly through trusted international partners on the ground. Humanitarian actors can only operate effectively if they have access to the whole of Gaza and it is safe for them to work there.

That is why we are calling for unfettered access for humanitarian organisations alongside an immediate ceasefire, the protection of civilians, the release of all hostages and a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[99]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the amount of (a) food, (b) medical and (c) other humanitarian aid that is able to enter Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it. The Foreign Secretary announced on 19 July that we will restart funding to UNRWA, releasing £21 million for Gaza and the region. We have also announced an additional £5.5 million to UK NGO UK-Med so they can continue their work in Gaza saving lives and delivering emergency medical care to those most in need.

During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel on 14-15 July he made clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu and other interlocutors that Israel must meet its commitment to "flood Gaza with aid".

## ■ Gaza: Humanitarian Situation

**Paula Barker:** [\[525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the famine in Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The people of Gaza face a humanitarian catastrophe. There is a high risk of famine across Gaza and more than 4 in every 5 people have been forced to flee their homes. During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel on 14-15 July he made clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu and other interlocutors that Israel must meet its commitment to "flood Gaza with aid". To further help those in need, the Foreign Secretary announced on 19 July that the UK will restart funding to UNRWA, and provide £21 million to support lifesaving work, including the provision of emergency food.

## ■ Israel: Arms Trade

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[95\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the sale of UK arms to Israel on the conflict in Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign Secretary met with President Netanyahu in Israel on 14 July and pushed for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the upholding of international law, and a rapid increase of aid into Gaza. This government will uphold our international legal obligations and act in line with the UK's Strategic Export License Criteria. We have commissioned new advice and will come to a considered decision.

## ■ Israel: Palestinians

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take diplomatic steps at the UN General Assembly to help de-escalate the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Government is determined to do all we can to help bring the conflict in Gaza to an end and make progress towards long-term peace and security in the Middle East, including through the auspices of the UN. We are pushing for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the upholding of international law and protection of civilians, and unfettered humanitarian access to enable a rapid increase of aid into Gaza.

We want a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution: a safe, secure Israel alongside a viable, sovereign Palestinian state.

## ■ Israeli Settlements

**Paula Barker:** [\[527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with his Israel counterparts on illegal settlements in the West Bank.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. The Foreign Secretary raised this with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Herzog during his visit to Israel and the OPTs on 14-15 July.

He stressed the UK's ambition and commitment to play its full diplomatic role in securing a ceasefire deal and creating the space for a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution. Central to lasting peace and stability is an end to expanding illegal Israeli settlements and rising settler violence in the West Bank.

## ■ Palestinians: Recognition of States

**Claire Hanna:** [\[202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will (a) take policy steps and (b) bring forward legislative proposals to recognise the Palestinian state.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Palestinian statehood is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people. During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel and the OPTs on 14 July, he reiterated our commitment to recognising a Palestinian state at a time that is most conducive to the peace process, with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

**Layla Moran:** [\[R\]](#) [\[362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will immediately recognise the state of Palestine.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

Palestinian statehood is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people. During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel and the OPTs on 14 July, he reiterated our commitment to recognising a Palestinian state **as** a contribution to a peace process to deliver a two state solution, with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

**Paula Barker:** [\[526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will have discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the potential UK recognition of a Palestinian state.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

During the Foreign Secretary's visit on 14 July to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories he emphasised the need for a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution in meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Katz.

Palestinian statehood is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people. The UK is committed to recognising a Palestinian state at a time that is most conducive to the peace process, with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

■ **UNRWA**

**Tim Roca:** [\[445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to meet with United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) officials.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign Secretary called UNRWA Commissioner General Lazzarini on 19 July to discuss the reinstatement of UK funding. Development Minister Anneliese Dodds also met with Lazzarini following the announcement on 19 July. They discussed how the UK's £21 million of new funding will support UNRWA's lifesaving work in Gaza and the provision of basic services in the region. We also condemned the killing of almost 200 UNRWA workers in the conflict. The Foreign Secretary also spoke with UNRWA Gaza Director Scott Anderson on 15 July during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. They discussed the above, and the need for the protection of civilians in Gaza.

■ **UNRWA: Finance**

**Laurence Turner:** [\[756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will resume funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

As the Foreign Secretary announced on 19 July, UNRWA is absolutely central to humanitarian efforts on Gaza. It also plays a critical role in the wider region in providing essential services, including healthcare and education, to Palestinian refugees. The UK is committed to supporting UNRWA's lifesaving work, and will resume funding, releasing £21 million new funding for its work in Gaza and the region.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Cancer: Radiotherapy****Mr Adnan Hussain:****[755]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including a targeted additional dose of radiotherapy within the National Cancer Plan.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

No assessment has been made. This Government's Health Mission will aim to make progress against major diseases, including cancer.

The NHS Long-Term Plan sets out the National Health Service's key ambitions on cancer to increase the number of cancers diagnosed at stages one and two to 75% by 2028 and to increase the number of people surviving cancer for five years by 55,000 as a result.

NHS England is the accountable commissioner for radiotherapy which is a prescribed specialised service. Standards for service delivery are set out in the service specification, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/spec-services/npc-crg/group-b/b01/>

**■ Dementia: Diagnosis****Sir John Hayes:****[15]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to improve the (a) diagnosis of and (b) age-appropriate support for young onset dementia.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

NHS England is committed to delivering high quality care and support for every person with dementia at every age, and central to this is the provision of personalised care.

The Well Pathway for Dementia includes diagnosing well, living well, supporting well, and dying well, and highlights that services need to be integrated, commissioned, monitored, and aligned with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's standards for each component of the pathway. It makes it clear that the needs, wishes, and preferences of each individual, including those with young onset dementia, should be taken into account when planning and providing their care.

**Alicia Kearns:****[226]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase dementia diagnosis rates.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The recovery of the dementia diagnosis rate to the national ambition of 66.7% is included in the National Health Service's priorities and operational planning guidance

for 2024/25. This provides clear direction for the integrated care boards (ICBs) to support delivery of timely diagnoses.

The latest dementia diagnosis rate reported by NHS England for the end of June 2024 was 65%. Timely diagnosis of dementia is vital to ensuring that a person with dementia in any local area can access the advice, information, care, and support that can help them to live well with the condition, and remain independent for as long as possible.

To support recovery of the dementia diagnosis rates and implementation of the Dementia Care Pathway, NHS England has funded an evidence-based improvement project for two trusts in each region, 14 sites in total, to pilot tools to improve the diagnosis of dementia and the provision of support in care homes.

Additionally, the Dementia Intelligence Network was commissioned to develop a resource for local health systems to support investigation of the underlying variation in dementia diagnosis rates. This work aims to provide context for variation and enable targeted investigation and provision of support at a local level to enhance diagnosis rates.

## ■ Dementia: Health Services

**Jenny Riddell-Carpenter:**

[\[326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve (a) the support, (b) provision of services and (c) health care plans for people with dementia in the next five years.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Diagnosis is vital in getting people the support they need. To support recovery of the dementia diagnosis rates and implementation of the Dementia Care Pathway, NHS England has funded an evidence-based improvement project for two trusts in each region, 14 sites in total, to pilot tools to improve the diagnosis of dementia and the provision of support in care homes.

The provision of dementia health care services is the responsibility of local integrated care boards (ICBs). NHS England would expect ICBs to commission services based on local population needs, taking account of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines, and to work closely with the third sector in their geographical area to offer appropriate services.

To improve care for patients with dementia, NHS England's RightCare team is refreshing the RightCare Dementia Scenario and developing a dementia model pathway to provide a high-level view of what dementia care activity looks like for local areas. This will aid targeted support where appropriate.

## ■ Dementia: Nurses

**Sir John Hayes:** [16]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to increase access to specialist dementia nurses in hospitals.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

NHS England is committed to delivering high quality care and support for every person with dementia, and central to this is the provision of personalised care and support planning for post diagnostic support.

Provision of dementia health care services is the responsibility of local integrated care boards (ICBs). NHS England would expect the ICBs to commission services based on local population needs, taking account of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines, and working closely with the third sector in their geographical area to offer appropriate services. Local authorities are required to provide or arrange services that meet the social care needs of the local population, including carers, under the Care Act 2014.

## ■ Dental Health: Pupils

**Grahame Morris:** [52]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward proposals to reintroduce school dental screening.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

There are no plans to reintroduce school dental screenings in England. The UK National Screening Committee does not recommend population screening for dental disease in children aged six to nine years old. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://view-health-screening-recommendations.service.gov.uk/dental-disease/>

## ■ Dental Services

**Rachael Maskell:** [101]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to reduce waiting times for dentists to take qualifying dental exams.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The General Dental Council (GDC) is responsible for setting requirements for entry to the dentists register and administers the Overseas Registration Exam (ORE), which assesses the knowledge and skills of dentists holding qualifications not otherwise recognised for registration. The Royal College of Surgeons operates the Licence in Dental Surgery, which is an alternative examination for such dentists.

The GDC tripled the capacity of sittings for part 1 of the ORE from August 2023 through all of 2024, and is running an additional sitting of part 2 of the ORE in 2024. Together, these steps have created more than 1,300 additional places across the two



parts. The GDC has opened tendering for provision of parts 1 and 2 of the ORE for the next five years, looking to improve the flexibility and availability of the ORE. Department officials continue to meet regularly with the GDC to discuss this important issue.

#### ■ **Dental Services: Halifax**

**Kate Dearden:** [\[490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of open dentistry practices in Halifax constituency (a) on the most recent date for which figures are available and (b) in 2010.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The most recent data available is from February 2024. As of that date, there are 15 open dentistry practices in Halifax constituency. Of these practices, 13 carry out a mixture of National Health Service and private work, and two seeing only private patients. There is no data available for 2010.

#### ■ **Farmers: Mental Health Services**

**Alicia Kearns:** [\[225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve mental health provision for farmers.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

People across the country are not getting the mental health support they need, which is why the Government will fix the broken system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health. This should help people in rural areas, including farmers, to be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

#### ■ **General Practitioners: Altrincham and Sale West**

**Mr Connor Rand:** [\[736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of open GP practices in Altrincham and Sale West constituency (a) on the most recent date for which figures are available and (b) in 2010.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Data provided by NHS England Digital shows that in May 2014, the earliest year from which data is available, there were 15 open general practices (GPs) in the Altrincham and Sale West constituency, and as of May 2024 there are 12 open GPs in the constituency. The data only includes main practices, and does not include branch practices.

**■ General Practitioners: Birmingham Northfield****Laurence Turner:** [\[214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of open GP practices (a) on the most recent date for which figures are held and (b) in 2010 in Birmingham Northfield constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Data provided by NHS England Digital shows that in May 2014, the earliest year from which data is available, there were 18 open general practices (GPs) in the Birmingham Northfield constituency, and as of May 2024 there are 15 open GPs in the constituency. The data only includes main practices, and does not include branch practices.

GPs close for a variety of reasons, including mergers or retirement, so this does not necessarily indicate a reduction in the quality of care. When a GP does close, patients are informed of the closure and advised to register at another local practice of their choice, within their area.

**■ General Practitioners: Maidstone and Malling****Helen Grant:** [\[59\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to increase access to local GP services in Maidstone and Malling constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government knows that patients are finding it harder than ever to access general practices (GP) and is committed to fixing the the crisis in GPs to secure the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service, thereby increasing access to local services including those in the Maidstone and Malling constituency.

Our plan to restore GPs and improve waiting times to see a practitioner will require both investment and reform. We have committed to training thousands more GPs and ending the 8:00am scramble for appointments by introducing a modern booking system. The Government will also introduce Neighbourhood Health Centres, bringing together vital health and care services, and ensuring healthcare is closer to home and that patients receive the care they deserve. In addition, the Government will also bring back the family doctor by incentivising GPs to see the same patient.

**■ General Practitioners: North Cornwall****Ben Maguire:** [\[247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the GP-to-patient ratio in North Cornwall constituency.

**Ben Maguire:** [\[248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) recruit and (b) retain General Practitioners in North Cornwall.

**Ben Maguire:** [\[259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time equivalent GPs were working in North Cornwall constituency in the latest period for which figures are available.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government has committed to training thousands more general practitioners (GPs) across the country, to take the pressure off those currently working in the system, and NHS England has made a number of recruitment and retention schemes available to GPs. In addition, the Government will bring back the family doctor, incentivising GPs to see the same patient, so that ongoing or complex conditions are dealt with effectively.

NHS England is working with practices in North Cornwall to create greater sustainability and offers a GP retainer scheme, which provides support to those returning to GP work. Practices are also supported with access to the primary care training hub which provides recruitment, development, and retention programmes, a general practice staff bank for Cornwall practices which helps provide short term locum support, and relocation funding that, following a successful application, can assist with recruiting for hard-to-fill roles.

In May 2024, the latest period for which data is available, there were 60.2 full time equivalent (FTE) doctors in GPs in the North Cornwall constituency, and an average of 5.8 FTE doctors in GPs per 10,000 registered patients.

## ■ Health: Dudley

**Sonia Kumar:** [\[427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to reduce health inequalities in Dudley.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

As part of our health mission, the Government is committed to ensuring people live well for longer. This includes tackling the determinants that underpin stark health inequalities, to halve the gap in healthy life expectancy between the richest and poorest regions.

We are working closely with local Directors of Public Health to ensure the ring-fenced Public Health Grant funds evidence-based activity to improve health and tackle health inequalities. The grant allocated to the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council for 2024/25 was £23,251,698. In addition, £1,221,970 was allocated to invest in drug misuse services. The council also receives funding, £1,533,953 from 2023/24 to 2024/25, for the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme. This programme is creating a network of family hubs with services that support families from conception to the age of two.

We are also working alongside NHS England Midlands and the Black Country Integrated Care System to support a range of local initiatives and to embed the

Core20PLUS5 approach, focused on clinical areas with the most need of accelerated improvement in the poorest 20% of the population and other underserved population groups identified locally. Work also continues with the West Midlands Combined Authority to take forward a health in all policies approach across the wider determinants of health.

## ■ HIV Infection

**Florence Eshalomi:**

[\[900037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce the number of HIV transmissions to zero by 2030.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

I would like to congratulate my Honourable Friend for her re-election and for her valuable work as Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on HIV, AIDS and Sexual Health in the last parliament, as well as her advocacy on HIV, particularly for the Black community in South London. HIV is a priority for the government and, as set out in our manifesto, we will commission a new plan to end new HIV transmissions within England by 2030.

## ■ HIV Infection: Drugs

**Siân Berry:**

[\[782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) available (a) in pharmacies and (b) from an online service.

**Siân Berry:**

[\[788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure communities have equal access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) across different (a) risk, (b) demographic and (c) geographic groups.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a priority for the Government, and we will commission a new plan to end new HIV transmissions within England by 2030. As part of our work in developing a new plan, we will explore options for ensuring equity and equal access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for all communities, including those across different risk, demographic, and geographic groups. We will also explore opportunities to deliver PrEP in settings outside of sexual health services, to improve access and equity, including considering online PrEP provision and PrEP in pharmacies.

## ■ Hospices: Finance

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that hospices receive adequate funding.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We understand that financially times are difficult for many voluntary and charitable organisations, including hospices, due to the increased cost of living. We want a society where these costs are manageable for both voluntary organisations, like hospices, and the people whom they serve.

The Government is going to shift the focus of healthcare out of the hospital and into the community, and we recognise that hospices will play a vital role. We will consider the next steps on palliative and end of life care more widely in the coming weeks.

**Hospital Beds****Rachael Maskell:****[630]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent delayed discharges from hospital to (a) residential care and (b) homes with domiciliary care provision.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that hospital departments are no longer blocked due to delayed discharges. By developing local partnership working between the National Health Service and social care, we will ensure that people are not stuck in hospital beds when they are well enough to go home.

The Government's commitment to supporting providers to deliver better pay, conditions and training will help fill vacancies, so care providers can better support hospitals to reduce delayed discharges.

**Liver Diseases****Sir John Hayes:****[22]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help raise awareness of liver disease.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Awareness of liver disease can be raised by providing information to the public and by supporting health and care professionals to discuss liver disease with their patients. The NHS.UK website provides the public with essential information on types of liver disease, their possible causes, symptoms, treatment, and prevention. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/liver-disease/>

In May 2022, the Department published guidance for health and care professionals on promoting awareness of liver disease in professional practice. Further information on this guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/liver-disease-applying-all-our-health/liver-disease-applying-all-our-health#promoting-awareness-of-liver-disease-in-your-professional-practice>

Furthermore, the United Kingdom's clinical guidelines for alcohol treatment, published by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities for consultation in October 2023, contain clinical guidance and advice for professionals on the early identification of liver disease among people with alcohol use disorders, and on the treatment of alcohol use disorders in people diagnosed with liver disease. Further information on the guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/liver-disease-applying-all-our-health/liver-disease-applying-all-our-health>

The Department is currently reviewing these guidelines following a consultation.

### ■ **Meat Products: Salt**

**Jim Shannon:**

[85]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the volume of salt in processed meat.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Processed meats are generally high in salt and, on average, meat and meat products contribute approximately 27% of salt intakes. A high intake of salt increases the risk of high blood pressure which, in turn, increases the risk of heart disease or a stroke. Reducing salt in foods by 1 gram per day, for example, could prevent 1,500 premature deaths each year, saving the National Health Service over £140 million.

To reduce salt levels in foods, the voluntary salt reduction programme sets targets for different food and drink product categories that contribute to salt intakes, including processed meats such as ham, bacon, and sausages. Businesses across all sectors of the food industry are required to work towards these targets. Separate targets on a meal basis have been set for the out of home sector, which includes processed meats where appropriate.

The targets were first set in 2006 and have been revised downwards five times to continually reduce salt content, with the most recent targets published in 2020. Businesses are expected to achieve the latest levels set by the end of 2024.

The most recent assessment of industry progress suggests that small reductions in salt content were seen in some meat products between 2017 and 2018. Salt intakes decreased from 9.38 grams to 8.4 grams a day between 2000 and 2018/19.

### ■ **Pancreatic Cancer: Diagnosis**

**Sir John Hayes:**

[598]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to improve early diagnosis rates for pancreatic cancer.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Pancreatic cancer is the deadliest common cancer, and earlier diagnosis is imperative in improving treatment options and survivorship. The Government is committed to improving early diagnosis rates for all cancers, and as part of this,

supports the NHS Long Term Plan, which includes a principal priority to increase the proportion of cancers diagnosed at stages 1 and 2 to 75% by 2028. This threshold is key to improving outcomes and survival rates for all types of cancer, including pancreatic.

We know that pancreatic cancer is difficult to diagnose due to the non-specific nature of its symptoms. To improve diagnosis and outcomes, NHS England is delivering a range of interventions including implementing non-specific symptom pathways for patients who have symptoms that do not align to a tumour type, as is often the case with pancreatic cancer. 96 pathways are in place, and more are being introduced. NHS England is also increasing general practice direct access to diagnostic tests, alongside providing a route into pancreatic cancer surveillance for those at inherited high-risk, to identify lesions before they develop into cancer, and diagnose cancers sooner.

Additionally, NHS England's Getting it Right First Time programme has appointed a team of five specialist clinicians to lead a national review into services for pancreatic cancer patients in England. The new workstream supports the delivery of the Optimal Care Pathway, a Pancreatic Cancer UK-led initiative which has brought together 300 health professionals and people affected to agree on how standards of diagnosis, treatment, and care of those with pancreatic cancer and their families can be improved.

## ■ Pharmacy

**Dan Carden:**

[\[667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support community pharmacies in (a) Liverpool Walton constituency and (b) England.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Pharmacies play a vital role in our healthcare system. We are committed to expanding the role of pharmacies and to better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, including by cutting red tape.

The Department and NHS England are currently consulting Community Pharmacy England on the contractual arrangements for community pharmacies in England including Liverpool Walton for 2024/25.

## ■ Pharmacy: Finance

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure adequate funding for community pharmacy services.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Pharmacies play a vital role in our healthcare system. We are committed to expanding the role of pharmacies, and better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. We are currently consulting with Community Pharmacy



England on the national funding and contractual framework arrangements for 2024/25.

### ■ Primary Health Care: Whitehill and Bordon

**Gregory Stafford:** [\[450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to improve the provision of primary healthcare in Whitehill and Bordon.

**Gregory Stafford:** [\[451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of (a) GP and (b) dental provision in Whitehill and Bordon; and if he will take steps to improve that provision.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government knows that patients are finding it harder than ever to access general practices (GP) and is committed to fixing the crisis in GPs to secure the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service.

Our plan to restore GPs will require both investment and reform. We have committed to training thousands more GPs, ending the 8:00am scramble for appointments by introducing a modern booking system, and trialing new neighborhood health centers to bring community health services together under one roof. Furthermore, the Government will also bring back the family doctor by incentivising GPs to see the same patient.

Whitehill and Bordon sits within the NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB), where the percentage of appointments delivered within two weeks of booking is 8.2% lower than the national average.

The Government knows that getting an NHS dentist has become increasingly difficult, and is aware that there are many areas of the country where these difficulties are particularly pronounced. The Government will tackle the immediate dental crisis with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and recruit new dentists to areas that need them most.

Our annual statistics show that in 2023 only 36% of the adult population in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB were seen by an NHS dentist in the last two years, compared with 41% nationally.

### ■ Shingles: Vaccination

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he make an assessment of the effectiveness of the roll-out of the shingles vaccine.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

From September 2023, the routine shingles vaccination programme changed from the Zostavax vaccine to the more effective Shingrix vaccine, to better protect



individuals from the effects of shingles, provide better clinical outcomes and reduce pressures on the health system. A phased expansion of the routine eligible cohort from people aged 70 years old to those aged 60 years old also began in September 2023, as Shingrix provides a substantially superior and longer duration of protection.

Uptake is in line with where we expect it to be at this stage. Data from approximately 40% of general practices across England showed that uptake of the first dose of Shingrix in adults turning 65 years old in the first quarter of the programme roll-out was 25.1%. The data also showed that uptake of the first dose of Shingrix in adults turning 70 years old in the same period was 34.2%. This is comparable to uptake of Zostavax in those aged 70 years old in the early part of the programme roll-out, and is anticipated to increase over time.

Published data is cumulative and there is a time lag because, whilst the data covers all eligible individuals that quarter, individuals whose birthday is at the end of a quarter have far less time to receive the vaccine than those at the beginning and may then be picked up in the next or subsequent quarters. Individuals become eligible when they turn 65 or 70 years old but then remain eligible until aged 80 years old and may not come forward or be called to receive the vaccine immediately. This is accounted for in planning the programme and in relation to vaccine supply.

With the new vaccine schedule, patients now need two doses of the shingles vaccine. Ensuring patients receive both doses is vital to making sure patients receive the full benefits. To ensure patients come in for their second dose, which is due from six to 12 months following their first dose, NHS England is encouraging local systems to let patients know when and where they will receive their second dose to increase follow-through, send reminders, promote the programme and frame the overall goal in terms of having maximum protection by receiving both doses. A consistent offer and sustained communication to the public is key to achieving uptake of both first and second dose to all those eligible in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's advice.

## ■ Social Services

**Paula Barker:**

[\[523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's policy is on local authority insourcing of adult social care services.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Local authorities are best placed to understand and plan for the needs of their population, which is why under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are tasked with the duty to shape their care market to meet the diverse needs of all local people. This includes planning the balance of services which should be directly provided by the local authority, or commissioned from external care providers.

**■ Social Services: Finance****Paula Barker:**[\[509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department plans to have with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the (a) funding and (b) commissioning of adult social care services.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Department of Health and Social Care has regular discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on adult social care funding, and the commissioning of adult social care services. The Department will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to understand the impact of cost and demand pressures on service delivery and budgets, and to align our approaches, support improvement, and ensure people are at the centre of care decisions.

**■ Sodium Valproate and Surgical Mesh Implants****Sarah Green:**[\[327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to respond to the recommendations of the report by the Patient Safety Commissioner entitled The Hughes report, published on 7 February 2024.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

*[Holding answer 22 July 2024]:* The Government will consider the recommendations of The Hughes Report and the relevant Minister is due to meet with the Patient Safety Commissioner this week.

To prevent future harm, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, NHS England, and others have taken action to strengthen oversight of valproate prescribing. For example, nine specialist mesh centres are in operation across England, ensuring that women with complications of mesh inserted for urinary incontinence and vaginal prolapse get the right support in every region, and we have maintained the national pause on the use of pelvic mesh, which has been in place since July 2018.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Fraud****Mr Luke Charters:**[\[348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to take further steps to tackle consumer fraud.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Government takes the issue of fraud very seriously and is dedicated to protecting the public from this devastating crime.

We will tackle the criminals responsible for fraud at home and overseas, work with industry to make it much more difficult to commit fraud, and support victims across the UK.

## ■ Fraud: Yorkshire and the Humber

**Mr Luke Charters:**

[353]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of businesses in the Yorkshire and the Humber region that experienced fraud in the last financial year.

**Dan Jarvis:**

Home Office does not hold data on the number of businesses in the Yorkshire and the Humber region that experienced fraud in the last financial year.

The Economic Crime Survey 2024 is a representative survey of businesses, which is currently conducting fieldwork, and will build the evidence base on the incidents and nature of fraud against businesses in the UK.

## ■ Intimidation: China

**Alicia Kearns:**

[227]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help protect (a) Hong Kongers, (b) Uyghurs and (c) Chinese dissidents who are resident in the UK from transnational repression by the Chinese Communist Party.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The UK does not tolerate attempts by the authorities of Hong Kong or China, or any other country, to intimidate and silence individuals in the UK. We continually assess potential threats in the UK, and take protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety in the UK very seriously. This involves taking a proactive approach to countering the most acute forms of state-directed threats to individuals.

The National Security Act 2023 strengthens our legal powers to counter foreign interference, including those actions which amount to transnational repression, and provides the security services and law enforcement agencies with additional tools to deter, detect, and disrupt modern-day state threats.

Anyone who thinks they might be a victim should report incidents or suspicious activity to the Police.

## ■ Police Stations: Birmingham

**Laurence Turner:**

[349]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police stations have closed in Birmingham since May 2010; and what the (a) name and (b) postcode was of each station.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office does not centrally collect data on the number of police station closures and has not collected this data previously.

■ **Refugees: Afghanistan****Ms Stella Creasy:****[610]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of people who were (a) called forward and (b) authorised for evacuation during Operation Pitting but were not able to board flights have subsequently been resettled under pathway one of the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The UK has made an important commitment to resettle Afghans fleeing persecution and those who served the UK.

Data on the number of Afghans who were called forward and not able to board flights who have been subsequently resettled under ACRS Pathway 1 is not captured in the immigration statistics.

The latest published [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables) show that (up to the end of March 2024) around 30,100 people have been brought to safety from Afghanistan and the region.

These statistics also show that:

- So far 9,703 people have been resettled under ACRS Pathway 1.
- A breakdown of the number of people that have been resettled under this pathway and the other Afghan resettlement routes since the evacuation in August 2021 may be seen in detail in the following table which was published as part of the last immigration statistics release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables#asylum-and-resettlement>.

■ **Travel: Fraud****Jim Shannon:****[69]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle fraud in online travel bookings.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Government takes the issue of online fraud very seriously and is dedicated to protecting the public from this devastating crime.

The Online Safety Act (OSA) will make tech companies responsible for blocking fraud and fraudulent adverts on their platforms. The OSA final Codes of Practice on illegal harms are expected by end of 2024 with tech firms liable a year after (2025), and fraudulent advertising duties set to follow in 2026.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Birmingham City Council: Insolvency**

**Laurence Turner:** [R] [216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the notice issued by Birmingham City Council on 05 September 2023 under Section 114(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, on what date (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department were first informed that this notice would be issued.

**Laurence Turner:** [R] [217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made a recent estimate of the value of the equal pay liability at Birmingham City Council.

**Laurence Turner:** [292]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's publication entitled DLUHC: ministerial meetings, July to September 2023, published on 14 December 2023, if she will publish the minutes of the meetings held on 14 September 2023 with (a) Birmingham City Council and (b) Max Caller.

**Laurence Turner:** [293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's publication entitled Birmingham City Council: Statutory intervention update letter from Commissioners, published on 22 February 2024, whether those commissioners have submitted further updates to her Department subsequent to that letter.

**Laurence Turner:** [365]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement published on 5 February 2024, HCWS241, on Local Government Finance Update, whether her Department carried out impact analyses on allowing Birmingham City Council flexibility to increase council tax bills by an additional 5 per cent.

**Jim McMahon:**

In line with the practice of successive administrations, detailed minutes of ministerial meetings - even those that are declared publicly - are not normally disclosed.

The first formal report from Birmingham City Council Commissioners, which was submitted to the former Secretary of State on 26 April this year, will be published on gov.uk as soon as practicable. That report was submitted six months after the start of the intervention, in line with the expectations placed on Commissioners on their appointment. I have met the Leader of Birmingham City Council and I am due to meet with the Commissioners this week. I would be happy to meet with all MPs whose constituencies are within the area of the Council.

The department and former Ministers were notified of the decision by the then Section 151 Officer at Birmingham City Council to issue a Section 114 report on 5 September 2023, the day it was made and published by the Council. The Council has provided the Department with their estimate of the equal pay liability, including as part of their request for additional financial support in February 2024. That estimate is £867 million. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, an equalities analysis was carried out in relation to requests from councils for additional flexibility to increase council tax for 2025/26.

## ■ Combined Authorities: Devolution

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release of 16 July 2024 entitled Deputy Prime Minister kickstarts new devolution revolution to boost local power, what (a) powers and (b) responsibilities she plans to allocate to Mayoral and Combined Authorities.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Deputy Prime Minister kickstarts new devolution revolution to boost local power, published on 16 July 2024, when she expects the first devolution deals to be signed by her Department.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Deputy Prime Minister has written to local leaders in those areas of England which are not yet covered by devolution, encouraging them to come forward with proposals by the end of September. Preparations for devolution settlements will be led by local areas themselves and the department is keen to grow devolution coverage across England.

We have set out our intention to expand the devolution of powers in areas such as housing planning, transport, skills and employment support, building on the existing devolution framework.

As part of our drive to hand more power to places and communities so they can better deliver growth in their local areas, the Government will also publish a new devolution framework in due course, setting out the new powers and flexibilities available to local areas.

## ■ Landlords: Licensing

**Dan Carden:** [\[672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to return landlord licensing powers to local authorities.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Local housing authorities are able to introduce selective licensing of landlords in targeted areas to tackle specific problems, if the statutory requirements are met.

Since 2015, new or renewed schemes which cover more than 20% of a local authority's private rented stock or geographical area require approval from the Secretary of State.

We will keep this 20% threshold under review in light of our proposals for devolution and supporting improving rented sector standards.

## ■ Local Government: Finance

**Layla Moran:** [208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's policy is on increasing county council funding for (a) social care services, (b) SEND services and (c) road maintenance.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Government recognises the pressures that local authorities are facing and is committed to getting councils back on their feet, by providing multi-year funding settlements, ending competitive bidding for pots of money and reforming the local audit system.

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement. The department will work with local government leaders to ensure they are better able to fulfil their statutory duties.

The Government's manifesto set out our intention for a programme of reform to create a National Care Service to deliver consistency of care across the country. We will work with the Department for Health and Social Care to engage local government on the development of this.

On SEND services, we are committed to taking a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

We will also work constructively with the Department for Transport with a view to ensuring local authorities have sufficient revenue funding within their settlement to carry out vital cyclical repairs to their network.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Sexual Offences: Young People

**Jim Shannon:** [78]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people under the age of 21 were convicted of sexual abuse in the last 12 months.

**Heidi Alexander:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on convictions for a wide range of offences, including sexual offences and various ages of defendants/offenders in the [Outcomes by Offence tool: December 2023](#).

This can be accessed by navigating to the 'Prosecutions and convictions' tab and using the Age Range filter and the Offence Group filter to select relevant offences in the Outcomes by Offence data tool.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Tribunals

**Gregory Stafford:** [447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she plans to take to reduce waiting times for appeals through special educational needs and disability tribunal hearings.

**Heidi Alexander:**

Although the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) has responded well to the significant increase in appeals it has experienced in recent years, we acknowledge that more needs to be done to reduce the time parents and young people have to wait to have their appeals determined. An additional 70 judges have been recruited for this jurisdiction and will begin sitting from September 2024, with further recruitment scheduled.

I look forward to working with my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and her Ministerial team to consider ways to reduce the demands on the tribunal so that the outstanding caseload, and the time within which the tribunal can determine appeals, can be brought down.

**Laurence Turner:** [763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many parents or young people have taken Birmingham City Council to appeal at a tribunal against an Education, Care and Health Plan decision in each of the last five years; and what (a) number and (b) proportion of those appeals were (i) determined in favour of the appellants, (ii) determined in favour of the local authority, (iii) withdrawn, (iv) conceded before the hearing, and (v) still awaiting a hearing.

**Heidi Alexander:**

Information about appeals to the First-tier Tribunal for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is published at: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics).

The table below sets out the number of appeals to the SEND Tribunal against decisions made by Birmingham City Council for the academic years 2019 to 2022 (the latest period for which data are available); and the numbers of those appeals that were (i) determined in favour of the appellants, (ii) determined in favour of the local authority, (iii) withdrawn, (iv) conceded before the hearing, and (v) still awaiting a hearing.

Appellants would include appeals made by parents and young persons.



ACADEMIC YEAR	TOTAL APPEALS REGISTERED	TOTAL APPEALS DETERMINED IN FAVOUR OF THE APPELLANTS	TOTAL APPEALS DETERMINED IN FAVOUR OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	TOTAL APPEALS WITHDRAWN	CONCEDED BEFORE THE HEARING	AWAITING A HEARING DATE
2020	291	180	10	32	65	0
2021	547	367	31	48	89	1
2022	525	365	10	52	84	12
2023	Data is not currently published					

1- Appeal data is only available for 3 years due to record retention policy.

2- Appeals registered and appeals concluded will not tally due to spanning over academic years.

#### ■ Victims and Prisoners Act 2024

**Ms Stella Creasy:**

[\[612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what her planned timetable is for bringing section 31 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 into force.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

Appropriate protections for victims of harassment or stalking are vital. We are carefully considering the measures within the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 and will provide an update on plans for implementation in due course.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, (a) how and (b) when she intends to enact the public protection decisions provisions of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Government is carefully considering how and when to implement the public protection provisions in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.

#### ■ Wandsworth Prison

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

[\[640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what her planned timetable is to publish her Department's response to the Chief Inspector of Prison's Urgent Notification letter of 8 May 2024 on HMP Wandsworth.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons' findings at HMP Wandsworth are deeply concerning. My right Hon. Friend, the Lord Chancellor, is determined to drive improvement at the prison and will publish her response to the Urgent Notification as soon as possible.

**NORTHERN IRELAND**■ **Casement Park: Regeneration**

**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he is taking steps to facilitate the construction of Casement Park.

**Hilary Benn:**

The UK Government is committed to ensuring that EURO 2028 benefits the whole of the United Kingdom. That is why we are working as quickly as possible with all the partners involved in the Casement Park project to assess the options available.

**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the adequacy of the level of funding from the UK Government for the redevelopment of Casement Park.

**Hilary Benn:**

The UK Government is committed to ensuring that EURO 2028 benefits the whole of the United Kingdom. That is why we are working as quickly as possible with all the partners involved in the Casement Park project to assess the options available.

**TRANSPORT**■ **A1**

**Alicia Kearns:** [\[223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help improve safety on the A1.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

National Highways has completed a number of safety improvements to the A1 near Stamford in recent years, such as resurfacing, associated road markings, and improved lighting and signage. National Highways will undertake further work south of Grantham commencing this autumn.

## ■ Abellio Greater Anglia and c2c: Tickets

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her planned timetable is for the expansion of contactless ticketing to (a) C2C and (b) Greater Anglia services.

**Simon Lightwood:**

We have committed to expanding Pay As You Go (PAYG) contactless ticketing to a further 47 stations in the South East by the end of the year, with 6 stations on the Chiltern railways line having already gone live in June. This expansion will include the entire c2c network where passengers will benefit from a better ticketing offer. Further details of any wider expansion of PAYG will be announced in due course.

## ■ Driving Tests: Somerset

**Anna Sabine:**

[\[392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) average waiting time and (b) longest waiting time for driving tests in Somerset was in each of the last ten years.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) main priority is to reduce car practical driving test waiting times, whilst upholding road safety standards.

As of 15 July 2024, there were 531,704 car practical driving tests booked, and 91,306 driving tests available within the 24-week booking window. The table below shows the average waiting time by year for a driving test at each driving test centre in Somerset.

WAITING TIME (WEEKS)	WESTON-SUPER-MARE	YEOVIL	TAUNTON
2014/15	5	6	7
2015/16	10	10	9
2016/17	9	6	5
2017/18	6	5	5
2018/19	8	5	6
2019/20*	6.7	7.7	6
2020/21	9.4	12.1	10.8
2021/22	9.1	15.8	16.7
2022/23	16.2	16.6	16.8
2023/24	20.5	20.6	16.3
As of June 2024	19.3	18.8	17.1

\*In 2020, the DVSA extended the booking window for customers, allowing them to book a driving test up to 24 weeks in advance. The 24-week booking window is still in place.

## ■ Roads: Safety

**Mr Richard Holden:** [705]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate she has made of when each project funded through the most recent round of Safer Roads Funding will be completed.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The latest rounds of the Safer Roads Fund are rounds 3A and 3B. Round 3A was funded in April 2023 to the total of £47.5 million and was granted to 25 Local Authorities to improve 27 roads. Round 3B was funded in March 2024 to the total of £38.3 million and was granted to 14 Local Authorities to improve 17 roads.

As Round 3 is still newly funded, local authorities are in the design phase of their schemes. Estimated completion dates are submitted to the Department as part of the Local Authorities' application process with most of round 3 schemes stating 2-3 years from design stage to completion. This would predict between 2025 and 2026 for completion.

The Department estimates that groundworks on many of the schemes will begin soon and Department officials will remain in contact with the local authorities, offering support throughout the lifetime of their scheme.

## TREASURY

## ■ Banking Hubs

**Dan Carden:** [668]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what criteria she plans to use to identify potential locations for new banking hubs.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The Government recognises the importance of banking to communities and high streets. The Government has therefore committed to work closely with banks to roll out at least 350 banking hubs, which provide individuals and businesses up and down the country with critical cash and banking services.

Currently, when a branch closes or a community makes a request, LINK (the operator of the UK's largest ATM network) is responsible for assessing whether a banking hub would be a suitable recommendation for a community. The criteria that LINK uses to assess the needs of a local community can be found on [LINK's website](#).

In December last year, the Financial Conduct Authority consulted on its regulatory approach to access to cash, including the criteria it proposes designated entities

should use when assessing the needs of local communities. This can be found [here](#). The FCA intends to publish its final rules in the third quarter of this year.

**Tim Roca:** [\[777\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her planned timetable is for rolling out banking hubs in communities affected by branch closures.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The Government recognises the importance of banking to communities and high streets and has committed to work closely with banks to roll out at least 350 banking hubs over the next five years.

147 banking hubs have already been recommended and Cash Access UK, the industry body responsible for banking hub deployment, expects 100 banking hubs to be open before the end of the year. These will provide individuals and businesses up and down the country with critical cash and banking services.

While not the same as a bank branch, alternative options to access everyday banking services can also include telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking, and via one of the UK's 11,500 Post Office branches.

## ■ Cooperatives

**Dan Carden:** [\[671\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department plans to take to support co-operatives.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The Government recognises the important contribution that co-operatives make to the economy, serving local communities around the UK and ensuring the UK has a diverse business sector with their model of shared ownership. Co-operatives, alongside other mutuals in the UK, had combined annual revenues of £87.9 billion in 2022, equating to 3.5% of UK GDP.

The Government is committed to supporting the UK's co-operative and mutuals sector and will be working closely with the sector to address any barriers that it currently faces.

## ■ Credit: Regulation

**Ms Stella Creasy:** [\[609\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her planned timetable is for regulating buy now pay later high cost credit providers; and if she will ensure that such regulation ensures consumers are able to access the financial ombudsman for redress for that form of credit.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

Regulating Buy Now Pay Later products is crucial to protect people and deliver certainty for the sector.

The government will be looking to work closely with all interested stakeholders and will set out its plans shortly.

## ■ Tax Avoidance

**Blair McDougall:** [344]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress she has made on establishing an (a) independent and (b) wide-ranging review into the loan charge.

**James Murray:**

The Chancellor and I know the loan charge is a very important one for many members and their constituents. We have been considering this matter since taking office and will provide an update in due course.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

## ■ Disability

**Claire Hanna:** [204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the UK's progress on implementing the recommendations made in the report entitled Concluding observations on the initial report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2017.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Government is committed to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and improving disabled people's lives in all aspects of life.

The previous Government's latest response to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was submitted in 2022, and published on GOV.UK with accessible formats in December 2022. This report and previous ones can be found [here](#).

As requested by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Government will submit a report by March 2029 with information on how we are implementing the Committee's recommendations outlined in their latest report published in April 2024. The Government, through the Disability Unit in the Cabinet Office, has already begun considering the recommendations from this report.

## ■ Unemployment

**Mr Richard Holden:** [706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of working age people were unemployed in (a) May 2010 and (b) the last month for which figures are available.

**Alison McGovern:**

The UK has experienced a recent rise in unemployment. It has also seen a rise in economic inactivity since the pandemic of 833,000 with long-term sickness rising to

2.8m. The UK remains the only nation in the G7 with an employment rate lower than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The headline UK unemployment level was 2.508 million in March-May 2010 (based on people aged 16 and over). In March-May 2024 (the latest month for which figures are available) the UK unemployment level was 1.528 million.

The headline UK unemployment rate was 7.9% in March-May 2010 (this is also estimated on a 16+ basis). In March-May 2024 (the latest month for which figures are available) the UK unemployment rate was 4.4%.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Assimilated Law Report

##### **Secretary of State for Department for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds):** **[\[HCWS17\]](#)**

Today I have laid a Report regarding the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (REUL Act) before Parliament and published it on gov.uk. This Report updates the House in line with the obligations under Section 17 of the REUL Act, which requires a Report to be published and laid before Parliament every six months detailing all revocations and reforms of assimilated law.

This is the second Report being laid before the House. While it is very early in my tenure as Secretary of State for Business and Trade, and this Report outlines the activities of the previous government, it is right that this obligation is fulfilled, and this update is given to the House.

The Report today summarises the data on the assimilated law dashboard, providing the public with information about the amount of assimilated law there is and where it sits across the various departments. The dashboard reflects the position as of 23 June, showing that a total of 6,735 instruments of REUL / assimilated law concentrated over approximately 400 unique policy areas have been identified.

The amount of REUL/assimilated law has decreased slightly since the last government's update to the dashboard in January 2024. This is due to departments undertaking further analysis on the REUL / assimilated law they own between January and June and identifying some errors and duplications

Since the previous update to the dashboard the previous government revoked or reformed 132 assimilated law instruments. As such, the previous government revoked or reformed 2361 instruments of REUL and assimilated law in total.

The Report gives details of a further 24 Statutory Instruments using powers under the REUL Act and other domestic legislation which the previous government laid since the previous Report including on Rail, Aviation, Health, Product Safety, Merchant Shipping, and Weights and Measures.

The timing of this report only gives me the opportunity to set out this Government's high-level intentions for the future reform of assimilated law. This Government is committed to creating a pro-business environment with a regulatory framework that supports innovation, investment, and high-quality jobs. This will be key to realising our national mission to deliver economic growth, on which so much depends. We will ensure regulation supports the building of new roads, railways, reservoirs and other nationally significant infrastructure. We will also make changes to national planning policy to make it easier to build laboratories, digital infrastructure and gigafactories, whilst also simplifying the procurement process to support innovation and reduce micromanagement.



## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Labour Market Update

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Liz Kendall):** [\[HCWS18\]](#)

Today I am announcing plans to *Get Britain Working* as part of the Government's number one mission: growing the economy.

We have seen record numbers – 2.8 million – excluded from the workforce due to long-term sickness and nearly 1 million young people – 1 in 8 – are not in education, employment, or training.

The plans we are setting out will deliver an employment support system that addresses the labour market challenges of today and tomorrow.

We will set a long-term ambition to get to an 80% employment rate, alongside helping more people out of low paid and poor-quality work. To support this, I will work across Government to deliver fundamental reform in three areas:

- Undertaking a major overhaul of Jobcentres. Bringing together Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service to create a new national jobs and careers service focused on helping people get into work and get on at work, not only on monitoring and managing benefit claims.
- Establishing a Youth Guarantee. Offering training, an apprenticeship, or help to find work for all young people aged 18 to 21.
- Empowering local leaders and local areas to tackle economic inactivity. We will give local places the responsibility and resources to design a joined-up work, health and skills offer that's right for local people – as a key part of their Local Growth Plans. DWP will support local areas to make a success of this new approach, including through devolving new powers over employment support to catalyse local action and change.

To drive these changes forward, as part of our growth mission, the Government will publish a White Paper, to set out the policy framework for delivering on these manifesto commitments.

To help inform and shape our new approach, I will also be establishing a Labour Market Advisory Board of leading experts, chaired by Professor Paul Gregg, who will provide my department with insight, ideas, and challenge as we design and drive a fundamentally new approach.