



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 24 July 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:50 P.M., 24 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

#### ■ Collective Bargaining

**Gareth Bacon:** [\[693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, in which sectors his Department plans to introduce sectoral collective bargaining.

**Justin Madders:**

The Employment Rights Bill will be introduced in the first 100 days in Government and will play a key role in delivering aspects of the Plan to Make Work Pay. This will include legislation on sectoral collective bargaining, with Adult Social Care being the first sector for this to be introduced.

#### ■ Collective Bargaining: Picketing

**Gareth Bacon:** [\[695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his policy is on whether secondary picketing would apply in sectors subject to sectoral collective bargaining.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government has no intention of changing the law in relation to secondary action, including secondary picketing. We are working on establishing a Fair Pay Agreement in the social care sector and will bring forward proposals in due course.

#### ■ Conditions of Employment: Public Consultation

**Gareth Bacon:** [\[696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government's plans to legislate on employment law within 100 days, what his planned timetable is for consulting on those legislative proposals.

**Gareth Bacon:** [\[697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many separate Government consultations are planned to support implementation of the proposals relating to worker's rights; and what the planned scope of each consultation is.

**Gareth Bacon:** [\[698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his planned timetable is for each consultation relating to worker's rights.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government is committed to delivering the plan to Make Work Pay in full. The Employment Rights Bill will be key to delivery and we are committed to introducing

this legislation to improve the rights of workers within 100 days. The details of this are in rapid development

Some parts of the plan to Make Work Pay will take longer to review and implement. Work is underway to prepare consultations on several aspects of the plan. There are also parts of the plan that will not require primary legislation to implement. Ministers are identifying the most appropriate delivery mechanisms for the commitments in the plan and are committed to carrying out full and comprehensive consultation on the implementation of the plan to Make Work Pay.

## ■ Department for Business and Trade: Ministers' Private Offices

**Gareth Bacon:**

[700]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether civil servants in his private office will have the right to switch off on (a) weekends and (b) evenings.

**Justin Madders:**

All DBT employees have an existing set of Terms and Conditions which confirm their expected hours of work. Given the nature of private office roles, employees may need to work additional or irregular hours, which is taken into account when determining their remuneration. The private offices operate as a team which ensures responsibility for being available to support Ministers outside of regular working hours is shared, work/life balance is monitored, and all employees can switch off regularly.

## ■ Small Businesses: Finance

**Sir John Hayes:**

[599]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to improve small businesses' ability to access finance.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Small businesses are the beating heart of our high streets, our communities, and essential to our economic success. This Government will hardwire the voice of small business into everything we do.

The Government is committed to improving access to finance for small businesses by reforming the British Business Bank and freeing up capital for small and medium-sized firms so they can expand. We have also announced our plan to align key institutions under the National Wealth Fund, which will boost growth and unlock investment. They can also access support from UK Export Finance, which helps UK exporters win contracts, fulfil orders, and receive payment by providing guarantees, insurance and loans to support export activities.

## ■ Trade Agreements: Academic Freedom

**Alex Mayer:** [\[723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he is taking steps to ensure commitments to academic freedom are discussed in the negotiation of trade agreements.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Department for Business and Trade are currently assessing progress across the programme of Free Trade Agreements (FTA) currently under negotiation and determining which matters will be raised in negotiations. The Department's trade deals will be aligned with our industrial strategy and designed to bring prosperity to communities across the country and fulfil our mission of securing the highest sustained growth in the G7.

The UK maintains the right to regulate public services, including the education sector, in all our trade agreements. FTA commitments typically do not prevent treaty partners from imposing domestic restrictions on academic freedom.

## ■ Trade Union Officials: Conditions of Employment

**Gareth Bacon:** [\[699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what estimate he has made of the cost to employers of plans to introduce statutory rights for trade union equality representatives.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government is committed to introducing statutory rights for trade union equality representatives to strengthen equality at work for all. Further information including impact assessments will be published in due course.

## ■ Trade Unions: Ballots

**Gareth Bacon:** [\[691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to allow workplace voting for trade union ballots; and whether he plans to introduce changes to secret trade union ballots.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government is committed to introduce modern, secure, electronic balloting and workplace balloting for trade union ballots. In doing so, we will ensure that the secrecy of the ballot is maintained.

## ■ Trade Unions: Electronic Voting

**Gareth Bacon:** [\[692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his policy is on electronic voting for trade union ballots; and if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of cyber security for electronic voting.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government has committed to introducing modern, secure, electronic balloting, while ensuring we maintain high standards of engagement, participation, and cyber security. Further information on the implementation of electronic balloting will be outlined in due course.

**CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****Public Libraries: Birmingham****Laurence Turner:**[\[757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to Birmingham City Council's consultation entitled Libraries Consultation 2024, published on 4 April 2024, what role officials in her Department had in the development of the options presented in that consultation.

**Chris Bryant:**

DCMS officials have met with Birmingham City Council officers to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service across the area as required by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, and to advise on superintendence processes.

However, the development of options for future library service provision in Birmingham is the responsibility of the Council.

**Sports: Finance****Helen Grant:**[\[57\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make additional funding available for grass roots sports clubs.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

This Government recognises that grassroots sports clubs are at the beating heart of communities up and down the country. High-quality, inclusive facilities help clubs to get more people active and by backing these clubs, the Government will support more people to get onto the pitch wherever they live.

To mark the achievements of our senior men's and women's football teams, and inspire the next generation as we look ahead to hosting UEFA EURO 2028 across the UK and Ireland, we have set out plans to strengthen our support for grassroots clubs. This includes continuing delivery of funding through the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme this year, and a commitment to work with the sector to develop a funding package that will support these plans.

We provide the majority of support for grassroots sport through our arm's length body, Sport England – which annually invests over £250 million of National Lottery and government money. Sport England's newly established Movement Fund offers

crowdfunding pledges, grants and resources to improve physical activity opportunities for the people and communities who need it the most.

### ■ **Television Licences: Fees and Charges**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[70\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will undertake a review of the BBC licence fee in the context of changing viewing habits of the public.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

The Government is committed to the licence fee for the remainder of the current Charter period. The Government will keep an open mind about the future of the licence fee, and will engage with the BBC and other relevant stakeholders before deciding on next steps.

## DEFENCE

### ■ **AUKUS**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his policy is on AUKUS.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Secretary of State for Defence reaffirmed the UK's staunch commitment to AUKUS, during a visit earlier this month to Sheffield Forgemasters with the Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Richard Marles. During the visit, the Secretary of State emphasised the importance of AUKUS in driving growth and creating jobs in local communities across the country.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on AUKUS.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Secretary of State for Defence has regular meetings with the Prime Minister, and other Cabinet colleagues, on a wide range of defence issues including AUKUS. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has also spoken to United States President, Biden and Australian Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, outlining his Government's commitment to a strong AUKUS partnership.

### ■ **Defence**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to introduce new defence regional partnerships.



**Maria Eagle:**

The Strategic Defence Review, launched by the Prime Minister on 16 July 2024, will set out how Defence will be central to the security, economic growth and prosperity of the United Kingdom. We will also bring forward a Defence Industrial Strategy that will establish long-term partnerships between business and government, promote innovation, and improve resilience.

**■ Defence: Expenditure****James Cartlidge:** [\[131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the replenishment of the munitions stockpile.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on funding for enablers relating to replenishment of the munitions stockpile.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on (a) the defence industry, (b) the ability of the defence industry to achieve always-on production for (i) artillery shells, (ii) core munitions, (iii) ground-based air defence and (iv) missiles for air and naval use.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on economic growth.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the resources available to Defence Equipment and Support.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the procurement of a new mobile fires platform.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the procurement of (a) new deep fires munitions and (b) associated enablers.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the procurement of directed energy weapons.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on his Department's research and development budget.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on his Department's expenditure plans for the Global Combat Air programme core platform.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on his Department's expenditure plans for the Global Combat Air programme's (a) un-crewed and autonomous collaborative platform elements and (b) related system-of-systems software and digital development.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the UK's ability to contribute to the Joint Expeditionary Force.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the Defence Drone Strategy.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the budget of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the budget for (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the procurement of a new multi-role support ship.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the delivery of uncrewed systems for the armed forces.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on procurement of further tranches of F-35 Lightning jets.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the delivery schedule for (a) Type 26 and (b) Type 31 frigates.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the development of heavy uncrewed ground systems.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the delivery of the Shadow Mk1 fleet.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on upgrades to the existing fleet of Typhoon fighter jets.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the development of the Challenger 3 Main Battle Tank.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the Land Environment Tactical Communications and Information Systems programme.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Government is fully committed to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence as soon as possible. The Government will set out a clear path to 2.5% at a future fiscal event.

The Government will deliver a programme for defence which is affordable and provides the capabilities we need to counter the growing, and diversifying, threats Britain is facing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**James Cartlidge:** [143]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on AUKUS.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Government is fully committed to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence as soon as possible. The Government will set out a clear path to 2.5% at a future fiscal event.

As set out in the Terms of Reference for the Strategic Defence Review, the UK is committed to the delivery of the AUKUS partnership with the US and Australia.

**James Cartlidge:** [155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on (a) infrastructure investment required to support and (b) other aspects of the Defence Nuclear Enterprise.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Government remains committed to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence. This will be dealt with at a future fiscal event. Defence spending plans and consideration of their impact will be assessed as part of the Spending Review and the Strategic Defence Review.

As set out in the Terms of Reference for the Strategic Defence Review, the Government has a total commitment to the independent UK nuclear deterrent. The Strategic Defence Review will consider the efficiency and effectiveness of the nuclear programme.

The timing of the next Spending Review will be announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

**James Cartlidge:** [164]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on defence on the Astute Class submarine programme.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Government is totally committed to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence as soon as possible. The Government will set out a clear path to 2.5% at a future fiscal event.

As set out in the Terms of Reference for the Strategic Defence Review, the UK is committed to the delivery of the AUKUS partnership with the US and Australia.

**James Cartlidge:** [574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he intends to change delegated spending (a) levels and (b) controls for Front Line Commands.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Department keeps delegations and spending plans under review. This is as part of effective financial management and to ensure the Department lives within its allocated funding, as voted by Parliament.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Assets****James Cartlidge:**[\[576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on retaining receipts from asset disposals.

**Maria Eagle:**

The disposal of assets results in income for the Ministry of Defence (MOD). In line with Managing Public Money, there are limits to how much income the MOD is allowed to retain from receipts. The MOD will routinely discuss with His Majesty's Treasury if there is a need to exceed these limits.

**EDUCATION****■ Free Schools: Liverpool****Paula Barker:**[\[516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department plans to take to help ensure Kings Leadership Academy in Liverpool is ready to accept pupils from September 2025.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

To open a free school, the department must be satisfied that the site is suitable and deliverable. The department has acquired the site for the school. However, there are a number of planning conditions that the department needs to satisfy before the school opens. The department is working closely with the Local Planning Authority, Liverpool City Council and the Great Schools Trust to address the planning requirements for the school.

**■ Schools: St Helens North****David Baines:**[\[550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the cost to the public purse was of funding state schools in St Helens North constituency in (a) 2024 and (b) 2010.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department cannot provide comparable funding for St Helens North constituency back to 2010, due to the changes in the funding system since that time. Therefore, the scope of the funding in 2010 and 2024 are not directly comparable. In particular, in 2018/19 the central services provided by local authorities were split out from the schools block funding, and instead became funded separately through the central school services block from that year onwards.

The schools national funding formula (NFF) determines schools' core revenue funding, in respect of 5 to 16 year olds, for all mainstream schools in England. Constituency figures are based on an aggregate of schools' notional NFF allocations. In 2024/25, the schools in St Helens North constituency received an aggregated total of £86.5 million through the NFF. The allocations that schools within a constituency actually receive are determined by the local funding formula in their area.

The above figure is for mainstream schools only. The department does not hold constituency level funding data for special schools.

In addition to this core revenue funding, schools also receive funding through a number of separate streams, including pupil premium, Universal Infant Free School Meals funding, PE and sport premium funding, and the recovery premium, and the National Tutoring Programme to support education recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. The department also has a capital budget, which funds a range of programmes for schools, such as the Schools Rebuilding Programme. Additionally, schools will receive funding for 16 to 19 year olds, or for children in school nursery provision, if applicable.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Belarus: Politics and Government

**Blair McDougall:** [R] [273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to take steps to support democratic forces in Belarus.

**Stephen Doughty:**

Since the flawed elections of 2020, the UK has consistently supported the efforts of the democratic opposition in its peaceful struggle to realise the democratic aspirations of the people of Belarus. On 11 July, the UK, alongside other partners, invoked the OSCE Vienna Mechanism to hold the Belarusian authorities to account over the treatment of political prisoners in Belarus. Most recently, the UK invited Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, to meet with European leaders, including with the Foreign Secretary and myself [Minister Doughty], in the margins of the European Political Community summit at Blenheim palace on 18 July.

### ■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

**Jeremy Corbyn:** [590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he expects to conclude negotiations with Mauritius on the sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary met the Mauritian Prime Minister on 23 July and committed to continuing negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory/Chagos Archipelago. It is too early to speculate on timelines or conclusions, but it is the Government's priority to resolve this long standing and important issue, including ensuring the long-term secure and effective operation of the joint UK/US military base on Diego Garcia and other key issues. As appropriate, we will continue to engage with all relevant parties including the Chagossian diaspora.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Standards****Ben Maguire:**[\[246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times at accident and emergency departments in (a) Royal Cornwall Hospital Treliske, (b) Derriford Hospital and (c) North Devon District Hospital.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is committed to supporting the National Health Service to reduce accident and emergency (A&E) waiting times and achieve the standards set out in the NHS Constitution. In doing so, we will be honest about the challenges facing the health service and serious about tackling them.

As a first step, my rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has appointed Lord Darzi to lead an independent investigation of NHS performance. This will report in September 2024.

**■ Allergies: Children****Jim Shannon:**[\[76\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide (a) enhanced diagnostics and (b) treatment for people under the age of 16 who have allergies.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that all people with allergies, including those under 16, have access to the services they need to manage their condition. The majority of those with allergies can be supported by locally commissioned services, with specialist allergy clinics available for those with more severe or complex allergic conditions.

Specialist allergy services are commissioned by NHS England Specialised Commissioning in line with the published Service Specification. This sets out that providers should deliver a diagnostic package for the investigation of suspected allergic diseases, including initial consultation and follow-up in a dedicated allergy

clinic and specialised allergy tests. There are regular review meetings between the regional commissioning teams and providers to ensure compliance with service standards.

To support healthcare professionals, including those in primary care settings, in the implementation of clear care pathways, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published guidance on the diagnosis and treatment of drug and food allergy in people aged under 19 years old. The guidance aims to improve diagnosis by offering advice on how to identify allergies and when to refer to secondary or specialist care.

The Royal College of General Practitioners have added allergy training to the new General Practitioner (GP) curriculum (2019) and, to support existing GPs, it has developed an allergy e-learning resource. Both resources aim to educate GPs about the various symptoms of allergic disease and to ensure that people with allergies can be effectively supported at primary care level.

While there are no specific treatments for allergies for those under 16 years old, the National Health Service website recommends the below treatments for allergies: medicines for mild allergic reactions like antihistamines, steroid tablets and steroid creams; emergency medicines called adrenaline auto-injectors, such as an EpiPen, for severe allergic reactions; and desensitisation, or immunotherapy, for severe allergic reactions, involving carefully exposing an individual to the thing they are allergic to over time, so that their body gradually gets used to it and does not react so badly. This should only be done by a medical professional.

#### ■ **Ambulance Services: Standards**

**Oliver Ryan:**

**[900039]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of ambulance response times.

**Karin Smyth:**

We have been clear our assessment is that ambulance response times have been wholly inadequate in recent years. Patients with serious conditions such as suspected strokes waited over 34 minutes on average last month for an ambulance to arrive – nearly twice as long as the 18-minute standard. This Government is committed to returning the NHS to the Constitution's standards.

#### ■ **Brain Cancer: Medical Treatments**

**Helen Hayes:**

**[900033]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve treatment for people with a glioblastoma brain tumour.

**Wes Streeting:**

Like so many Hon. members across the House, I dearly miss the late Baroness McDonagh, who was sadly taken from us by glioblastoma. I'm determined to improve



overall survival rates and treatment for rarer cancers like these and I met with officials and leading clinicians on glioblastomas this week to discuss what more we can do.

**Helena Dollimore:**

[\[900036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve treatment for people with a glioblastoma brain tumour.

**Wes Streeting:**

Like so many Hon. members across the House, I dearly miss the late Baroness McDonagh, who was sadly taken from us by glioblastoma. I'm determined to improve overall survival rates and treatment for rarer cancers like these and I met with officials and leading clinicians on glioblastomas this week to discuss what more we can do.

## ■ Cancer: Clinical Trials

**Sorcha Eastwood:**

[\[315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support delivery of (a) blood and (b) other cancer clinical trials.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

£1.5 billion per year is invested by the Department of Health and Social Care on health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR research expenditure for all cancers was over £121.8 million for 2022/23, with more spent on cancer than any other disease group. Over £20 million of this was spent on Leukaemia research specifically.

In 2022/23 alone, the NIHR Cancer Research Network supported over 950 cancer research studies involving over 90,000 participants. Further investments in 10 Biomedical Research Centres and a network of Experimental Cancer Medicine Centres are supporting the discovery, development, and testing of new cancer treatments, including through hospital-based clinical trials, across the country.

The NIHR continues to encourage and welcome applications for research into any aspect of human health, including blood and all other cancers. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality, rather than against specific disease funding allocations. We would welcome more applications from researchers working on cancer prevention, treatment, and care.

## ■ Cancer: Health Services

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will commission a strategy on the (a) research, (b) diagnosis and (c) management of cancer.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The NHS Long-Term Plan published in January 2019 sets out the National Health Service's key ambitions on cancer, including acknowledging the importance of

research and cancer management. The Plan also sets out the NHS ambition to increase the number of cancers diagnosed at stage 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.

Lord Ara Darzi is currently undertaking an independent investigation into the state of the NHS, the findings of which will feed into the Government's 10-year plan to build a health service that is fit for the future. The Government will set out any further priorities on cancer and health in due course.

## ■ Cervical Cancer: Screening

**Jim Shannon:**

[953]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to roll-out self-sampling cervical cancer tests.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

A recently published YouScreen study provides evidence on offering a self-sampling test to non-attenders in the NHS Cervical Screening Programme. The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) plans to review this evidence and make a recommendation by the end of the year.

In addition, an in-service evaluation is being commissioned by the National Institute for Health and Care Research to determine whether self-sampling could be offered as an option to everyone eligible for cervical screening. The findings from this evaluation will be used to inform any recommendations made by the UK NSC.

## ■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[115]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve support for people with myalgic encephalomyelitis.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for commissioning specialist myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), services that meet the needs of their population, subject to local prioritisation and funding. The process of commissioning services should take into account best practice guidance, such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidance on ME/CFS diagnosis and management, published in October 2021.

The Department funds research into ME/CFS through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR, together with the Medical Research Council, is funding the world's largest genome-wide association study of ME/CFS. This £3.2 million study, termed DecodeME, will analyse samples from 25,000 people with ME/CFS to search for genetic differences that may indicate underlying causes or an increased risk of developing the condition. A decision on the next steps for ME/CFS at the national level will be taken in the coming weeks.

## ■ Dental Services: North Cornwall

**Ben Maguire:**

[\[244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to increase access to NHS dental appointments in North Cornwall constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government plans to tackle the challenges patients face when trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and by recruiting new dentists to areas that need them most.

To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, the Government will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists. The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Board (ICB) has a number of measures in place to increase access to NHS dental appointments, including:

- commissioning over 356 additional urgent dental care appointments each week across the South West, with 45 of these weekly appointments available in Cornwall;
- commissioning additional stabilisation sessions with eight practices, providing 125 appointments each week in Cornwall;
- setting up a dental helpline to help people access urgent or stabilisation advice; and
- setting up an innovative access pilot project in Cornwall that supports the most vulnerable to see an NHS dentist.

## ■ Electronic Cigarettes: Staffordshire

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of illegal vaping products that were sold in Staffordshire in each of the last five years.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Data collection and analysis to understand the scale of illegal vaping products across the country is part of the work led by National Trading Standards, to enhance illicit vape enforcement. This work, funded through a £3 million grant across two years from the Department, has identified that the Central England Trading Standards Authorities (CEnTSA) seized 129,244 illicit vapes from 2022 to 2023. The CEnTSA brings together 14 Local Authority Trading Standards services across the West Midlands, including Staffordshire County Council Trading Standards. Data for Staffordshire alone and data prior to 2022/23 is not held by the Department.

**■ General Practitioners: North Shropshire****Helen Morgan:**[\[329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve waiting times for GP appointments in North Shropshire.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 22 July 2024]:* The Government knows that patients are finding it harder than ever to access general practice (GP) appointments, and is committed to fixing the crisis to secure the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service. North Shropshire sits within the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board (ICB), where the percentage of appointments delivered within two weeks of booking is 4.1% lower than the national average.

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, 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.

**■ Health Services: Rural Areas****Alicia Kearns:**[\[224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve healthcare (a) access and (b) outcomes in rural communities.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has asked distinguished surgeon Professor Lord Darzi to investigate the problems that are affecting the National Health Service. The Government will then begin work on an ambitious programme of action, a 10-year plan to put the NHS back on its feet. That includes the NHS in our rural and coastal areas, as well as the NHS in urban areas.

**■ Landfill: Newcastle-under-Lyme****Adam Jogee:**[\[745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of hydrogen sulphide from landfill sites on the health and wellbeing of people aged (a) 18 and under and (b) over 65 in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

I have agreed to meet with my Honourable Friend about this issue. The UK Health Security Agency undertakes monthly assessments of the risk to people of all ages from hydrogen sulphide but does not produce separate assessments for individual age groups. The risk assessments are published and available on the Environment Agency website.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will respond to the letter from the former Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee entitled Future Cancer: inquiry progress to his predecessor, published on 23 May 2024.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department has received the letter and is reviewing the recommendations made by the former Chair of the Committee. When the Health and Social Care Committee is reconstituted in the autumn, we will consider an appropriate response at that time.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will respond to the letter from the former Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee on the Men's health inquiry to his predecessor, published on 23 May 2024.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government will respond to the Health and Social Care Committee's letter on the Men's Health Inquiry. We will write to the new select committee, after considering the findings and recommendations outlined in the correspondence.

## ■ Mother and Baby Units

**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many standalone midwife-led units are operating in England; and what the names of those units are.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 23 July 2024]:* The latest data available to NHS England indicates that there are 25 midwifery led units (MLUs) operating in England. The following table lists each unit, as well as their provider:

MIDWIFERY LED UNIT NAME	PROVIDER NAME
Samuel Johnson Freestanding birth unit	University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust
Netherbrook	University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust
Dewsbury Hospital	Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust
Berwick Maternity Unit	Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Hillcrest Maternity Unit	Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

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MIDWIFERY LED UNIT NAME	PROVIDER NAME
Hexham Maternity Unit	Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
The Friarage	South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
South Tyneside Midwifery-led Birthing Unit	South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
Blackburn Birth Centre	East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust
Rosendale Birth Centre	East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust
Helme Chase Midwifery Unit	University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust
Maidstone Birthing Centre	Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust
Crowborough Birthing Centre	Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust
Wallingford MLU	Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Wantage MLU	Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Horton MLU	Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Cotswold MLU	Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Aveta Birth Centre	Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Stroud Maternity Unit	Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Tiverton Birth Centre	Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust
Paulton Maternity Unit	Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Frome birthing Centre	Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Chippenham Birthing Centre	Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust

MIDWIFERY LED UNIT NAME	PROVIDER NAME
Trowbridge maternity unit	Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Ashcombe Birthing Unit	University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust

## ■ NHS: Waiting Lists

**Dan Tomlinson:** [\[900027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of waiting times for NHS treatment.

### **Wes Streeting:**

Patients are waiting too long to access the care they need, with over 6 million people waiting for treatment across 7.6 million pathways. Tackling this is a key part of our Health Mission. We will start by delivering an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, as the first step in our commitment to ensuring patients are treated within 18 weeks.

## ■ Pancreatic Cancer: Diagnosis and Research

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of recent trends in the number of pancreatic cancer diagnoses; and what steps he plans to take to help support research into less treatable cancers.

### **Andrew Gwynne:**

The National Health Service's latest available data shows that the number of pancreatic cancer cases diagnosed in 2021 was 9,728, compared to 9,263 in 2019, showing a gradual increase. Delivering more research is key to understanding and assessing the challenges around cancers with lower survival rates. The Department invests £1.3 billion per year into health research, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including all cancers. As with other Government funding of health research, the NIHR does not allocate funding for specific disease areas, including less survivable cancers. The level of research spend in a particular area is driven by factors including scientific potential and the number and scale of successful funding applications.

The NHS Cancer Programme has commissioned 10 clinical cancer audits, which will provide timely evidence for cancer service providers where patterns of care in England may vary, increase the consistency of access to treatments, and help stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes for patients. This includes an audit on pancreatic cancer. NHS England's Getting it Right First Time (GIRFT)

programme has appointed a team of 5 specialist clinicians to lead a national review into services for pancreatic cancer patients in England. As part of their review, the GIRFT clinicians are visiting 23 networks. Early evidence shows that tracking patients throughout their pathway, both geographically and chronologically, supports an optimal service, making good use of Clinical Nurse Specialists. The final report will be completed in 2024/25.

## ■ Pancreatic Cancer: Health Services

**Mr Luke Charters:**

[853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve outcomes for patients who have been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department is working with NHS England to deliver interventions to improve outcomes for those with pancreatic cancer across England. Early diagnosis is imperative to improving outcomes for all types of cancer, especially pancreatic due to the non-specific nature of its symptoms. As the first step to ensuring faster diagnosis and treatment, we will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week. For pancreatic cancer specifically, NHS England is providing a route into pancreatic cancer surveillance for those at inherited high-risk to identify lesions before they develop into cancer. NHS England is additionally creating pathways to support faster referral routes for people with non-specific symptoms, and is increasing direct access for general practitioners to diagnostic tests.

Additionally, the Getting it Right First-Time (GIRFT) team in NHS England is undertaking a deep dive into pancreatic cancer, which will highlight good practice and actions National Health Service providers need to take to improve services. NHS England is also funding a new audit into pancreatic cancer, aiming to provide regular and timely evidence to cancer service providers of where patterns of care in England may vary, to increase the consistency of access to treatments and to stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes for patients.

## ■ Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn: Construction

**James Wild:**

[686]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to build a new Queen Elizabeth hospital in King's Lynn by 2030.

**Karin Smyth:**

The National Health Service is broken, and the Government is determined to fix it. We recognise the need for investment in NHS estates across the country, including at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn, where there is reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete. We will provide the investment and reform needed to get patients the care they deserve.



My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has asked for an urgent report on the degree to which the New Hospital Programme is funded, and a realistic timetable for delivery. He will consider this carefully then report back to patients, clinicians, and local communities to confirm any possible revisions to the schedule.

### ■ **Radiotherapy: Standards**

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to increase radiotherapy treatment capacity in the NHS.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Since April 2022 the responsibility for investing in new radiotherapy machines sits with local systems. This is supported by the 2021 Spending Review, which set aside £12 billion in operational capital for the National Health Service for 2022 to 2025, and the latest Capital Planning Guidance.

### ■ **Social Services: Conditions of Employment**

**Paula Barker:**

[\[510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to enhance employment protections in the adult social care sector.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

Our Plan to Make Work Pay sets out a significant and ambitious agenda to ensure workplace rights are fit for a modern economy, empower working people, and deliver economic growth.

Those working in social care have been ignored for too long, and so will be at the heart of our initial reforms. We will start by engaging with the sector to deliver a long overdue new deal for care workers, including establishing the first ever Fair Pay Agreement.

The wider employment protections we are putting in place will also enhance protections for those in the adult social care sector. The Employment Rights Bill will be introduced in the first 100 days in Government and will play a key role in delivering aspects of our Plan to Make Work Pay. This plan will support more people to stay in work, make work more family friendly, and improve living standards. This will put more money in working people's pockets to spend, boosting economic growth, resilience, and conditions for innovation.

### ■ **Speech and Language Therapy: Greater Manchester**

**Mr Connor Rand:**

[\[737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many speech and language therapists there were in (a) Trafford and (b) Greater Manchester in each of the last five years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The table below shows the number of full-time equivalent speech and language therapists working in National Health Service trusts and other core organisations, in the Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust and the Greater Manchester Integrated Care System, in March of each of the last six years:

YEAR	MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST	MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
2019	99	286
2020	125	433
2021	123	433
2022	139	459
2023	154	492
2024	154	509

Source: the Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics for England, published by NHS England on a monthly basis.

These staff provide services in a range of settings, including in education. However, therapists will also be directly employed by other providers, including schools, independent provision, and third sector and charitable organisations, for which data is not held centrally.

## ■ Speech and Language Therapy: West Midlands

**Laurence Turner:**[\[215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many speech and language therapists there were in (a) Birmingham and (b) the West Midlands in each of the last five years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The table below shows the number of full-time equivalent speech and language therapists working in National Health Service trusts and other core organisations, in the Birmingham and Solihull integrated care system and the West Midlands as a whole, in March of each of the last six years:

YEAR	BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM	WEST MIDLANDS
2019	200	642
2020	217	666

YEAR	BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM	WEST MIDLANDS
2021	224	699
2022	243	734
2023	246	740
2024	284	800

Source: the Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics for England, published by NHS England on a monthly basis.

These staff provide services in a range of settings, including in education. However, therapists will also be directly employed by other providers, including schools, independent provision, and third sector and charitable organisations, for which data is not held centrally.

#### ■ **Stem Cells: Donors**

**Sorcha Eastwood:**

[\[314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to (a) raise awareness of and (b) help increase stem cell donation.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department's Stem Cell Programme is providing £2.4 million of funding for the period 2022 to 2025. The programme is being delivered by NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT), and Anthony Nolan. It aims to enhance the resilience of the United Kingdom's stem cell supply by strategically recruiting donors, particularly those most likely to donate, and to address health disparities through targeted campaigns, with a focus on ethnic minority communities. By increasing the pool of potential donors, the programme seeks to improve the availability of matches in the UK, ultimately reducing waiting times for patients in need of stem cell treatment.

The UK aligned registry has over 2 million potential stem cell donors registered. NHSBT and Anthony Nolan are raising awareness of the importance of stem cell donation and increasing the number of donors on the register through a range of methods including partnering with community organisations, working with volunteer student groups, and engaging with active blood, plasma, and platelet donors.

#### ■ **Vaccination**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to (a) review take up levels of vaccinations and (b) raise awareness of the potential benefits of vaccinations (i) in childhood and (ii) for tackling (A) flu and (B) covid-19.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) monitors and reviews vaccination coverage, including the assessment of barriers that reduce the uptake of vaccination, for all routine immunisation programmes in England.

To raise awareness of vaccination benefits, the Government provides information in multiple languages and accessible formats, runs e-learning programmes, provides training for healthcare professionals, and carries out national marketing campaigns.

Working with the Department and NHS England, the UKHSA runs national marketing campaigns to encourage greater uptake of childhood immunisations. The next campaign will start at the end of August 2024, and will run for six weeks.

During autumn and winter, a national communication campaign for winter vaccines, including flu and COVID-19, will target those in eligible cohorts, to ensure that they are aware of the benefit of having their vaccines.

**■ Wheelchairs: Procurement**

**Daisy Cooper:** [382]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the provision of NHS wheelchair services by AJM Healthcare.

**Daisy Cooper:** [383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many disabled adults have been waiting for an NHS wheelchair from AJM Healthcare for longer than (a) 6 months, (b) 12 months, (c) two years and (d) three years.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 22 July 2024]:* Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for the provision and commissioning of local wheelchair services. It is therefore the responsibility of ICBs to review and assess the quality of the provision of their commissioned National Health Service wheelchair services.

As such, we do not currently have any plans to assess the adequacy of the provision of NHS wheelchair services provided by AJM Healthcare. NHS England is taking steps to support ICBs to make improvements and commission effective, efficient, and personalised wheelchair services.

Data on waiting times for wheelchairs provided by AJM Healthcare is not held centrally. NHS England collects quarterly data from the ICBs through the National Wheelchair Data Collection, which is available through the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/national-wheelchair/>

This data supports the drive for improvements in wheelchair services, although it is ICB level data that does not include specific data on individual services. Individual service data would need to be requested from ICBs.

## ■ Whipps Cross Hospital: Construction

**Ms Stella Creasy:**

[608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of rebuilding Whipps Cross Hospital; and what his expected timetable is for when this funding will be made available to Barts Health NHS Trust.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 23 July 2024]:* The Government recognises the immediate issues affecting the National Health Service and is determined to fix them. We also recognise the need for investment in our estate across the country, including at Whipps Cross University Hospital, North East London.

My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has asked for an urgent report on the degree to which the New Hospital Programme is funded and a realistic timetable for delivery. He will consider this carefully then report back to patients, clinicians and local communities to confirm revision, if any, to the schedule.

## HOME OFFICE

## ■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

**Sorcha Eastwood:**

[568]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Seasonal Agricultural Workers scheme in Northern Ireland to include mushroom growers.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Seasonal Worker visa allows workers to come to the UK for up to six months in any twelve month period to pick both edible and ornamental crops (e.g. fruit and flower picking). The list of eligible occupations covered by the route already includes mushroom pickers, as set out in paragraph SAW4.1(f)(vi) of Appendix Temporary Work - Seasonal Worker of the Immigration Rules.

## ■ Business: Fraud

**Mr Luke Charters:**

[350]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to tackle business 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.

## ■ Immigration Controls: Customs Officers

**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) airports, (b) ports and (c) train terminals had a dedicated Border Force customs team to deal with freight in each year since 2010.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Office's priority is to deliver a safe and secure border, Border Force maintain 100% checks for all scheduled arriving passengers into the UK and this will be continued during any period.

Border Force does not publish information on operational activities. Doing so would publicise operational practices which would be used to assist in the evasion of customs controls and compromise Border security.

## ■ Migrants: Finance

**Neil Coyle:** [\[801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the No Recourse to Public Funds policy on local authority emergency social service funding.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Office is committed to the continuous review of the impacts of the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) policy. Officials are working with a wide range of stakeholders, including other government departments, the devolved administrations and third sector organisations to develop a better understanding of the impacts of the policy, including on funding.

There are important safeguards in place for those in genuine need. Local authorities may provide basic safety net support, regardless of immigration status, if it is established that either there is a risk to the wellbeing of a child or there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example, where a person has community care needs or serious health problems.

## ■ Slavery

**Jim Shannon:** [\[81\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will introduce a new modern slavery strategy.

**Jess Phillips:**

Modern slavery is a scourge that traumatises and dehumanises its victims.

The Government is committed to tackling it, taking a holistic approach that puts victims first.

We will update on the future of Home Office policies in due course.

## ■ Youth Centres: South Shropshire

**Stuart Anderson:**

[530]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many youth hubs South Shropshire constituency will receive from the plan to establish a new network of youth hubs.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Government is committed to intervening early to stop young people being drawn into crime with an ambition to half knife crime in a decade, accompanied by a new, increased focus on crime prevention.

Fundamental to this will be the delivery of our Youth Futures programme, which will include the rollout of youth hubs across England and Wales. We want to work with the police, partners and local communities to design and deliver these hubs. That will include decisions on the exact location of hubs to ensure they are in the local areas that will benefit most.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Birmingham City Council: Public Appointments

**Laurence Turner:**

[758]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's publication entitled Birmingham City Council: Commissioner appointment letters, published on 5 October 2023, what (a) process and (b) criteria her Department applied to (i) shortlist and (ii) select those Commissioners.

**Jim McMahon:**

The previous government introduced a recruitment process to identify potential candidates for future commissioner appointments and other improvement roles.

A recruitment consultant was hired to help create a high calibre, diverse pool of candidates with interest and availability confirmed in advance of any need.

The exercise to identify potential commissioners and other improvement roles was public, and applicants were able to apply online through a dedicated website. I refer my Hon Friend to the written statement made on 1 December 2021 ( [HCWS435](#) ) which referenced the open recruitment process.

Candidates were drawn from the recruitment pool and elsewhere, reflecting the experience and expertise considered necessary. Decisions on appointment were taken, following due diligence and conflict of interest checks, by the former Secretary of State under section 15 (6) of the Local Government Act 1999.

## ■ Community Ownership Fund

**Alan Gemmell:** [\[746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for decisions for awards under the Community Ownership Fund Round 4.

**Alex Norris:**

This Government is committed empowering communities with a strong new 'right to buy' beloved community assets, such as empty shops, pubs and community spaces. We will make further announcements in due course.

## ■ Regeneration

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has to regenerate town centres (a) in Chester-le-Street, (b) in Stanley and (c) elsewhere.

**Alex Norris:**

This Government is committed to delivering a five-step plan to support high streets and town centres across the country, including in Chester-le-Street and Stanley. We will tackle anti-social behaviour with 13,000 more neighbourhood police and PCSOs, roll out banking hubs, replace business rates with a new system of business property taxation, stamp out late payments and give communities a strong new 'right to buy' beloved community assets to revamp high streets and end the blight of empty premises.

The Government will also work with local partners in the North East to deliver economic growth, supporting local town centres. We will work with the North East Combined Authority on a Local Growth Plan, which will be both locally owned and aligned with the national Industrial Strategy. This is part of our plan to move power out of Westminster and put it in the hands of those with the greatest stake in our country's future.

## ■ Vagrancy Act 1824

**Paula Barker:** [\[521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will set out a timeline for the commencement of the repeal of the Vagrancy Act 1824.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Government is clear that homelessness is too high and can have a devastating impact on households affected.

We need to take a long term approach and to tackle the different factors that can cause people to become homeless.



We will consider these issues carefully and, working with Mayors and councils across the country, develop a new cross-government strategy to put Britain back on track to ending homelessness. This will include consideration of any relevant legislation including the Vagrancy Act.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Custodial Treatment: Women

**Ben Goldsborough:**

[291]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women were taken into immediate custody from (a) Crown courts and (b) magistrates courts for sentences of (i) less than and (ii) more than six months for each offence classification in each police force area in England and Wales in 2022-23.

**Heidi Alexander:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of custodial sentences issued at criminal courts in England and Wales. This includes breakdowns by sex, sentence length, offence group and police force area, and therefore the information requested can be obtained from the following published data:

- Magistrates' courts: [Magistrates' court data tool](#)
- Crown Court: [Crown Court data tool](#)

### ■ Medomsley Detention Centre

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions she has had with the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman on its planned timetable for the inquiry into abuse at the former Medomsley Detention Centre in County Durham.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The abuse that took place at Medomsley Detention Centre was appalling. The previous government, after years of campaigning by victims and survivors, commissioned the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) in October 2023 to undertake a thorough review of the abuse at Medomsley Detention Centre. The investigation commenced in November 2023 and is looking into what the authorities knew about the abuse over this period, if there were opportunities for them to take action or intervene, and what action they took.

At the outset, the PPO expected the review to take 18 months and therefore would conclude in May 2025 (although the Terms of Reference, which are available on the PPO website, do include the options for an extension if required, subject to approval).

It is important that the review has enough time to fully investigate what happened, to get the whole truth for victims and survivors. In the coming weeks, my officials and I will discuss the review's progress with the PPO and his team to ensure that it can be completed as thoroughly but as quickly as possible.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ Broadband: Infrastructure****David Baines:**[\[552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help ensure that (a) Brsk, (b) Openreach and (c) other broadband providers use existing infrastructure wherever possible when installing new broadband provision.

**Chris Bryant:**

We fully understand people's concerns about the excessive deployment of telegraph poles, and are urgently considering options to address this.

Obviously, telegraph poles can play an important role in delivering connectivity to communities and competition between providers can offer consumers greater choice and cheaper rates, but it is vital that operators share infrastructure wherever possible in the interests of local communities.

The law already provides for this. The Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003 require operators to share infrastructure where practicable, and the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022 made it easier for operators to upgrade and share existing apparatus.

In addition, providers can also use the Communications (Access to Infrastructure) Regulations 2016 ("the ATI regulations"), which are designed to facilitate sharing for physical infrastructure.

**SCOTLAND****■ Pensioners: Scotland****Martin McCluskey:**[\[540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many people of pensionable age there are in each constituency in Scotland.

**Ian Murray:**

As you may be aware, the current State Pension age is 66 for both men and woman, with the state pension age set to rise to 67 between 2026 and 2028. The most recent population data by Scottish constituency, collected on Census Day 20 March 2022, is set out below.

<b>CONSTITUENCY</b>	<b>TOTAL AGED 66 AND OVER</b>	<b>CONSTITUENCY</b>	<b>TOTAL AGED 66 AND OVER</b>
East Renfrewshire	19643	Glasgow East	12856
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	6541	Glasgow North	11530
Midlothian	17187	Glasgow North East	13685
North Ayrshire & Arran	21715	Glasgow South	13302
Orkney & Shetland	9929	Glasgow South West	12633
Aberdeen North	19039	Glasgow West	13489
Aberdeen South	16777	Glenrothes & Mid Fife	18257
Aberdeenshire North & Moray East	20932	Gordon & Buchan	17908
Airdrie & Shotts	15166	Hamilton & Clyde Valley	18673
Alloa & Grangemouth	17579	Inverclyde & Renfrewshire West	18918
Angus & Perthshire Glens	24265	Inverness, Skye & West Ross-shire	21123
Arbroath & Broughty Ferry	22136	Livingston	16365
Argyll, Bute & South Lochaber	23315	Lothian East	19413
Bathgate & Linlithgow	16280	Mid Dunbartonshire	22168
Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross	22936	Moray West, Nairn & Strathspey	21530
Coatbridge & Bellshill	15343	Motherwell, Wishaw & Carluke	16914
Cowdenbeath & Kirkcaldy	19633	North East Fife	21192
Cumbernauld & Kirkintilloch	16691	Paisley & Renfrewshire North	16629

Dumfries & Galloway	24389	Paisley & Renfrewshire South	17158
Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale & Tweeddale	21473	Perth & Kinross-shire	22354
Dundee Central	16396	Rutherglen	16976
Dunfermline & Dollar	17223	Stirling & Strathallan	20043
East Kilbride & Strathaven	17844	West Dunbartonshire	17131
Edinburgh East & Musselburgh	15006	Ayr, Carrick & Cumnock	21464
Edinburgh North & Leith	13067	Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk	24245
Edinburgh South	16692	Central Ayrshire	19687
Edinburgh South West	15448	Kilmarnock & Loudoun	18931
Edinburgh West	19583	West Aberdeenshire & Kincardine	18983
Falkirk	17612		

## ■ Renewable Energy: Scotland

**Martin McCluskey:**

[\[542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent estimate he has made of the value to the Scottish economy of the renewable energy sector; and what steps he plans to take to support that sector.

**Ian Murray:**

The renewable energy sector supports economic activity throughout its supply chains and this economic activity supports wage spending across Scotland. According to the Fraser of Allander Institute, a leading think-tank, Scotland's renewable energy industry and its supply chain supported an estimated 42,000 jobs and contributed over £10.1 billion to the economy in 2021. Scotland's renewables industry continues to contribute significantly to the UK economy, and has a growing role to play as we realise the UK Government's ambition of becoming a clean energy superpower by 2030. The establishment of GB Energy, publicly owned and headquartered in Scotland, will further support and turbocharge the sector.

**■ Shipbuilding: Levenmouth****Richard Baker:**[\[549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had on supporting continued expansion in activity at the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Methil.

**Ian Murray:**

I have had frequent discussions with the Department for Business and Trade, across government, trade unions and with the Deputy First Minister of Scotland, to support activity at Harland and Wolff sites across the United Kingdom. This country has a long and proud history of shipbuilding and fabrication, and I am confident that this Government is taking appropriate steps to support the sector in Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Government and the company itself. Can I refer the Hon Gentlemen to the market update from the company dated Friday 19 July, and the Written Ministerial Statement presented to the House on Monday 22 July for more information.

**TRANSPORT****■ A483****Helen Morgan:**[\[836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with Highways England on the proposed 30mph speed limit on the A483 between Llanymynech and Pant.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department recognises the need for a more consistent approach to speed limits on the A483 between Llanymynech and Pant. National Highways is working with Shropshire Council and Transport Wales to consider the case for changing the speed limit of the A483 between Llanymynech and Pant alongside a more substantive review into improving safety on this section of the strategic road network as part of the next Road Investment Strategy.

**■ Bus Services: Rural Areas****Helen Morgan:**[\[838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to increase access to bus services in (a) North Shropshire constituency and (b) other rural areas.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The government knows that Britain needs a modern transport network to help kickstart economic growth. Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities. As announced in the King's Speech, the Government will introduce the Better Buses Bill to put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, to ensure networks

can meet the needs of the communities who rely on them, including in North Shropshire and other rural areas across England.

We also plan to empower local transport authorities by reforming bus funding. By giving local leaders more control and flexibility over bus funding they can plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities. The Department will work closely with local leaders and bus operators to deliver on the government's ambitions.

#### ■ **Gobowen-Oswestry Railway Line**

**Helen Morgan:** [\[837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his Department's planned timetable is for the reopening of the Oswestry to Gobowen railway line.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Following the General Election and the State Opening of Parliament, the Government is now formulating its plans. The Department will announce its policy intentions in due course and aims to provide an update on next steps for the Oswestry to Gobowen line project soon.

#### ■ **Roads: Rural Areas**

**Helen Morgan:** [\[839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to improve road surface quality in rural areas that have heavy load traffic.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Government is committed to tackling the poor state of our local road network in both rural and urban areas and has pledged to support local authorities to fix local pothole-ridden roads for the long term.

#### ■ **Whitchurch Station: Access**

**Helen Morgan:** [\[835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to provide step-free access at Whitchurch station in Shropshire.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Both myself and the Rail Minister are early in our tenure as transport Ministers. As such, we are yet to speak to Network Rail regarding the status of the Whitchurch station accessibility project. I look forward to discussing these proposals with Network Rail and other stakeholders in the near future.

**TREASURY****■ Bank Services: Northern Ireland**

**Claire Hanna:** [\[412\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a (a) public banking ecosystem and (b) regional development bank in Northern Ireland.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

There are no current plans for a regional development bank in Northern Ireland, however we look forward to working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive on our mission to deliver growth across the United Kingdom.

The Chancellor last week announced new plans to align key institutions under the National Wealth Fund that will boost growth and unlock investment. The National Wealth Fund will operate across the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, and create a step change in our ability to mobilise private capital in the UK's most important sectors and assets, supporting thousands of jobs across the country, and playing a central role in the government's industrial strategy.

To ensure investments can start immediately, the National Wealth Fund will deploy funding through the UK Infrastructure Bank and draw on the capability of the British Business Bank, expanding its remit and providing an additional £7.3 billion to catalyse private investment at an even greater scale. Since inception, UKIB has successfully delivered many projects, for example, providing investment to support thousands of rural homes to access ultrafast broadband. The National Wealth Fund will continue to build on this excellent work.

**■ Energy: Taxation**

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[644\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the removal of the investment allowance in the Energy Profits Levy on private investment into energy transition.

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[646\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has carried out an economic impact assessment of increasing the Energy Profits Levy.

**James Murray:**

The Government's tax commitments are set out in the manifesto. HM Treasury are working to deliver them and will set out further details in due course.

**■ Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation**

**Mr Luke Charters:** [\[R\]](#) [\[850\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking with the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation to enforce the UK's sanctions regime.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The Treasury's Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) is responsible for civil enforcement of the UK's financial sanctions regimes.

OFSI is committed to ensuring that the UK has the strongest possible capability to implement and enforce the UK's financial sanctions. OFSI has scaled up its enforcement capabilities through legislative changes and expanded its team, allowing it to progress a higher number of complex investigations. For example, in the financial year 2022 – 2023 OFSI increased resource in its enforcement team by 175%.

OFSI expects to see the first monetary penalties resulting from breaches related to the 2022 Russia designations in 2024.

**■ Pay and Pensions****Laurence Turner:**[\[268\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed alignment of the Retail Prices Index methodology with the Consumer Prices Index, including owner occupier housing costs from February 2030 on (a) wage-setting and (b) private sector pension benefit uprating.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The alignment of the methods and data sources of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs into the Retail Price Index (RPI) reflects the flaws in RPI which can either overstate or understates price changes. The Bank of England will assess if these changes significantly impact certain index-linked gilt holders.

The Government recognises the widespread use of RPI and that there are potential impacts from the reform. Whilst there is legislation around the minimum indexation requirements for defined benefit schemes, scheme rules will determine how any pensioners' benefits are increased each year.

The independent Office for Budget Responsibility will publish a revised 5-year wage-growth forecast in their next Economic and Fiscal Outlook, considering all relevant factors.

**■ Pensions: Lump Sum Payments****Blair McDougall:**[\[281\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending paragraph 1(b) of Schedule 29 to the Finance Act 2004 to ensure that people with enhanced protection are not limited in the amount of pension commencement lump sum they can obtain.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

Paragraph 1(b) of Schedule 29 to the Finance Act 2004 provides for a pension commencement lump sum where all or part of a member's lump sum allowance, and all or part of their lump sum and death benefit allowance, is available.



Those with enhanced protection against pension tax charges are entitled to the same amount of pension commencement lump sum they would have expected to receive prior to 6 April 2023. This enables them to receive up to £375,000 if they have sufficient available lump sum allowance.

The government has no plans to enable those with enhanced protection, or any other protection, to access additional tax-free lump sums where they have already taken the maximum amount. This maintains members' expectations in respect of their tax-free lump sums.

## ■ Public Expenditure

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[707\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the annual deficit was (a) in percentage of GDP, (b) in 2010 real terms and (c) as a proportion of government spending in the financial year (i) 2009-10 and (ii) 2023-24.

**Darren Jones:**

The annual deficit in 2009-2010 was 10.3% of GDP and 4.5% of GDP in 2023-24.

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) does not publish the annual deficit in real terms. In order to remove the effects of inflation and provide an indication of a country's ability to service borrowing and debt, it is typical to compare fiscal aggregates as a percentage of GDP, which represents the scale of the aggregate in comparison to the size of the economy at the relevant time.

In nominal terms, the annual deficit was £160.9bn in 2009-2010 and £122.1bn in 2023-24.

As a proportion of government spending, the annual deficit was 22.2% in 2009-2010 and 10.0% in 2023-24.

More information is available on the ONS' website under "Public sector finances, UK Statistical bulletins".

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Poverty: Children

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans for the taskforce on child poverty to make an assessment of the potential impact of ending the (a) the two-child benefit limit and (b) under-occupancy charge on levels of child poverty.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the (a) terms of reference for the taskforce on child poverty and (b) planned timescale for publishing the outcomes of that taskforce's work.

**Alison McGovern:**

The new Ministerial Taskforce will drive cross-government action on child poverty, starting with overseeing the development of our ambitious new strategy in line with the Opportunity Mission.

After initial engagement, the formal work to develop the new child poverty strategy will begin and we will publish a Full Terms of Reference in the coming weeks.

Recognising the wide-ranging causes of child poverty, we will explore how we can use all the available levers we have across government and wider society to drive forward the change our children need. Alongside this we will be reviewing Universal Credit so that it makes work pay and tackles poverty.

**Neil Coyle:****[802]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the proposed child poverty strategy will examine the potential impact of (a) trends in the use of food bank usage and (b) the No Recourse to Public Funds policy on levels of childhood poverty.

**Alison McGovern:**

We are committed to tackling child poverty and ending the mass dependence on emergency food parcels. The new Ministerial Taskforce will drive cross-government action on child poverty, starting with overseeing the development of our ambitious new strategy in line with the Opportunity Mission.

After initial engagement, the formal work to develop the new child poverty strategy will begin and we will publish a Full Terms of Reference in the coming weeks. We will explore how we can use all the available levers we have across government and wider society to drive forward the change our children need.

**■ Poverty: St Helens North****David Baines:****[551]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on the number and proportion of children living in poverty in St Helens North constituency in (a) 2024 and (b) 2010.

**Alison McGovern:**

Statistics on the number of Children living in absolute and relative poverty per constituency are published annually in the "Children in low income families: local area statistics" publication and can be found in tabs "6\_Absolute\_ParIC" and "5\_Relative\_ParIC" at [Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2023). The latest statistics published on 21 March 2024 cover the years 2014/15 to 2022/23. Figures are not available prior to 2014/15 and are produced on a before housing costs basis only.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### PRIME MINISTER

#### ■ Machinery of Government

##### Prime Minister (Sir Keir Starmer):

[\[HCWS19\]](#)

I am making this statement to bring to the House's attention the following Machinery of Government changes.

On 10 July the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities was renamed the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

I am today announcing the following further changes to the Machinery of Government.

First, responsibility for the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union, including co-chairing the Ministerial structures under the UK's treaties with the European Union will move from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to the Cabinet Office. This change will allow the Paymaster General as Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations to drive the Government's European Union agenda, overseeing the existing relationship, and leading the cross-government work to deepen this relationship in the future. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office remains responsible for bilateral relationships, Gibraltar negotiations and Europe strategy using the department's diplomatic expertise.

Second, the Office for Veterans' Affairs will move from the Cabinet Office to the Ministry of Defence. This change will enable the Minister for Veterans and People to have complete oversight for the entirety of service life; from training to veterans working with all government departments to deliver for our service personnel.

Third, the Government Digital Service, the Central Digital and Data Office, and the Incubator for Artificial Intelligence will move from the Cabinet Office to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. This change will embed the delivery of digital services and levers to drive public and private sector innovation within a single department. Working closely with the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology will be the digital centre of government.

Fourth, the Government Car Service will move from the Department for Transport to the Cabinet Office. This change will better align the Government Car Service with other centrally-provided protective security services for ministers and support end-to-end provision of executive protective security.

The four additional Machinery of Government changes outlined above will take effect immediately.