



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 30 July 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:48 P.M., 30 July 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	8		
BUSINESS AND TRADE	8		
■ Industry	8	■ Government Departments:	
■ Living Wage	8	Disclosure of Information	15
■ Military Aid: Ukraine	8	■ Government Departments:	
■ Political Levy	9	Public Consultation	15
■ Trade Unions: Private Sector	10	■ Government Departments:	
■ Zero Hours Contracts	10	Sanitation	16
CABINET OFFICE	10	■ Government Departments:	
■ Arms Length Bodies: Lobbying	10	Trade Unions	16
■ Blood: Contamination	11	■ Government Departments:	
■ Civil Servants	11	Written Questions	16
■ Civil Servants: Location	11	■ Ministers and Senior Civil	
■ Civil Servants: Pay	12	Servants: Travel	17
■ Civil Servants: Performance		■ Non-departmental Public	
Related Pay	12	Bodies: Staff	17
■ Civil Servants: Remote		■ Prime Minister:	
Working	13	Correspondence	17
■ Civil Service	13	■ Public Bodies	18
■ Civil Service: Equality	14	■ Public Bodies: Staff	18
■ Former Ministers: Members'		■ Public Sector: Buildings	18
Interests	14	■ Public Sector: Staff	18
■ Freedom of Information	15	■ Public Sector: Trade Union	
■ Government Communication		Officials	19
Service	15	■ Special Advisers: Equal Pay	19
		CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	20
		■ Culture, Practices and Ethics	
		of the Press Inquiry	20

DEFENCE	20	■ Teachers: Crimes of Violence	33
■ Defence: Northern Ireland	20	■ Teachers: Recruitment	34
■ LGBT Veterans Independent Review	20	■ Universities: Liability	34
■ Strategic Defence and Security Review	21	ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	35
■ Ukraine: Military Aid	21	■ Energy: Prices	35
■ Veterans: Cramlington and Killingworth	22	■ Fuel Oil: North East Somerset and Hanham	35
EDUCATION	22	■ Fuel Poverty: Cramlington and Killingworth	36
■ Antisemitism: Education	22	■ Great British Energy: Northern Ireland	36
■ Breakfast Clubs: Primary Education	23	■ Hinkley Point C Power Station	37
■ Children in Care: Southampton	23	■ Insulation and Renewable Energy: Norfolk	37
■ Children's Centres: Halifax	24	■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme	37
■ Curriculum	24	■ National Grid: Public Consultation	38
■ Education: Disadvantaged	24	■ Renewable Energy	38
■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme	25	■ Renewable Energy: Prices	38
■ Lifelong Education	26	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	39
■ Nurseries	26	■ Agriculture: Finance	39
■ Private Education: Fees and Charges	27	■ Air Pollution	39
■ Schools: Admissions	27	■ Animal Welfare	40
■ Schools: Discipline	28	■ Biodiversity: Regulation	40
■ Schools: Nottinghamshire	28	■ Drinking Water: Havant	40
■ Skills England	29	■ Farming Recovery Fund	41
■ Skills England: Costs	29	■ Fly-tipping: South Holland and the Deepings	42
■ Special Educational Needs	30	■ Food: Waste	42
■ Special Educational Needs: Cornwall	31	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Correspondence	42
■ Special Educational Needs: Hertfordshire	32	■ Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023	42
■ Special Educational Needs: Rural Areas	32		
■ Students: Finance	33		

■ Greenpeace	43	■ Dental Services: Burton and Uttoxeter	53
■ Inland Border Facilities: Ashford	43	■ Dental Services: Coastal Areas and Rural Areas	53
■ Pets: Travel	43	■ Dental Services: Contracts	53
■ Plastics: Pollution	44	■ Dental Services: Cramlington and Killingworth	54
■ Potatoes: Northern Ireland	44	■ Dental Services: Exeter	54
■ River Itchen: Sewage	45	■ Dental Services: Gedling	54
■ Veterinary Services: Northern Ireland	45	■ Dental Services: Halton	55
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	46	■ Dental Services: Herefordshire and Worcestershire	55
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	46	■ Dental Services: Newcastle-under-Lyme	56
■ Arms Trade: Israel	47	■ Dental Services: Norfolk	56
■ Bangladesh: Demonstrations	47	■ Dental Services: North Cornwall	57
■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Private Education	48	■ Dental Services: Norwich North	57
■ Hamas: UNRWA	48	■ Dental Services: York Outer	57
■ India: British Nationals Abroad	48	■ Dentistry: Migrant Workers	58
■ Israel and Occupied Territories: Aid Workers	49	■ Dentistry: Training	58
■ Occupied Territories: Armed Conflict	49	■ Down Syndrome Act 2022	59
■ Occupied Territories: Violence	49	■ General Practitioners	60
■ Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief	50	■ General Practitioners: Cramlington and Killingworth	60
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	50	■ General Practitioners: Recruitment	60
■ Care Workers: Agency Workers	50	■ Health Services: Disability	61
■ Dental Health: Babies	51	■ Hospices: Finance	62
■ Dental Health: Pupils	51	■ Hospitals: Construction	64
■ Dental Services and General Practitioners: Aldershot	51	■ Mental Health Services	64
■ Dental Services and General Practitioners: Hitchin	52	■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People	64

■ Mental Health Services: Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard	65	■ Police Stations: Cramlington and Killingworth	77
■ Neurodiversity: Mental Health Services	65	■ Police Stations: Horwich	78
■ Ophthalmic Services: Special Educational Needs	66	■ UK Border Force: ICT	78
■ Palliative Care	66	■ Visas: Seasonal Workers	78
■ Pancreatic Cancer: Screening	66	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	79
■ Pharmacy	67	■ Affordable Housing: North East	79
■ Pharmacy: Gedling	68	■ Coal: Cumbria	79
■ Radiotherapy	68	■ Combined Authorities	79
■ Rickets	68	■ Deputy Prime Minister: Departmental Responsibilities	80
■ Social Services: Career Development	69	■ Elections: Proof of Identity	80
■ Social Services: Training	69	■ Empty Property: Shops	81
■ Veterans: North East	70	■ Homelessness: Young People	81
■ Visas: Social Services	70	■ Housing First	82
HOME OFFICE	71	■ Housing: Construction	82
■ Anti-social Behaviour and Crime	71	■ Leasehold	83
■ Anti-social Behaviour and Drugs: Newcastle-under-Lyme	71	■ Leasehold: Reform	83
■ Anti-social Behaviour: North East	72	■ Levelling Up Fund	83
■ Asylum: Housing	72	■ Local Government: Cornwall	84
■ Common Travel Area	73	■ Neighbourhood Plans	84
■ Community Policing: Powers	73	■ New Towns	84
■ Demonstrations: Infrastructure	74	■ Poverty	84
■ Drugs: Rehabilitation	74	■ Private Rented Housing: Evictions	85
■ Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: Finance	74	■ Regeneration: Cramlington and Killingworth	85
■ Human Trafficking	75	■ Wind Power	85
■ Immigration: Hong Kong	76	JUSTICE	86
■ Nitazenes: Misuse	76	■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	86
		■ Custodial Treatment: Women	86
		■ Employment Tribunals Service	87

■ Horizon IT System: Convictions	87	■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Cost Effectiveness	96
■ Juries: Allowances	88	■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Equality	96
■ Juries: Finance	88	■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Public Expenditure	96
■ Prison Officers: Labour Turnover	88	■ Digital Technology: Proof of Identity	96
■ Prisons: Crimes of Violence	89	■ EU Framework Programme	97
■ Prisons: Education	89	■ Innovation: Regulation	97
■ Public Order Act 2023: Prosecutions	90	■ Mobile Phones: Rural Areas	97
■ Sentencing	90	■ Office for Life Sciences	98
■ Tax Evasion	91	■ Patents	98
NORTHERN IRELAND	91	■ Pornography Review	98
■ Apprentices: Taxation	91	■ Public Consultation: Artificial Intelligence	98
■ Casement Park: Regeneration	91	■ Research: Databases	99
■ Employment Schemes: Northern Ireland	92	■ Research: Finance	99
■ Flags: Northern Ireland	92	■ Science and Technology	99
■ Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery	92	■ Semiconductors: Manufacturing Industries	100
SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	93	■ Space Technology	100
■ 4G and 5G: Standards	93	■ Spaceflight	100
■ Animal Experiments	93	■ Universities: Business	100
■ Artificial Intelligence	94	TRANSPORT	101
■ Artificial Intelligence: Disinformation	94	■ A10: Norfolk	101
■ Artificial Intelligence: Regulation	94	■ A52: Accidents	101
■ Broadband: Finance	95	■ Aviation: Crew	104
■ Building Digital UK: Public Appointments	95	■ Bus Services: Concessions	104
■ Civil Service: Artificial Intelligence	95	■ Bus Services: Gloucestershire	105
		■ Driving Tests: Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard	105

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	106	■ Food Poverty	115
■ Heathrow Airport: Noise	106	■ Personal Independence Payment	116
■ Motor Insurance: Fees and Charges	106	■ Poverty: Children	116
■ Motor Insurers Bureau	107	■ Social Security Benefits: Children	116
■ Network Rail	107	■ Universal Credit	117
■ Public Transport: Disability	107	■ Universal Credit: Appeals	117
■ Railway Stations: Stonehouse	108	■ Universal Credit: High Peak	117
■ Railways: Access	108	■ Universal Credit: Newcastle-under-Lyme	118
■ Railways: County Durham	108	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	120
■ Railways: Electric Shock	109	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	120
■ Railways: North Cornwall	109	■ Fly-tipping: South Norfolk	120
■ Roads: Closures	110	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	121
■ Transport: Cramlington and Killingworth	110	BUSINESS AND TRADE	121
TREASURY	110	■ Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 consultation on turnover and control regulations	121
■ Business Rates	110	■ Horizon Convictions Redress Scheme	121
■ Defibrillators: VAT	111	■ Low Pay Commission Remit	122
■ Hospitality Industry: Government Assistance	111	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	124
■ Pay: Young People	112	■ Saving Nature	124
■ Private Education: Business Rates and VAT	112	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	125
■ Social Security Benefits: Children	113	■ Adult Social Care Workforce	125
■ Special Educational Needs	113	■ NHS Update	126
■ Tax Avoidance	113	■ NHS Workforce Update	127
■ Taxation	114	HOME OFFICE	128
■ Timesharing: Misrepresentation	114	■ Afghan Resettlement	128
WORK AND PENSIONS	114	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	129
■ Child Poverty Taskforce	114	■ Building the homes we need	129
■ Food Banks: Blyth and Ashington	115		

■ Local Audit Backlog	138	TRANSPORT	141
		■ Transport Infrastructure	141

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

■ Industry

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[1139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when he plans to publish an Industrial Strategy.

Sarah Jones:

As stated in the Kings Speech this government is committed to establishing an industrial strategy council on a statutory footing. Growth is this Government's number one priority. To achieve growth and create secure, well-paid jobs across the country, we will get businesses investing again through a clear, credible, long-term modern Industrial Strategy. To succeed, the Strategy will need to be designed and delivered in partnership with business, unions, local leaders and wider stakeholders. The Strategy will be published **in the coming months and I will update the house** in due course.

■ Living Wage

Tracy Gilbert: [\[1133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to page 20 of the King's Speech Background Briefing Notes, published by the Prime Minister's Office on 17 July 2024, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of people who will be affected by the proposals to deliver a genuine living wage (a) nationally and (b) in Edinburgh North and Leith constituency.

Justin Madders:

The minimum wage has been one of the most effective and successful policy interventions of the last 25 years. The Government is committed to delivering a genuine living wage for working people, and removing the discriminatory age bands, so that all adults can benefit.

The Low Pay Commission (LPC) will complete its April 2025 rate recommendations by the end of October 2024. The government will then announce the rates this Autumn and publish an impact assessment when the regulations are laid which will include estimates of the number of people who will benefit from the uprating. This approach will put more money in working people's pockets to spend, boosting economic growth, resilience and conditions for innovation.

■ Military Aid: Ukraine

James Cartlidge: [\[989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the £3.5 billion defence export finance deal for Ukraine, announced on 18 July 2024, whether that

funding is additional funding on top of pre-existing levels of export finance support from the UK to Ukraine.

James Cartlidge: [\[990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the £3.5 billion defence export finance deal for Ukraine, announced on 18 July 2024, what his planned timetable is for making the additional finance available.

James Cartlidge: [\[991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the £3.5 billion defence export finance deal for Ukraine, announced on 18 July 2024, whether any (a) goods and (b) services are excluded from the funding arrangement.

James Cartlidge: [\[992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the £3.5 billion defence export finance deal for Ukraine, announced on 18 July 2024, what percentage of UK- (a) manufactured and (b) originated content will be required for (i) goods and (ii) services purchased under the arrangement to qualify for support.

Justin Madders:

More than two years since the illegal invasion of Ukraine, the UK continues to stand resolutely with the Ukrainian people against Russian aggression.

£3.5 billion is the total capacity UK Export Finance (UKEF) has to support transactions with Ukraine. It is already in place for support for eligible transactions, including any future transactions entered into under the new treaty. All transactions are subject to UKEF's regular due diligence and approvals processes.

James Cartlidge: [\[994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the £3.5 billion defence export finance deal for Ukraine, announced on 18 July 2024, whether the finance provided will be subject to UK Export Finance's Transition Export Development Guarantee.

Justin Madders:

UK Export Finance's Export Development Guarantee product helps companies who export from, or plan to export from the UK, access high value loan facilities for general working capital or capital expenditure purposes. The risk associated with this product remains centred in the UK, and consequently does not impact UKEF's market limit for Ukraine.

■ Political Levy

John Glen: [\[1206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to change the trade union political levy to an opt-out basis for (a) new and (b) existing members of trade unions.

Justin Madders:

The Government is committed to repealing the Trade Union Act 2016 through the Employment Rights Bill, including the restrictions on union political funds.

■ **Trade Unions: Private Sector****Gareth Bacon:**[\[690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to (a) increase the level and (b) promote the use of trade union facility time in the private sector.

Justin Madders:

The Government is committed to ensuring there is sufficient facilities time for all trade union representatives, in both the public and private sector, so that they have capacity to represent and defend workers, negotiate with employers and conduct training.

■ **Zero Hours Contracts****Tracy Gilbert:**[\[1134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to page 20 of the King's Speech Background Briefing Notes, published by the Prime Minister's Office on 17 July 2024, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of people who will be affected by the proposals to ban exploitative zero-hour contracts (a) nationally and (b) in Edinburgh North and Leith constituency.

Justin Madders:

The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (for January to March 2024) suggest that around 1,030,000 people (representing 3.1% of total employment) were employed on a zero-hours contract in the UK.

Over the same period there were approximately 71,000 people (equating to 2.7% of total employment) employed on a zero-hours contract in Scotland.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Arms Length Bodies: Lobbying****John Glen:**[\[934\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether arms length bodies will be permitted to hire public affairs consultancies to lobby the Government.

John Glen:[\[942\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department issues on the hire of public affairs consultancies by Arms Length Bodies to lobby the Government.

Georgia Gould:

Section 4.1 of the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies states that ‘it will always be an improper use of public funds for public bodies to employ consultants or other companies to lobby Parliament, government or political parties.’

Blood: Contamination

John Glen: [933]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his timetable is for the implementation of the infected blood compensation scheme.

John Glen: [941]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his planned timetable is for the implementation of the infected blood compensation scheme.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Victims and Prisoners Act requires the Government to make regulations to establish a compensation scheme by 24 August 2024. These regulations are subject to the made affirmative procedure which will provide Parliament with the opportunity to debate the details of the Scheme. The Infected Blood Compensation Authority is established in law and the interim chief executive and his team are working hard to put the operational systems in place with the aim of beginning payments by the end of this year.

Civil Servants

John Glen: [915]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what was the (a) headcount and (b) full time equivalent size of the civil service in the most recent period for which figures are available by (i) department and (ii) agency.

Georgia Gould:

National Statistics on the number of civil servants, both overall and by government department and agency, are published each quarter by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as part of their Public Sector Employment statistical release. The latest available statistics were published 11 June 2024 and showed the number of civil servants as at 31 March 2024.

The latest statistics and all previous and upcoming releases can be found on the ONS website at

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/datasets/publicsectoremploymentreferencetable>

Civil Servants: Location

John Glen: [913]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) headcount and (b) full time equivalent number of civil servants located outside of London was under the Places for

Growth programme in the most recent period for which figures are available; and in which locations those civil servants worked.

Georgia Gould:

For the most recent period for which figures are publicly available (Civil Service Statistics, March 2023):

- Headcount number of Civil Servants based outside of London was 409,820
- Full-time equivalent number of Civil Servants based outside of London was 381,720.

As of December 2023, 18,283 government roles were relocated from London to the regions and nations across the UK under the Places for Growth Programme (PfG). The locations that received the most role relocations as of December 2023 were Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham and Sheffield.

■ **Civil Servants: Pay**

John Glen:

[\[925\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is his policy that civil servants should work a four-day week on full pay.

Georgia Gould:

It is not government policy that civil servants should work a four-day week on full pay.

The Government is committed to supporting individuals and businesses to work in ways that best suit their particular circumstances while also ensuring that it provides value for money for the public.

■ **Civil Servants: Performance Related Pay**

John Glen:

[\[1211\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the written ministerial statement of 14 May 2024, HCWS464, on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Civil Service, what his policy is on linking civil servants' (a) pay, (b) promotions and (c) bonuses to meeting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives.

John Glen:

[\[927\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 14 May 2024, HCWS464, on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Civil Service, what the Government's policy is on linking pay to performance against equality, diversity and inclusion objectives within the Civil Service.

Georgia Gould:

There is no requirement to explicitly link pay, promotion, or bonus payments to performance against equality, diversity and inclusion objectives within the Civil Service.

The end of year performance assessment process assesses Senior Civil Servant's delivery against a number of management objectives, including finance, business

delivery, and people and capability which considers delivery against the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-25.

■ **Civil Servants: Remote Working**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[1810\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on home working across the civil service.

Georgia Gould:

The government's entire focus is on the work of delivering change. The government has not yet reviewed existing guidance on home working. We will support the Civil Service with the necessary tools to ensure it can deliver that change. The Government is committed to supporting individuals and businesses to work in ways that best suit their particular circumstances and whilst terms and conditions relating to hours of work are delegated to departments as individual employers, the Civil Service must ensure that it provides value for money for the public.

■ **Civil Service**

John Glen: [\[919\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to increase productivity in the (a) Civil Service and (b) wider public sector.

Georgia Gould:

This government will focus on improving the productivity of the public sector to deliver high quality public services, achieve value for money and deliver on the Government's core mission of economic growth.

As part of this focus the government will develop a strategic plan for a more efficient and effective civil service, including bold options to improve skills, harness digital technology and drive better outcomes for public services.

John Glen: [\[931\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to HM Treasury's press release entitled End to Civil Service expansion and review of equality and diversity spending announced in productivity drive, published on 2 October 2023, what his policy is on reductions to the size of the civil service.

Georgia Gould:

Decisions on the future size of the Civil Service will form a key part of the next comprehensive Spending Review. Therefore, a proper and full consideration will be given to this in due course, and the Cabinet Office will work closely with HM Treasury on the development of these plans.

John Glen: [\[939\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to reduce the size of the civil service.

Georgia Gould:

Decisions on the future size of the Civil Service will form a key part of the next comprehensive Spending Review. Therefore, a proper and full consideration will be given to this in due course, and the Cabinet Office will work closely with HM Treasury on the development of these plans.

■ Civil Service: Equality

John Glen: [\[926\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Written Statement of 14 May 2024, HCWS464, on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Civil Service, if he will publish the review of EDI expenditure across the Civil Service commissioned by the previous Government.

Georgia Gould:

We are currently considering the Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Review commissioned by the previous Government.

John Glen: [\[936\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the written ministerial statement of 14 May 2024 on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Civil Service, HCWS464, if he will publish the data on historic spending on equality, diversity and inclusion referred to in that statement.

Georgia Gould:

We are currently considering the Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Review commissioned by the previous Government.

■ Former Ministers: Members' Interests

John Glen: [\[1232\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to introduce a ministerial deed.

John Glen: [\[1233\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to amend the business appointment rules for Ministers.

John Glen: [\[906\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to introduce a five year lobbying ban on Ministers and special advisers who leave Government.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The government has committed to reviewing and updating the post-government employment rules. This will include restrictions on ministers lobbying for the companies they used to regulate, with meaningful sanctions for breaching the rules.

■ Freedom of Information

John Glen: [922]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to extend the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to private sector organisations.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Government is committed to Freedom of Information and will keep the scope of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 under consideration.

■ Government Communication Service

John Glen: [921]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to change the size of the Government Communications Service.

Georgia Gould:

There are no current plans to change the size of the Government Communication Service (GCS). Its mission is to deliver communications which supports ministers' priorities, enables the efficient and effective operations of public services and improves people's lives.

We constantly assess all functions and ensure they are delivering value for money.

■ Government Departments: Disclosure of Information

John Glen: [904]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his planned timetable is for the proposed gov.uk webpage on transparency data going live.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

This Government is fully committed to transparency and openness and publishes quarterly transparency data on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). The Government is committed to looking at how the range of information published can be improved and made as useful as possible.

■ Government Departments: Public Consultation

John Glen: [907]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Cabinet Office guidance on consultation principles, what guidance his Department is providing to other departments on publishing responses to consultations that were initiated under the previous government.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Cabinet Office advises departments that a new administration may respond to a consultation that was initiated under a previous administration if they choose to do so.

John Glen: [908]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on the (a) minimum length of time a Government consultation should be open and (b) maximum length of time before a response is published to a closed consultation.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government's Consultation Principles provide guidance to departments on conducting consultations. Principle E states that departments should determine a proportionate amount of time to run the consultation, taking into account the nature and impact of the proposal. Principle J says that responses should be published within 12 weeks of the consultation or that there should be an explanation why this is not possible. The Consultation Principles are publicly available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

■ Government Departments: Sanitation

John Glen: [916]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to (a) reduce and (b) increase the number of (i) gender-neutral and (ii) specific-sex toilets on the Government Property Agency estate.

Georgia Gould:

GPA's current Design Guide is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-government-workplace-design-guide>.

■ Government Departments: Trade Unions

John Glen: [918]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) ministerial meetings with, (b) hospitality provided by and (c) hospitality provided to trade unions will be reported in quarterly transparency returns.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Details of Ministers' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) alongside details of all hospitality received in a ministerial capacity.

Hospitality expensed to departments by Senior Officials at the level of SCS2 and above is also reported in Senior Officials' quarterly transparency returns.

■ Government Departments: Written Questions

John Glen: [923]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is his policy that information which would be released under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 should be released in response to a Parliamentary Question.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

A release of information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is considered a release to the world at large.

Responses to Parliamentary Questions should adhere to Ministers' obligations under the Ministerial Code.

■ Ministers and Senior Civil Servants: Travel

John Glen: [\[928\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on (a) first and (b) business class travel for (i) Ministers, (ii) special advisers and (iii) senior officials.

John Glen: [\[935\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on the use (a) first class and (b) business class travel by (i) Ministers, (ii) special advisers and (iii) senior civil servants.

Ellie Reeves:

The Government's policy is that all travel must be efficient and cost-effective. This principle is long-established and has been in place under successive administrations. Where applicable, this principle is expanded upon in the relevant code of conduct and individual departmental policies on travel and expenses.

■ Non-departmental Public Bodies: Staff

John Glen: [\[910\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) full-time equivalent and (b) total staff are employed by each non-Departmental public body that is not part of the civil service in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Georgia Gould:

An updated version of the Public Bodies landscape, covering data from 2022-23, will include data on FTE staff employed by NDPBs, and will be published on gov.uk in due course.

■ Prime Minister: Correspondence

John Glen: [\[930\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many faxes have been received on the public faxline in 10 Downing Street since 4 July 2024; and how that correspondence is responded to.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

As was the practice under the previous Administration, any faxes are converted into emails on receipt. There have been 3 in the period requested. These have been transferred to the relevant authorities.

■ Public Bodies

John Glen: [911]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to publish an updated version of the report entitled Public Bodies 2020, published on 15 July 2021.

Georgia Gould:

An updated version of the Public Bodies landscape, covering data from 2022-23 will be published on gov.uk in due course.

■ Public Bodies: Staff

John Glen: [909]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) full-time equivalent and (b) total staff are employed by each public corporation that is not part of the civil service in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Georgia Gould:

Data on the number of total staff employed by each public corporation is not held centrally by the Cabinet Office.

■ Public Sector: Buildings

John Glen: [912]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the size was of the public sector estate managed by the Government Property Agency in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Georgia Gould:

In 2022/23, the Government Property Agency grew its management to 45% of the government office portfolio, over 840,000 m². Further details can be found in the Agency's 2023/24 Business Plan:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64b6891271749c001389ed86/The_Government_Property_Agency_Business_Plan_2023_to_2024.pdf

■ Public Sector: Staff

John Glen: [914]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people were employed in the public sector by (a) headcount and (b) full time equivalent in the most recent period for which figures are available by sector.

Georgia Gould:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the Hon. Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 22nd July 2024 is attached.

Attachments:

1. UKSA Response - PQ914 [PQ914.pdf]

■ Public Sector: Trade Union Officials

John Glen: [\[903\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on public sector trade union facility time transparency.

John Glen: [\[938\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on trade union facility time allowances.

John Glen: [\[943\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether plans to increase trade union facility time allowances in the Civil Service.

Georgia Gould:

The Government is committed to ensuring there is sufficient facility time for all trade union representatives, in both the public and private sector, so that they have capacity to represent and defend workers, negotiate with employers and conduct training. There are no monetary allowances for trade union facility time other than paid time to carry out their duties. Public sector organisations are required to publish transparency data on facility time each year.

■ Special Advisers: Equal Pay

John Glen: [\[924\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the (a) mean and (b) median gender pay gap for special advisers in pay bands (i) 1, (ii) 2, (iii) 3 and (iv) 4.

John Glen: [\[937\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the gender pay gap is for special advisers employed by the Government.

Georgia Gould:

The gender pay gap for special advisers is published annually in the Cabinet Office's Gender Pay Gap Report. The latest published report is for 2023 and is available on gov.uk; the mean pay gap was 4.62%, and the median pay gap was 10.89%.

This was not broken down by pay band, due to the small numbers of individuals in each pay band.

John Glen: [\[932\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether ethnicity and disability pay reporting will apply to special advisers.

John Glen: [\[940\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether ethnicity and disability pay reporting will apply to special advisers.

Georgia Gould:

Special advisers are employees of their appointing minister's department, and would be included in new pay reporting requirements in the same way as other employees.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press Inquiry****Andy Slaughter:**[\[1645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has sought advice on whether witnesses at Part One of the Leveson Inquiry (a) lied to and (b) misled that Inquiry.

Stephanie Peacock:

Part One of the Leveson Inquiry and the subsequent police investigations were chaired by judge, Lord Leveson, and was independent of Government.

DEFENCE**■ Defence: Northern Ireland****Jim Shannon:**[\[950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the proportion of defence spending that is allocated to Northern Ireland.

Maria Eagle:

Northern Ireland and its defence sector companies play an important role in the collective defence of the United Kingdom and the promotion of our global interests. The Strategic Defence Review, launched by the Prime Minister on 16 July 2024, will ensure defence is central to both the security and the economic growth and prosperity of the whole United Kingdom.

■ LGBT Veterans Independent Review**Ben Maguire:**[\[1143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to implement the outstanding recommendations of the LGBT Veterans Review.

Al Carns:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 July 2024 to Question 495 to the hon. Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie).

Attachments:

1. BT Veterans Independent Review [495 - BT Veterans Independent Review.docx]

■ Strategic Defence and Security Review

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[1141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has for stakeholders to contribute to the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Luke Pollard:

This Review will help set the path for Britain's defence for the next decade and is to be Britain's review – not just the Government's. The Review will be headed by three external Reviewers led by Lord Roberson of Port Ellen and supported Dr Fiona Hill CMG and General Sir Richard Barrons. It will be a root and branch review that considers all aspects of Defence. The Reviewers will consult widely, including with Parliament, the Defence community, academia, and industry. Allies will be engaged regularly to seek their views.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid

James Cartlidge:

[\[993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the £3.5 billion defence export finance deal for Ukraine, announced on 18 July 2024, if he will take steps to ensure that a proportion of the additional funding for export finance to Ukraine is provided to small and medium-sized enterprises in the UK defence and security sector.

Luke Pollard:

The UK/Ukraine Defence Industrial Support Treaty signed on 19 July 2024 enables Ukraine to access export financing to procure defence capability from UK companies. It is for Ukraine to decide their priorities for that financing with the agreement of HMG, and there will be opportunities for UK companies of all sizes to benefit. This includes Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the supply chain, reflecting the significant contribution that SMEs make to a robust, resilient and innovative supply chain and wider UK prosperity.

James Cartlidge:

[\[995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the £3.5 billion defence export finance deal for Ukraine, announced on 18 July 2024, what estimate he has made of increases in the number of (a) drones and (b) other uncrewed systems available to the Ukrainian armed forces resulting from the new funding arrangements.

Luke Pollard:

The UK is committed to increasing the quantity and quality of drones being provided to Ukraine, through national and international partnerships for example through the UK co-lead Drone Capability Coalition. We will deliver over 10,000 drones (both aerial and maritime) to Ukraine this financial year, with deliveries well underway. Due to rapid battlefield changes, these drones are being procured and iterated rapidly using the Ministry of Defence's annual £3 billion of support to Ukraine, rather than the £3.5 billion defence export finance deal.

■ Veterans: Cramlington and Killingworth**Emma Foody:****[1104]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veterans live in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency.

Al Carns:

The House of Commons library has an online data dashboard for constituencies which includes data on veterans taken from the most recent censuses in Great Britain. This is available here:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/constituency-data-uk-armed-forces-veterans-2021-census/>

England and Wales Census 2021 data showed that 4,387 people in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. This represents 5.5% of this constituency's population aged 16 and over. This compares with 5.0% of the population in the North East region and 3.8% in Great Britain.

EDUCATION**■ Antisemitism: Education****Fabian Hamilton:****[1194]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of implementing mandatory education on antisemitism in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is committed to tackling antisemitism and all forms of prejudice. Education is a key component of building a fairer and more equal society.

As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, there are many opportunities in the existing curriculum for schools to teach about antisemitism, including through:

- Citizenship education, which is compulsory at key stages 3 and 4, and teaches about religious diversity, mutual respect and understanding.
- Relationships education, which is compulsory in all schools, and teaches about the impact of prejudice and the importance of respect.
- Religious education, which is compulsory in all state-funded schools, and educates about religious tolerance.

Young people should be taught the history of the Holocaust. Effective Holocaust education, and learning about other genocides, supports pupils to learn about the possible consequences of antisemitism and other forms of extremism and to help reduce the spread of antisemitism, religious intolerance and other forms of intolerance and extremism.

The department has been supporting greater understanding of the Holocaust by providing funding to the Holocaust Educational Trust to provide the Lessons from Auschwitz programme, and to UCL Centre for Holocaust Education which provides a programme of continuing professional development for teachers.

■ **Breakfast Clubs: Primary Education**

James Wild: [\[1566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her planned timetable is to roll out free breakfast clubs to all primary schools.

James Wild: [\[1567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the annual cost of providing free breakfast clubs in all primary schools.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is committed to making quick progress on delivering breakfast clubs in every primary school. Breakfast clubs will remove barriers to opportunity, by providing a supportive start to the day, ensuring every child, no matter their circumstances, is well prepared for school and ready to achieve.

The department has already taken decisive action by announcing in the King's Speech that, under the Children's Wellbeing Bill, every primary school in England will offer a free breakfast club. Legislating for breakfast club provision will give schools the certainty they need to plan for the future. Before the legislation comes into force, the department will work with the sector to make sure the right support, including funding, is in place.

■ **Children in Care: Southampton**

Darren Paffey: [\[1849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to help improve the outcomes for care-experienced children and young people in Southampton.

Janet Daby:

Reforming children's social care is critical to giving all our children and young people the start in life they deserve. The government is committed to working in partnership with local government to support children in care across all settings, and to improve outcomes for care leavers.

The King's Speech set out the government's plans to introduce a Children's Wellbeing Bill, which will help raise standards for children in care and ensure that every child can thrive in a safe, loving home as part of the government's commitment to deliver high and rising standards in education for children and young people in England. The Bill is expected to be introduced within the first session of Parliament and will be a crucial step in breaking down barriers to opportunity for children and young people.

■ Children's Centres: Halifax

Kate Dearden: [487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many Sure Start centres have closed in Halifax constituency since May 2010; and the (a) name and (b) postcode of each centre.

Janet Daby:

Data on children's centres is supplied by local authorities via the department's Get Information about Schools (GIAS) database portal. This portal can be found here:

<https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>.

Based on information supplied by Calderdale local authority, no centres have closed in Halifax constituency since May 2010. The list of children's centres closed since May 2010 is based on information supplied by Calderdale local authority as of 18 July 2024. These figures could change again in future since local authorities may update the database at any time.

■ Curriculum

Damian Hinds: [893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has received representations on the impact on the workloads of (a) teachers and (b) school leaders of significant changes to the curriculum.

Catherine McKinnell:

The views of experts, parents, teachers and leaders will be pivotal to the expert-led Review of Curriculum and Assessment announced on 19 July, and a call for evidence will be launched in September. The review will also take written evidence from key stakeholders and undertake a national roadshow, meeting and taking input from staff on the frontline.

The department recognises the pressure that staff in schools and colleges have been under and is enormously grateful to them for their efforts, resilience and service in educating children and young people.

In recognition of this pressure, the review will seek evolution not revolution. It will be aware of the trade-offs required to deliver high and rising standards alongside greater breadth, and in particular to any recommendations that would impact on workload.

The review will seek to identify and focus on the most significant and pressing issues facing curriculum and assessment, without destabilising the system.

■ Education: Disadvantaged

Sonia Kumar: [1172]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to tackle disparities in educational attainment between the most and least affluent area; and whether she plans to review the funding formula to help ensure more effective distribution of resources to schools serving disadvantaged communities in (a) Dudley and (b) elsewhere.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department wants to break down barriers to opportunity for every child, no matter what their background, and have an education system in which all children and young people can achieve and thrive.

All children deserve to have the best start in life, and the department will achieve this by ensuring access to high-quality early education and childcare. By upgrading space in primary schools, the department will create an additional 3,000 nurseries which will transform life chances.

The department has moved quickly to start driving up school standards by beginning work to recruit an additional 6,500 expert teachers, and have already launched an independent, expert-led curriculum and assessment review to deliver our ambition for every child and young person to study a curriculum which is rich and broad, inclusive and innovative.

The Children's Wellbeing Bill will ensure our education and children's social care systems transform life chances for millions of children and young people, by ensuring the school system is fair for every child. Every primary school, including those in Dudley, will be required to provide free breakfast clubs, to ensure that every child, no matter their background, is well prepared for the school day. We will limit the number of branded uniform items that a school can require to cut costs for parents and families.

The schools national funding formula (NFF) distributes funding based on school and pupil characteristics. The NFF targets funding to schools which have the greatest numbers of pupils with additional needs. In 2024/25, 10.2% of the formula is targeted towards deprived pupils. The department is considering the impact of the formula on local authorities, including Dudley. It is important that there is a fair education funding system that directs funding to where it is needed.

More widely, for too many children, living in poverty robs them of opportunity and affects their ability to learn. Child poverty has gone up by 700,000 since 2010, with over four million children now growing up in a low-income family.

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, therefore announced the appointment of the Secretary of State for Work and Pension and the Secretary of State for Education to be the joint leads of a new ministerial taskforce, to begin work on a Child Poverty Strategy. The government is committed to delivering an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty, tackle the root causes, and give every child the best start at life.

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme**Rachael Maskell:****[973]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Holiday Activities Fund on children living in poverty.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity and giving every child the best start in life. This is why we have established a new cross-government taskforce to develop an ambitious strategy to tackle the child poverty crisis.

During this summer, the government will be providing more than three million holiday club places through the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme, supporting children who are living in poverty to access free, healthy meals and enriching activities.

An independent evaluation of HAF from 2021 showed that attending HAF clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people living in poverty. The evaluation highlights that HAF clubs work best when they provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities, when they offer healthy food, and when they involve children and parents in meal preparation.

As part of the next spending review, the department will consider the impact of the programme and how the programme could continue to support children living in poverty.

■ Lifelong Education**Abtisam Mohamed:**[\[1137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

Janet Daby:

The government recognises that lifelong learning is a core part of a sustainable higher education system which provides opportunities for all and offers learners greater flexibility in an ever-evolving economy.

At present, the department is working to ensure that its approach to lifelong learning will be as effective as possible, enabling people to gain the skills they need to support their careers.

■ Nurseries**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[1438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her planned timetable is for the creation of an additional 3,000 nurseries.

Stephen Morgan:

The department knows that high-quality early education and childcare is a crucial opportunity to transform life chances, yet too often it is unavailable or unaffordable.

To tackle this, the department will open an additional 3,000 nurseries through upgrading space in primary schools. The department will start delivering additional places as soon as possible, whilst also driving high and rising standards and better opportunities for every child. The department will work closely with schools, local

authorities and private, voluntary and independent providers to help deliver new nursery places and the expansion in childcare entitlements.

■ Private Education: Fees and Charges

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[1572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 458 on Private Education: Fees and Charges, whether the Department has made an assessment to date of the impact of the introduction of VAT on schools in the independent sector on class sizes in state schools.

Stephen Morgan:

The impact of any tax changes affecting independent schools on the state sector will be carefully considered. The government will complete its analysis once details of the policy changes have been confirmed. The department is supporting HM Treasury which will deliver tax changes. Further details will be announced in due course.

■ Schools: Admissions

Paula Barker:

[\[515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department plans to take to increase the number of school places in areas where there exists a shortage.

Catherine McKinnell:

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places sits with local authorities. The department collects pupil forecasts and school capacity data from local authorities annually through the School Capacity survey. The department provides capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support local authorities to provide school places, based on the data they provide.

Nearly £1.5 billion of allocations have already been confirmed to support local authorities to create school places needed over the next three academic years, up to and including the 2026/27 academic year. This represents £745 million for September 2024, £195 million for September 2025 and over £520 million for September 2026.

The department also engages with local authorities on a regular basis to review their plans for creating additional places and to consider alternatives where necessary. When local authorities are experiencing difficulties, the department supports them to find solutions as quickly as possible. Published guidance makes clear the expectation that schools, academy trusts, dioceses, parents and other civic partners work collaboratively with local authorities to support them in the delivery of their place planning responsibilities. This government is reviewing this further to ensure it meets the needs of local areas.

■ Schools: Discipline

James Wild: [1568]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her policy is on the future of the Behaviour Hubs programme.

Stephen Morgan:

Delivery of the Behaviour Hubs will run until the end of March 2025.

Funding beyond the end of March 2025 is subject to the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Schools: Nottinghamshire

Michael Payne: [R] [1077]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the real terms per pupil funding was for (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in Nottinghamshire in each financial year since 2010.

Catherine McKinnell:

The table below provides per-pupil funding units from 2018/19 to 2023/24, which represents the funding provided for schools in Nottinghamshire each year in the schools block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG).

The department cannot provide comparable funding for Nottinghamshire back to 2010, due to the changes in the funding system since that time. The scope of the per-pupil funding before and after 2018/19 are not directly comparable. In particular, the central services provided by local authorities were split out from the schools block funding in 2018/19, and instead funded separately through the central school services block from that year onwards.

The figures in the table below are provided on a cash basis. The department also publishes real-terms statistics on schools funding at the national level, which does not distinguish by phase. The department uses the GDP deflator to calculate real-terms funding levels. These can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-funding-statistics> and <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/methodology/school-funding-statistics-methodology>.

	DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK UNIT OF FUNDING	
	YEAR	
Primary	Secondary	
2018/19	£3,927	£4,985
2019/20	£3,946	£5,013
2020/21	£4,125	£5,218

	YEAR	DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK UNIT OF FUNDING
2021/22	£4,467	£5,650
2022/23	£4,592	£5,817
2023/24	£4,814	£6,145
2024/25	£5,071	£6,470

These figures do not include funding for growth, premises or additional funding received through supplementary grants.

■ Skills England

Damian Hinds:

[\[891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which responsibilities of (a) the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and (b) other bodies she plans to transfer to the proposed new body, Skills England.

Janet Daby:

Skills England will bring together employers, education and training providers and unions with national and combined authorities to ensure that national and regional skills systems are meeting the needs and supporting delivery of the government's Growth Mission.

Skills England will be established in phases over the next 9 to 12 months to create a responsive and collaborative skills system.

The route for employers to shape skills training is currently offered by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). The Skills England Bill will transfer relevant functions from IfATE to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, in the first instance, to ensure that Skills England can be developed and have the necessary functions in the coming months. IfATE will continue its important work in the interim as the transition of functions to Skills England is finalised. Further details will be shared as plans for legislation are developed.

■ Skills England: Costs

Damian Hinds:

[\[889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the cost of (a) creating Skills England and (b) transferring responsibilities to that body from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

Damian Hinds:

[\[890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the annual running costs of the proposed new body, Skills England.

Janet Daby:

Skills England will identify current and future skills gaps and put in place plans to address those gaps, bringing together central and local government, businesses, training providers and unions to meet the skills needs of the next decade across all regions.

Skills England will be established in phases over the next 9 to 12 months to create a responsive and collaborative skills system. The Skills England Bill announced in the King's Speech will transfer functions from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) to Skills England.

Operational budgets for Skills England will be finalised over the set-up period. However, the department does not envisage an increase in running costs for transferring and delivering functions that are currently being undertaken by different organisations or teams.

Special Educational Needs**Damian Hinds:****[894]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of pupils at (a) primary, (b) secondary pre-16 and (c) post-16 independent schools (i) have an Education Health and Care plan and have their school fees paid for in full by their local authority, (ii) have an Education Health and Care plan and do not have their school fees paid for in full by their local authority and (iii) have special educational needs but do not have an Education Health and Care plan, broken down by local authority.

Catherine McKinnell:

Where a local authority names an independent school on a child or young person's Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, the local authority must secure a place and must pay fees where applicable. However, if a child's parents wish to make a private fee-paying placement which has not been named following the EHC assessment process, the local authority may be relieved of its duty to secure the special educational provision, if it is satisfied that the parents have made 'suitable alternative arrangements'.

The department publishes statistics on EHC plans, including the establishment children and young people attend. These can be accessed at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>.

As at January 2024, local authorities named an independent special school for 25,620 EHC plans and an independent mainstream school for 6,768 EHC plans. Local authorities maintained 916 EHC plans where parents had made alternative arrangements, which includes where parents have chosen to arrange and pay for an independent school placement. Numbers and percentages by local authority are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/67bb4b0f-de93-4558-b7f4-08dcab23a860>.

This information is provided at individual level by local authorities in the SEN2 collection.

Phase of independent schools data is not collected. Therefore, the age group of the child and young person has been provided as a proxy in the attached table. However, please note that this does not necessarily translate to state-funded sector primary, secondary and post-16 schools.

The department also publishes statistics on special educational needs (SEN) provision for children in schools. More information can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>.

This publication includes children in independent schools recorded as having special educational needs who do not have an EHC plan, and is available at local authority level here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/de7807ad-ea91-4e25-b8aa-08dcab23db45>.

This information is provided by independent schools in the School Level Annual School Census and does not include school phase or an age breakdown of SEN.

Attachments:

1. EHCP_Independent_LA_Level [894_EHCP_independent_LA_level_.xlsx]

■ **Special Educational Needs: Cornwall**

Ben Maguire:

[1144]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of SEND provision in Cornwall; and what steps she plans to take to with Cornwall Council to help improve the (a) funding and (b) delivery of SEND services.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department has been working with the local area partnership since the Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection in February 2023. The inspection concluded that the local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The department holds regular, formal monthly monitoring meetings, in partnership with NHS England, that are focussed on the impact of actions taken to improve the lives of children and young people with SEND and their families. The department has put in place a SEND advisor and funded the Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence (RISE) consortium to support improvement.

Cornwall is part of the Developing Better Value in SEND (DBV in SEND) programme, which supports local authorities and their local area partners to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department will continue with its work with the local area to ensure that they deliver further improvements in services.

■ Special Educational Needs: Hertfordshire**Chris Hinchliff:****[1445]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the process to secure a SEND diagnosis for children living in North East Hertfordshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

Ofsted inspected local arrangements for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Hertfordshire in July 2023. Its report, published on 10 November 2023, concluded that there are widespread and/or systemic failings, leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.

The report found that many children and young people with SEND face long delays in having their needs assessed and receiving appropriate support. Parents and carers often encounter poor communication regarding education, health and care (EHC) assessments, as well as review processes, with many needing to take formal steps to secure the right support for their child, leading to frustration and added stress for families.

To ensure children are supported in receiving the necessary support and provision to match their needs in a timely manner, the department continues to monitor and challenge Hertfordshire County Council's progress against their priority action plan, which includes the monitoring of EHC plan 20-week timeliness rates.

Judgements regarding sufficient progress will be made by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission following the monitoring visit that is expected to take place 18 months after the initial inspection. Following this, the department will continue to monitor and provide appropriate challenge and support to the local authority to make the necessary improvements, with the guidance of an expert SEND advisor and NHS England advisor.

This government is committed to improving the experiences for children and young people with SEND and their families. The department will take a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and alternative provision settings, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

■ Special Educational Needs: Rural Areas**Sir John Hayes:****[1192]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of SEND delivery in rural areas.

Catherine McKinnell:

For too long the education and care system has not meet the needs of all children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision, including children in rural areas, receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department will be focusing on a community-wide approach to improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and to ensure that special schools cater to those with the most complex needs. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and I will work with families and education and care experts to deliver this, in the best interests of all children.

■ Students: Finance

Damian Hinds: [\[888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her planned timetable is for reviewing the way bursaries are allocated and the structure of retention payments.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department reviews bursaries each year before deciding the offer for trainees starting Initial Teacher Training (ITT) the following academic year. In doing this, the department takes account of a number of factors, including historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions, and teacher supply need in each subject.

The government is committed to delivering 6,500 new expert teachers. To deliver this commitment, the department will review the way bursaries are allocated and the structure of retention payments. The department will announce its recruitment and retention incentive offer for 2025/26 in due course.

■ Teachers: Crimes of Violence

Clive Lewis: [\[1513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help protect teachers from assaults by (a) pupils and (b) parents.

Stephen Morgan:

No teacher should feel unsafe or face violence or abuse in the workplace. The department will always support teachers to ensure they can work in safe and calm classrooms. All school employers, including trusts, have a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees.

Every pupil deserves to learn and staff deserve to work in safe, calm classrooms. The government will back schools in delivering this.

The government is determined to understand the causes of poor behaviour. The department has already committed to providing access to specialist mental health professionals in every school, introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school, and ensuring earlier intervention in mainstream schools for pupils with special needs.

Since 2021, the Behaviour Hubs programme has also offered support to schools that want to improve pupil behaviour and create calm, safe and supportive environments.

■ Teachers: Recruitment**Damian Hinds:**[\[887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the targeted increase of 6,500 more teachers recruited to teach key subjects means a net increase in the full-time equivalent number of teachers teaching those subjects, in post in secondary schools; what the subjects are; what her planned timescale is for reaching that target; and whether she has a target for other subjects over the same period.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department knows that high quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education, which is why this government will recruit 6,500 new expert teachers.

The department is developing its approach and putting plans in place to achieve this, which will be shared publicly in due course. These measures will include getting more teachers into shortage subjects, supporting areas that face recruitment challenges and tackling retention issues. The way bursaries are allocated, and the structure of retention payments, will also be reviewed.

The department has taken a key step towards delivering an additional 6,500 teachers by accepting the School Teachers' Review Body recommendation of a 5.5% award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools in England from September.

This is a substantial award that recognises hard-working school teachers and leaders, and demonstrates this government's commitment to the teaching profession.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has already addressed over 14,000 people from the workforce, is expanding the teacher recruitment campaign 'Every Lesson Shapes a Life', and has committed to working alongside the sector to re-establish teaching as an attractive profession and as one that existing teachers want to remain in, former teachers want to return to and new graduates wish to join.

■ Universities: Liability**Layla Moran:**[\[1023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is her Department's policy that universities should have a statutory duty of care to students.

Layla Moran:[\[1024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to help improve mental health practice in universities.

Janet Daby:

The department has asked the higher education (HE) Student Support Champion, Professor Edward Peck, to continue to work with students, parents, mental health experts and the HE sector to drive meaningful change in mental health practice through the HE Mental Health Implementation Taskforce.

The Office for Students (OfS) is providing £400,000 of funding to the student mental health charity, Student Minds, to rapidly expand the scale and membership of the University Mental Health Charter Programme. The Programme supports universities to adopt a whole-institution approach to mental health, and also follow a process of continuous improvement to work towards the Charter Award. The University Mental Health Charter is already raising standards within the sector.

The department has appointed academic experts from the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health to undertake a National Review of HE Suicides. It will report findings by spring 2025, ensuring lessons from tragic cases are shared widely across the sector.

In 2024, to support HE providers to engage with the National Review of HE Suicides and develop mental health and suicide prevention strategies, the OfS is allocating £15 million of funding. This funding is in addition to the £10 million provided early this year to support student mental health and hardship.

The government is determined that children and young people receive the mental health care they need which is why it has committed to recruit 8500 additional staff across children and adult mental health services.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Energy: Prices

Sir John Hayes:

[\[866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to help people who are living (a) in rural areas and (b) off the energy grid with the cost of energy.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

In an unstable world, the only way to guarantee our energy security and protect billpayers permanently is to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels and towards homegrown clean energy. New, clean renewable generation reduces our exposure to the volatile gas market.

In the short-term, we will continue to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 annual rebate on energy bills for eligible low-income households. We will invest an extra £6.6 billion in energy efficiency funding over the next Parliament to upgrade 5 million homes and cut bills for families.

■ Fuel Oil: North East Somerset and Hanham

Dan Norris:

[\[1632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support people who rely on heating oil in North East Somerset and Hanham constituency.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The government will continue to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 annual rebate on energy bills for eligible low-income households. We will invest an extra £13.2 billion through our Warm Homes Plan over the next Parliament to upgrade 5 million homes and cut bills for families.

Fuel Poverty: Cramlington and Killingworth

Emma Foody: [1110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency living in fuel poverty.

Emma Foody: [1111]

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 Cramlington and Killingworth constituency in each year since 2010.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The latest statistics for the number of households in fuel poverty in parliamentary constituencies in England, can be found in the published sub-regional fuel poverty statistics, in Table 4: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>. These statistics were published in line with the boundaries operating prior to the 2024 General Election.

The latest official Fuel Poverty Statistics for England were published in February 2024 here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics#2023-statistics> Annex D of this report includes an affordability measure of the number of households required to spend more than 10 per cent of their income on domestic energy. However, affordability measure estimates are not held at sub-national level.

Great British Energy: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister: [1124]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the planned remit for Great British Energy is in Northern Ireland; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Windsor Framework on the operation of Great British Energy.

Michael Shanks:

We have set out significant detail on Great British Energy (GBE) after only three weeks in office, including that GBE will benefit all four corners of our United Kingdom whilst respecting the devolution settlements. We are resetting our approach to working with the devolved nations, because meaningful cooperation centred on respect will be key to delivering change across our United Kingdom. We are committed to close collaboration with Northern Ireland's Ministers on GBE. We will work with the Northern Ireland Executive on the scope of GBE's activities and the opportunities for Northern Ireland. We will set out further detail in due course.

■ Hinkley Point C Power Station**Claire Coutinho:** [\[1570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his policy on decarbonising the grid by 2030 on the cost of constructing Hinkley Point C.

Michael Shanks:

Hinkley Point C is not a government project and therefore construction costs are a matter for EDF and its development partners on the project.

■ Insulation and Renewable Energy: Norfolk**Alice Macdonald:** [\[1420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to increase (a) levels of home insulation and (b) access to renewable energy sources in (i) Norwich North constituency and (ii) Norfolk.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department is committed to increase home insulation and renewable energy sources in all parts of the country, including in Norwich North and Norfolk.

The Warm Homes Plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation and other improvements to cut bills. We will announce policy details of the Warm Home Plan soon.

Delivering on our renewable electricity ambitions is integral to delivering our clean power by 2030. We are working in collaboration with the private sector to radically increase the deployment of onshore wind, solar and offshore wind.

■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[1034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to meet with the Durham Miners' Association to discuss the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme.

Sarah Jones:

The Scheme Rules and their operation are agreed between the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme Trustees and the Government. I will be meeting the Trustees shortly to discuss how best to deliver on our manifesto commitments.

Graeme Downie: [\[776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the membership will be for the review of Mineworkers' Pension Scheme.

Sarah Jones:

As of 30 September, there were 119,244 members of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme.

■ National Grid: Public Consultation

Ben Goldsborough: [\[1128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will (a) make an assessment of the adequacy of the regulatory framework for ensuring public consultation on energy transmission projects and (b) take steps to ensure that statutory consultations on such projects include consultation on construction options.

Michael Shanks:

For England and Wales, the Planning Act 2008 sets out the consultation requirements that developers of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), including electricity transmission projects, are required to follow. In April 2024, new guidance was published for NSIPs which sets out the consultation milestone that requires developers to demonstrate that they have consulted adequately with communities. The developer's statutory consultation needs to show compliance with the energy National Policy Statements, including in relation to construction. In Scotland, the Scottish Government's good practice guidance sets out the expectations and requirements for consultation.

■ Renewable Energy

Jim Shannon: [\[951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of increasing clean energy generation on energy efficiency.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Investing in clean energy at speed and scale is the only way to deliver energy security and protect families from future energy shocks.

■ Renewable Energy: Prices

Deirdre Costigan: [\[1902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, to make an assessment of the impact of his plans for (a) new onshore wind and (b) other renewable energy sources on household bills.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

In an unstable world, the only way to guarantee our energy security and protect billpayers from future energy shocks is to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels and towards home-grown clean energy. Through supporting the transition to clean energy, Great British Energy will save families money by ensuring electricity bills are no longer exposed to the kinds of gas price shocks which helped drive increases in the electricity price cap of over £1,300 for a typical household during winter 22/23.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Finance**

Stuart Anderson: [\[1033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how his Department plans to spend its budget allocated to agriculture in the 2024-25 financial year; and how much and what proportion of that budget will be spent on support for farmers in South Shropshire constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

We will deliver a resilient and healthy food system, with a new deal for farmers that works for farmers, food security and nature.

The only way to do this effectively is to listen to farmers and others with a stake in our food system, countryside and nature. Defra are doing this and assessing data and information about what's working and what isn't before setting out detailed plans. The Department will confirm plans for further optimisation and rollout of farming grants and schemes shortly.

Victoria Atkins: [\[968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to increase the agriculture budget by inflation for each year of this Parliament.

Daniel Zeichner:

The budget for farming and agriculture beyond this year will be part of the government's spending review.

■ Air Pollution

Adam Jogee: [\[1094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the World Health Organisation guidelines entitled WHO global air quality guidelines: particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide, published on 22 September 2021, whether he plans to adopt the recommendations set out in those guidelines for (a) particulate matter, PM2.5 and PM10, (b) ozone, (c) nitrogen dioxide, (d) sulphur dioxide and (e) carbon monoxide.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is committed to meeting current legal targets for air quality, including the targets recently set under the Environment Act 2021, and will review the policy measures needed to achieve them. We will deliver a comprehensive and ambitious Clean Air Strategy including a series of interventions to reduce emissions so that everyone's exposure to air pollution is reduced.

■ Animal Welfare

Cat Smith:

[\[1286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to launch a consultation on which activities should be banned from being (a) advertised and (b) offered for sale under the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Animals (Low Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023 provides a framework for the introduction of a future bans on the advertising and offering for sale, in England and Northern Ireland, of low-welfare animal activities abroad. Future decisions on the next steps will be evidence-based and subject to Parliamentary scrutiny.

The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation. We are considering the most effective ways to deliver these commitments and will be setting out next steps in due course.

■ Biodiversity: Regulation

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[1842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to introduce exemptions for protected horticultural growers within the biodiversity net gain regulations.

Mary Creagh:

The Government recognises the importance of horticultural growers. Land used for horticulture can be enhanced or created to generate biodiversity units, which can support site expansion or be sold on the private market or used to support on site expansion. Equally, any impacts to horticultural land through development or land use change require compensation.

Following consultation, exemptions to the BNG requirement set out within the regulations are narrow and focussed. This keeps the policy ambitious, whilst being proportionate and deliverable for developers and local authorities. The exemptions are not sector specific.

Defra are ready to work with the horticulture industry to promote best practice for maximising on-site BNG opportunities.

■ Drinking Water: Havant

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[\[1621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Southern Water's proposal to introduce recycled waste water in to the drinking water supply at the Havant Thicket Reservoir on the environment.

Emma Hardy:

Southern Water have recently consulted on their proposal to turn treated wastewater, normally pumped out to sea, into purified recycled water. This water would then be pumped to Havant Thicket Reservoir, where it would be stored and mixed with spring water, before being pumped along a new pipeline and treated prior to going into supply.

The urgent need to protect the iconic chalk rivers of Hampshire means that action is needed now to ensure resilient and sustainable water supplies. Options such as water recycling mark a transition to water supplies that are not dependent upon the uncertainties of rainfall. These options are well established elsewhere around the world and are already operating elsewhere in the UK, to ensure resilient supplies in a changing climate.

All water recycling options including Southern Water's must meet the environmental requirements for wastewater treatment discharges into the environment. Water re-abstracted from the environment for public water supply must also be treated to meet our high drinking water standards before use, in accordance with a robust risk assessment.

Recent research carried out for the Drinking Water Inspectorate indicated a high level of support (79% agreement) for the use of water recycling to supplement drinking water supplies.

An online survey and in-depth, online interviews were undertaken between July and September 2022. The online survey had 1,618 respondents with demographic representation broadly consistent with the UK adult population. Survey respondents were randomly allocated to groups so that the impact of two manipulated variables (relating to water recycling scheme design and to terminology) could be investigated. Overall, the survey showed that there was a relatively high Ref: DWI 70/2/348. Project Report ii level of support (79% agreement) for the utilisation of water recycling to supplement drinking water supplies. The survey results also showed that terminology has a stronger influence on levels of support for water recycling than scheme configuration (e.g. the presence of environmental buffers).

■ Farming Recovery Fund**Steve Barclay:**[\[1674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timescale is for making payments under the Farming Recovery Fund to eligible applicants.

Daniel Zeichner:

To date all eligible farmers identified in the original Farming Recovery Fund announced in April 2024 have been offered the payment in line with the published criteria. In May, Defra announced a further expansion to the fund and further information on that will be available soon.

■ Fly-tipping: South Holland and the Deepings**Sir John Hayes:****[1638]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many instances of fly tipping were recorded in South Holland and the Deepings constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2023 and (c) 2024 to date.

Mary Creagh:

Local authorities are required to report fly-tipping incidents and enforcement actions to Defra, which the department publishes annually, at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/env24-fly-tipping-incident-and-actions-taken-in-england>. This data isn't available at a constituency level and excludes the majority of private-land incidents.

Data for the period April 2023 to March 2024 will be published at the end of this year.

■ Food: Waste**Wera Hobhouse:****[1332]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to introduce mandatory food waste reporting.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to setting a clear roadmap to a circular economy – a future where our resources are used as efficiently and productively as possible for as long as possible, and waste is reduced. The ministerial team are reviewing policies to address the challenges associated with tackling food waste in the supply chain, and these will be announced in the usual way.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Correspondence**Ms Stella Creasy:****[1672]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to respond to the letter from the UN Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention of 12 March 2024.

Mary Creagh:

The UK welcomed the creation of the Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention.

The Government is considering the issues raised in the Special Rapporteur's two recent letters, in the context of the UK's obligations under the Aarhus Convention.

We will respond in due course.

■ Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023**Steve Barclay:****[1673]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timetable is for (a) bringing forward and (b) implementing secondary legislation relating to

the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023; and whether he has a target date for full implementation of the Act's provisions.

Daniel Zeichner:

Innovation is important in strengthening food security, enhancing resilience and improving agricultural sustainability.

We are considering how to take forward the regulatory framework outlined in the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act and will share our plans in due course.

■ **Greenpeace**

John Glen:

[\[1246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the Government policy is on engagement with Greenpeace.

Daniel Zeichner:

As all governments do, this Government engages with a range of stakeholders, including Greenpeace.

■ **Inland Border Facilities: Ashford**

Ms Stella Creasy:

[\[611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the average time was for a consignment entering Sevington Border Control Post to leave following (a) a physical inspection and (b) any other inspection in each week since 30 April 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

Monitoring and enforcing the border controls introduced under the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) is undertaken collaboratively between bodies including Defra, the Animal and Plant Health Agency, Border Force and HMRC.

Our checks are intelligence-led and based on biosecurity risk: It would be inappropriate for us to set out operational details such as the exact inspection details from 30 April.

Checking details, such as time taken to review consignments, could be used by bad actors looking for exploitable elements of the border to facilitate illegal imports.

Furthermore, this information is also commercially sensitive. HMG does not wish to impact trader choice of route as details of checks completed may advantage/disadvantage other ports as traders may BCP shop to find what appears on paper to be the "fastest route".

■ **Pets: Travel**

Graeme Downie:

[\[1125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with his EU counterparts on the ease of pet transportation between the UK and EU member states.

Graeme Downie: [\[1126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with EU representatives on the potential reintroduction of pet passports.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra applied to the European Commission in February 2020 for the United Kingdom (UK) and Crown Dependencies to be listed as a 'Part 1' third country for the purposes of the EU pet travel scheme having met all of the EU's stated conditions to be granted this. However, the EU formally 'listed' the UK as a 'Part 2' third country, meaning pet owners can no longer use pet passports issued in Great Britain (GB) for travel to the EU and instead need a single use Animal Health Certificate (AHC).

The Government wants to reset our relationship with the EU and will meet with European partners over the coming months to discuss how we might deepen cooperation. However, it is too early to speculate on the scope or outcome of these discussions, including in relation to pet travel.

Graeme Downie: [\[1127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the average annual cost to pet owners of obtaining an animal health certificates for travel to an EU country.

Daniel Zeichner:

Animal Health Certificates are obtained from an official veterinarian. All fees are set by veterinary surgeons or veterinary practices and are a private matter between individual practices and their clients.

■ **Plastics: Pollution**

Paula Barker: [\[715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce plastic pollution.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to reducing plastic waste and in April 2024 announced a ban on plastic-containing wet wipes. We will be assessing further actions to take to address the challenge of plastic pollution and move to a circular economy for plastics.

As plastic pollution is a transboundary challenge, later this year, the UK will be attending the final round of negotiations to develop a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution globally and is committed to negotiating an ambitious treaty.

■ **Potatoes: Northern Ireland**

Jim Allister: [\[1122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Windsor Framework on (a) ware potato

production in Northern Ireland and (b) the import of seed potatoes from Britain to Northern Ireland.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Windsor Framework has lifted the ban on the movement of seed potatoes which can now move under the Northern Ireland Plant Health Label scheme, provided the movement is between a registered professional operator in Great Britain and a professional operator in Northern Ireland. Once planted in Northern Ireland, the new crop of seed potatoes can be sold with no restrictions. This reflects long standing arrangements for biosecurity.

■ **River Itchen: Sewage**

Darren Paffey:

[1848]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to increase the enforcement powers of Ofwat to help tackle unlawful discharges of sewage into the River Itchen by Southern Water.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State recently met with water company bosses, including Southern Water, to make clear that water firms will be held accountable for their performance for customers and the environment. During the meeting, water bosses signed up to the Government's initial package of reforms to cut sewage dumping and attract investment to upgrade infrastructure.

The Government also announced a new Water (Special Measures) Bill, which will turn around the performance of water companies, in the King's Speech. The Bill will strengthen regulation, give the water regulator new powers to ban the payment of bonuses if environmental standards are not met and increase accountability for water executives. These are the first critical steps in enabling a long-term and transformative reset of the entire water sector.

I would also refer the hon. Member to the Written Statement made by the Secretary of State on 18 July: [Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#).

■ **Veterinary Services: Northern Ireland**

Jim Allister:

[1123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Windsor Framework on (a) the availability of veterinary medicines and (b) the farming industry after 31 December 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

A grace period arrangement for veterinary medicines remains in place until the end of 2025 and provides for the continuity of supply to Northern Ireland.

Maintaining availability of veterinary medicines to Northern Ireland after the end of 2025 is a priority. This Government will progress work on this issue as quickly as

possible and we will continue to engage with the agricultural and pharmaceutical industries to fully understand the potential impacts.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Kate Osborne:

[\[900155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support peace and human rights in Colombia.

Catherine West:

Supporting Implementation of the 2016 Colombia Peace Agreement is our priority. The UK has committed £80 million towards peace, stability and human rights in Colombia since 2016, leading efforts in the UN, including as penholder of resolutions in the UNSC.

Colombia is a Human Rights priority for the UK. The UK is working with the Colombian Government and communities to raise our concerns and to support the victims of sexual violence and environmental crimes.

David Taylor:

[\[900156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for asylum accommodation policy of using the overseas development budget to help fund asylum accommodation.

Anneliese Dodds:

The growth of asylum accommodation spending has led to difficult cuts to other UK aid programmes. This Government is committed to rebuilding Britain's reputation on international development. The Home Secretary is committed to bringing order to the asylum system and has taken steps to unblock the backlog of claims, which will help reduce costs.

Ben Coleman:

[\[900157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help strengthen the UK's relationship with Europe.

Stephen Doughty:

This Government will reset relations with our European friends and strengthen ties to boost economic growth, enhance our security through an ambitious UK-EU security pact and tackle shared challenges.

The European Political Community Summit at Blenheim Palace on 18 July brought together 46 European leaders to advance this reset. To take forward this work, the Foreign Secretary travelled to Germany, Poland and Sweden in his first weekend in the role and I conducted my first visit to Greece.

Alex Sobel:

[\[900158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Indonesian counterpart on the human rights situation in West Papua.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary and I have raised concerns publicly about reports of human rights abuses during the protests in Bangladesh. We have urged an end to the violence and stressed the need for the right to assemble peacefully and express different political views to be protected.

We continue to engage with the Bangladesh government including the Foreign Secretary on the importance of respect for human rights.

■ **Arms Trade: Israel**

Chris Law:

[\[616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the findings of the Oxfam report of 18 July 2024 entitled *Water War Crimes*, whether his Department plans to review Government legal advice on arms sales to Israel.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We have been clear that the government must uphold both our domestic and international legal obligations when it comes to arms exports as set out in the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. As soon as the Foreign Secretary took office he commissioned a review of International Humanitarian Law in relation to operations in Gaza. That review process is underway and requires careful consideration. The Foreign Secretary will make public his decision on Israel's compliance as soon as that process is complete.

■ **Bangladesh: Demonstrations**

Uma Kumaran:

[\[1627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in Bangladesh on the (a) student protests and (b) potential restoration of (i) internet and (ii) mobile services in that country.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary and I have publicly called for an immediate end to the violence and unrest in Bangladesh, and for access to the internet and communications services to be restored. I discussed my concerns regarding the situation with the Bangladesh High Commissioner to London on 19 and 23 July. The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh has engaged with Bangladesh government ministers to reinforce messages on de-escalation, the need for constructive dialogue to reduce tensions and for communications to be restored. We will continue to call on all sides to find a peaceful way forward.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Private Education**Dame Harriett Baldwin:** [\[1265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff in his Department are currently eligible to have their children's school fees paid by his Department.

Catherine West:

In 2023/24, 341 FCDO staff were in receipt of Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) funding for their children to attend a UK boarding school. 699 FCDO staff based overseas with children were attending an overseas school funded by the FCDO. The FCDO Headcount of UK based staff at 31/3/23 was 7,601 staff.

Dame Harriett Baldwin: [\[1266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the financial impact of a 20% VAT increase on school fees on his departmental budget in (a) 2024/25 and (b) 2025/26.

Catherine West:

The FCDO cannot accurately estimate the impact of a 20 percent VAT increase on school fees, since we do not know if schools will transfer the costs of fees to parents, or from what date the VAT will be introduced.

Hamas: UNRWA**Mr Peter Bedford:** [\[1434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of reports that United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) facilities are being used by Hamas in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are aware of reports of Hamas using healthcare facilities and other infrastructure, such as schools, as bases and command nodes. UNRWA has condemned the use of UN facilities by any party to the conflict for military and fighting purposes. All parties must act in accordance with International Humanitarian Law.

India: British Nationals Abroad**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[1193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what consular support is in place to assist Indians with British citizenship when they are visiting India.

Catherine West:

We would not normally provide consular support to a dual British national living or travelling in the country of their other nationality. In countries which recognise and permit dual-nationality, we would consider an exception if someone is vulnerable and

we have human rights or humanitarian concerns. Some countries, such as India, do not recognise dual nationality so providing consular assistance to a British/Indian dual national may not be possible.

■ **Israel and Occupied Territories: Aid Workers**

Brendan O'Hara: [\[1677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential implications for his policies of visa restrictions on international aid workers to (a) Israel and (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories; and whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on improving humanitarian access to those territories.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

During his first visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 14-15 July, the Foreign Secretary pressed Israeli leaders to deliver on their promise to "flood" Gaza with aid. We are concerned at reports of humanitarian agencies being unable to do their jobs because of visa restrictions. We are calling for the full co-operation of Israel with the UN and humanitarian agencies to grant visas and allow for the unfettered access required by humanitarians.

■ **Occupied Territories: Armed Conflict**

Melanie Ward: [\[766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish risk assessments of the likelihood of atrocity crimes being committed in Gaza and the West Bank that his Department has made in the last 10 months.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

It is our policy that any FCDO monitoring and assessment of atrocity risks is confidential and therefore we have no plans to publish. However, we continue to monitor risks closely and will continue to update the House on the ongoing situation in Gaza. We do not have access to the advice provided to the previous Government.

■ **Occupied Territories: Violence**

Jeremy Corbyn: [\[1460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of recent increases in settler violence in the West Bank.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Settlement expansion reached record levels in the past year and has been accompanied by an increase in settler violence. During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel and the OPTs on 14-15 July, he met with Palestinians displaced in the West Bank and was horrified to hear of acts of violence carried out by settlers.

The Foreign Secretary made the UK's position clear to those communities and to the Israeli Government. Settlements are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution.

The Government will challenge those who undermine the prospects of a two-state solution or use hateful rhetoric. We will look at all options to take tougher action.

■ **Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief**

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[863]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to recommendation 6 of the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review of FCDO support for persecuted Christians, published in 2019, whether he plans to appoint a Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Stephen Doughty:

This Government will champion freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all abroad. No one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. Envoy roles will be decided upon in due course. In the meantime, we will use the strength of our global diplomatic network, including dedicated staff within the FCDO, to promote and protect FoRB around the world.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Care Workers: Agency Workers**

Paula Barker:

[511]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent the (a) exploitation of and (b) potential waste in public funding for agencies arranging adult social care workers from overseas.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 24 July 2024]: We have seen unacceptable increases in unethical practices and exploitation of international recruits in the adult social care sector. We are committed to improving the way international recruitment works in adult social care, to ensuring individuals work for legitimate providers, and to tackling the exploitation of workers.

This includes working closely with the Home Office to share concerns and intelligence. In addition, £16 million has been provided to regional partnerships this financial year which is focused on providing support to international workers affected by unethical employment practices to access appropriate services and provide pastoral support.

The Government recognises the scale of reforms needed to make the adult social care sector attractive, to support sustainable workforce growth and reduce the reliance on international recruitment. We want it to be regarded as a profession, and for the people who work in care to be respected as professionals.

■ Dental Health: Babies

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce tooth brushing education for parents of infants from teething age until three years old.

Stephen Kinnock:

In England, local authorities are responsible for assessing oral health needs, developing oral health strategies, and commissioning oral health improvement programmes for children in their local area.

The Better Health Start for Life website offers expectant parents and parents of children aged zero to four years old evidence-based information on adopting healthy habits. It features new content, including a new video, on how to take care of infant teeth, with information on when to start a regular brushing regime, and limiting food and drink that could damage emerging teeth. There is also Delivering Better Oral Health, an evidence-based toolkit which includes advice on toothbrushing for children aged zero to three years old.

■ Dental Health: Pupils

Grahame Morris:

[\[1485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2024 to question 52 on Dental Health: Pupils, when the UK National Screening Committee will next review recommendations on school dental screening.

Grahame Morris:

[\[1486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2024 to question 52 on Dental Health: Pupils, for what reason the National Screening Committee have not reviewed school dental screening recommendations in the period 2022-23.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) was due to review screening for dental disease in children under nine years old in 2022/23. However, a number of reviews, including this one, were delayed due to staff depletion and delays to recruitment, following the UK NSC secretariat function moving into the Department, and the Committee's remit expanding. Staffing levels have now been resolved, and the UK NSC is addressing the outstanding reviews in their planned three-year programme of work.

■ Dental Services and General Practitioners: Aldershot

Alex Baker:

[\[1609\]](#)

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 Aldershot constituency; and what plans he has to improve that provision.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP) or National Health Service dentist, and we are committed to fixing the the crisis in primary care to secure the long-term sustainability of the NHS, and increase access to local services including those in the Aldershot constituency. Aldershot sits within the NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB), where the percentage of GP appointments delivered within two weeks of booking is 3.2% lower than the national average. Our annual statistics show that in 2023, only 40% of the adult population in the Frimley ICB were seen by an NHS dentist in the last two years, compared with 41% nationally.

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. The Government will also tackle the immediate dental crisis with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and to recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most.

■ Dental Services and General Practitioners: Hitchin**Alistair Strathern:**[\[1164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of (i) GPs and (ii) dentists in Hitchin constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 25 July 2024]: We have committed to training thousands more general practitioners (GPs) across the country as well as take pressure off those currently working in the system and NHS England has made a number of recruitment and retention schemes available to GPs.

Getting a National Health Service dentist is increasingly difficult. The Government will tackle the immediate crisis with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to areas that need them most.

Hitchin constituency runs across two integrated care boards (ICBs), Hertfordshire & West Essex and Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. Hertfordshire & West Essex ICB advises that recruitment initiatives include working with Primary Care Network training teams and supporting the training and development of GPs coming into practice. The Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB provides a range of initiatives to support with the recruitment and retention of GPs for its practices. These include a flexible staffing platform, Lantum, which aids retention of GPs by providing flexible roles, and support with workforce planning.

■ Dental Services: Burton and Uttoxeter

Jacob Collier:

[\[841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve NHS dental provision in Burton and Uttoxeter 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 recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

From 1 April 2023, the responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population was delegated to all integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. NHS dentists are required to keep their profiles on the NHS.UK website up to date so that patients can find a dentist more easily. This includes information on whether they are accepting new patients. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through an NHS dental practice, they should contact NHS111.

■ Dental Services: Coastal Areas and Rural Areas

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to end the proposed use of NHS Dental Vans.

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 to recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists. We will announce further plans in due course.

■ Dental Services: Contracts

Damien Egan:

[\[1421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reform the NHS dentistry contract.

Stephen Kinnock:

To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to National Health Service dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

There are no perfect payment systems and careful consideration needs to be given to any potential changes to the complex dental system, so that we deliver a system better for patients and professionals.

■ **Dental Services: Cramlington and Killingworth**

Emma Foody: [1115]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of open dentistry practices in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency between 2010 and 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

While there is no data available for 2010, as of February 2024, there are nine open dentistry practices in the Cramlington and Killingworth constituency. Of those nine practices, one is entirely private, and eight do a mixture of National Health Service and private work.

■ **Dental Services: Exeter**

Steve Race: [1892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of dentistry practices in the Exeter constituency accepting new (a) adult and (b) child NHS patients.

Steve Race: [1893]

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

Stephen Kinnock:

While data for 2010 is not available, as of 10 July 2024, there were 16 open dentistry practices in the Exeter constituency, two of which were showing as accepting new adult patients when availability allows, and two of which were showing as accepting new child patients when availability allows. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website, and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

■ **Dental Services: Gedling**

Michael Payne: [1075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many open dentistry practices were accepting adult NHS patients in Gedling constituency (a) on the most recent date for which data is available and (b) in 2010.

Stephen Kinnock:

While the data requested is not available for 2010, as of 10 July 2024, there were 13 open dentistry practices in the Gedling constituency, two of which were showing as accepting new adult patients. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website, and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

Dental Services: Halton

Mike Amesbury: [1026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of dentistry in Halton in the last (a) three months, (b) six months, (c) 12 months and (d) two years.

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 recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

From 1 April 2023, the responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. The NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB is responsible for having local processes in place to identify areas of need, and determine the priorities for investment across the ICB area. NHS Dental Statistics, published by NHS Digital, provides data on dental activity in England. The latest annual report is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-dental-statistics>

Dental Services: Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Dame Harriett Baldwin: [1267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data he holds on the impact of the £200 million NHS Dental Recovery Plan announced in February 2024 on the availability of NHS dental appointments in the Worcestershire and Herefordshire Integrated Care Board area.

Stephen Kinnock:

No assessments have yet been made on the impact of the £200 million NHS Dental Recovery Plan announced in February 2024.

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

dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

Dame Harriett Baldwin: [1268]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data he holds on the number of dentists accepting new NHS patients in the Worcestershire and Herefordshire Integrated Care Board area in July (a) 2023 and (b) 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

While there is no data available for 2023, as of 10 July 2024, there were 87 dentistry practices in the Worcestershire and Herefordshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), 12 of which stated they were accepting new adult National Health Service patients, when availability allows. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website and is matched to ICBs based on the postcode shown on the website. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

■ Dental Services: Newcastle-under-Lyme

Adam Jogee: [1086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to help improve access to NHS dentistry in Newcastle-under-Lyme 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 recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

From 1 April 2023, the responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards across England.

NHS dentists are required to keep their NHS.UK profiles up to date so that patients can find a dentist more easily. This includes information on whether they are accepting new patients. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through an NHS dental practice, they should contact NHS 111.

■ Dental Services: Norfolk

James Wild: [689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department has allocated to the NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board for the commissioning of NHS dental services in the 2024-25 financial year.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board's dental ringfence for 2024/25 is £64,780,000.

■ Dental Services: North Cornwall**Ben Maguire:****[1149]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of open dentistry practices in North Cornwall constituency accepting adult NHS patients (a) on the most recent date for which figures are available and (b) in the last 5 years for which figures are available.

Stephen Kinnock:

While the data requested is not available for the last five years, as of 10 July 2024, there were 11 open dentistry practices in the North Cornwall constituency, none of which were showing as accepting new adult patients. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website, and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

■ Dental Services: Norwich North**Alice Macdonald:****[1422]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of open dentistry practices that accept new adult NHS patients in Norwich North constituency on the (a) most recent date for which figures are available and (b) same date in 2010.

Stephen Kinnock:

While data for 2010 is not held centrally, as of 10 July 2024, there were nine open dentistry practices in the Norwich North constituency, none of which were showing as accepting new adult patients. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website, and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

■ Dental Services: York Outer**Mr Luke Charters:****[852]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of open dentistry practices in the York Outer constituency currently accepting (a) adult and (b) children NHS patients.

Stephen Kinnock:

As of 10 July 2024, there were eight open dentistry practices in the York Outer constituency, none of which were showing as currently accepting new adult or child patients. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website, and is matched to

constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

■ Dentistry: Migrant Workers

Graeme Downie: [855]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the General Dental Council on steps to reduce the time take for Ukrainian nationals to take the overseas registration exam to allow them to practice in the UK.

Graeme Downie: [856]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time is for dentists to sit the Overseas Registration Exam.

Graeme Downie: [857]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dentists have completed the Dental Overseas Registration Examination in each of the last five years.

Graeme Downie: [858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care how many Ukrainian dentists have completed the Overseas Registration Examination in each of the last three years.

Stephen Kinnock:

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not had any discussions with the General Dental Council (GDC) regarding the length of time it takes for Ukrainian nationals to take the Overseas Registration Exam (ORE).

The Department does not collect or hold information about the number of dentists that have completed the GDC's ORE, the number of Ukrainian dentists who have completed their ORE, or the average waiting time to sit the ORE exam.

With regards Ukrainian refugees' applications to register as dental professionals in the United Kingdom, the GDC understands that refugees may face difficulties in providing original documentation and, if that is the case, encourages applicants to contact the GDC's examinations team, who will help them to consider how they might go about meeting the requirements. More information for refugee dental professionals can be found on the GDC's website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gdc-uk.org/registration/join-the-register/information-for-refugee-dental-professionals>

■ Dentistry: Training

Claire Hanna: [1579]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making dental (a) foundation and (b) vocational training mandatory for dentists entering private practice.

Stephen Kinnock:

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the independent regulator of dentistry in the United Kingdom, and sets the standards that must be met by domestic and international applicants wishing to be added to the UK dental register. Only dentists and dental care professionals registered with the GDC can legally practise in both National Health Service and private dentistry in the UK. The GDC sets out these standards to ensure registrants are safe to practise, and patients receive a high standard of care.

Claire Hanna:[\[1580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the clinical experience dentists receive before becoming eligible to practice.

Claire Hanna:[\[1581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review the standards of training for dentistry students.

Stephen Kinnock:

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the independent regulator for dentists and dental care professionals in the United Kingdom. The GDC sets the standards of training and education required, including clinical placements, to gain entry to its register, and approves and inspects education and training providers.

■ Down Syndrome Act 2022**Andrew Cooper:**[\[1398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on producing statutory guidance under the Down Syndrome Act 2022.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is currently considering next steps on producing the Down syndrome statutory guidance, as required under the Down Syndrome Act 2022, and further information will be provided in due course.

Officials have engaged with stakeholders to progress the development of draft guidance. This has included the establishment of an advisory group to inform the development process, and carrying out a national call for evidence and review of the evidence to gain a better understanding of the specific needs of people with Down syndrome and how these can be met by relevant authorities. The call for evidence received over 1,500 responses, including responses from people with Down syndrome, their families and carers, professionals, organisations, and stakeholder groups representing people with genetic conditions.

■ General Practitioners

Neil O'Brien: [\[1552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GP (a) practices and (b) premises there were in each current ICB area in each month since January 2010.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: A table showing the number of general practices and premises in each current integrated care board (ICB) area in England, each month since January 2014, is attached. Data is not available before 2014. Open and close dates for both practices and branches were identified using data from the NHS Organisation Data Service. Locations have been mapped to current ICB boundaries.

Attachments:

1. No. of practices open monthly Jan 14 until May 22 [Annex A PQ1552 .xlsx]

■ General Practitioners: Cramlington and Killingworth

Emma Foody: [\[1117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of how many and what proportion of people living in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency are not registered with a GP.

Stephen Kinnock:

We do not hold the number of people not registered with a general practice (GP), or individual patient's addresses. As of 1 June 2024, there were 74,697 patients registered at GPs with a postcode in the Cramlington and Killingworth constituency. The data provided has been sourced from NHS England and shows the number of patients registered with a GP in the Cramlington and Killingworth constituency. This data is not directly comparable to local population data as parliamentary constituencies do not line up with GP practice catchment boundaries, so some patients will be registered to a GP in a different constituency.

■ General Practitioners: Recruitment

Mike Amesbury: [\[1031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme funding to employ GPs.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme is subject to annual review as part of the consultation on the GP Contract, with both professional and patient representatives. NHS England works closely with the Department to implement any changes identified as part of this process.

■ Health Services: Disability

Marsha De Cordova: [\[1339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he expects NHS England to publish the updated Accessible Information Standard.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Accessible Information Standard (AIS) review has been completed, and the updated standard and supporting documents are in the process of being transferred to web copy. NHS England is working on ensuring accessible versions are available for publication, and is making updates to the AIS e-learning modules in line with the new standard. NHS England is ensuring that all stakeholders involved in the review of the AIS have had ample opportunity to feedback on the process. The AIS documentation is going through NHS England's publication approval process. NHS England cannot provide a specific date for publication of the AIS, but aim to publish it soon.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[1340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data he holds on the number of people accessing NHS services who did not receive information in an accessible format.

Stephen Kinnock:

The requested data is not held centrally.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[1341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that all NHS providers are producing information in format that is in line with the Accessible Information Standard.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[1342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the barriers faced by patients who wish to access information in an alternative format.

Stephen Kinnock:

Under the Equality Act (2010), health and social care organisations must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged. National Health Service organisations and publicly funded social care providers must comply with the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) to meet the communication needs of patients and carers with a disability, impairment, or sensory loss.

Once the revised standard receives publishing approval, NHS England will continue work to support implementation with awareness raising, communication and engagement, and updated e-learning modules on the AIS to ensure NHS staff are better aware of the standard, and their roles and responsibilities in implementing it.

NHS England is in the process of developing updated e-learning training modules on the AIS, to complement the updated AIS. These will raise awareness of the standard and ensure that NHS staff can access up to date training on their roles and

responsibilities under the AIS, which should support better and more consistent implementation of the standard.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[1343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost to the public purse is of implementing the Accessible Information Standard.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England is committed to implementing the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) effectively. NHS England has identified a number of ways to support the standard, including through a self-assessment framework, and has committed to reviewing the efficacy of implementation. This will be achieved through existing staffing and team allocations.

For health and care systems, the AIS is an existing standard which has been in place since 2016, and we would expect systems to implement it within existing budgets, making it a priority where any costs are accrued to implement it. NHS England has invested officer time in developing the standard, and will invest further staff time in the launch and suitable communications as planned.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[1344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure NHS England is complying with the Accessible Information Standard.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England remains committed to implementing the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) effectively, and this remains a priority for the People and Communities division. NHS England has identified a number of ways to support the standard, including through a self-assessment framework, and has committed to reviewing the efficacy of implementation.

When NHS England publishes anything, the item will require approval via their publications approval process. This involves checking the item for compliance with website accessibility guidelines as well as general accessibility, for example complexity of language. In addition, their Equality and Involvement team will, as part of the process, review the proposed content and approach, with a view to ensuring that it is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty, before giving clearance. The Department has included the AIS within the NHS England mandate, which illustrates the commitment to NHS England implementing the AIS in its work.

■ Hospices: Finance

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[1180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much grant funding each Integrated Care Board in England is providing for hospice funding for (a) children's and (b) other hospices over the 2024-25 financial year.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[1181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the performance of Integrated Care Boards in England in fulfilling their duty to commission palliative and end of life care.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 26 July 2024]: Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for the commissioning of palliative and end of life care services, to meet the needs of their local populations. The hospice sector is an important part of the range of providers and services needed. 2023/24 was the final year of the Children's Hospice Grant, which commenced in 2007. In 2024/25, however, NHS England provided an additional £25 million of funding for children and young people's hospices, maintaining the level of grant funding from 2023/24. This funding was distributed, for the first time, via ICBs, in line with National Health Service devolution. The Department does not hold data on how much funding each ICB has provided to children's hospices and other hospices over 2024/25.

To support ICBs in their duty to commission palliative and end of life care services, NHS England has published statutory guidance, as well as service specifications for adults, and children and young people, all of which are available, respectively, at the following three links:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/palliative-and-end-of-life-care-statutory-guidance-for-integrated-care-boards-icbs/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/service-specifications-for-palliative-and-end-of-life-care-adults/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/service-specifications-for-palliative-and-end-of-life-care-children-and-young-people-cyp/>

Julia Buckley:

[1406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of funding arrangements for hospices.

Stephen Kinnock:

We want a society where every person receives high-quality, compassionate care, including at end of life. 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 next steps, including funding, on palliative and end of life care more widely in the coming months.

■ Hospitals: Construction

Dr Neil Hudson:

[1585]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department will continue the (a) Hospital Rebuilding Programme and (b) implementation of Community Diagnostic Centres.

Karin Smyth:

The Government recognises that strategic, value for money investments in capital projects are critical to providing good quality care. Specific commitments regarding the future of existing capital programmes are subject to the next Spending Review, with timescales for this not yet confirmed.

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 revision to the schedule.

The National Health Service is committed to rolling out additional diagnostic tests and scans from a network of 160 Community Diagnostic Centres across the country by March 2025, as part of the NHS's Elective Recovery Plan published in 2022.

It is unacceptable that some patients have been waiting over six weeks for a diagnostic test. The Government will support the NHS in increasing diagnostic capacity, to meet the demand for diagnostic services, as a priority. Specific programmes of funding to support this are subject to the upcoming Spending Review.

■ Mental Health Services

Neil Coyle:

[613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for bringing forward proposals to update and improve mental healthcare.

Stephen Kinnock:

Our plans to update and improve mental healthcare will be shared in due course.

The King's speech confirmed our intention to bring forward a Mental Health Bill to give patients greater choice, autonomy, enhanced rights and support, and ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect throughout treatment.

We will also recruit 8,500 additional staff across children and adult mental health services and introduce a specialist mental health professional in every school.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Mr Connor Rand:

[738]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many referrals have been accepted by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Trafford in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows the number of referrals to Trafford mental health services for those aged 17 years old and under, as well as the number of those referrals who received first contact, in each of the last five years:

YEAR	REFERRALS	REFERRALS WHO RECEIVED FIRST CONTACT
2019/20	3,987	1,868
2020/21	4,852	2,559
2021/22	6,677	3,362
2022/23	4,835	3,132
2023/24	4,982	2,798

Source: data taken from the Mental Health Services Dataset, published by NHS England.

■ **Mental Health Services: Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard**

Alex Mayer:[\[730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle waiting lists for mental health services in Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

Waiting lists for those referred for support are too high, and especially so for young people. People with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they deserve, which is why we will fix the broken system and ensure that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

The Government will recruit 8,500 additional staff across children and adult mental health services, introduce a specialist mental health professional in every school, and roll out the Young Futures hubs to further support young people's mental health.

■ **Neurodiversity: Mental Health Services**

Ben Goldsborough:[\[1091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many families of children (a) have applied, (b) are waiting and (c) have been issued with a neurodevelopmental services assessment in each local authority area in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The information is not available in the format requested.

■ Ophthalmic Services: Special Educational Needs

Neil O'Brien: [\[1364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the fee per child to deliver the Special Schools Eyecare service.

Neil O'Brien: [\[1551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the press release from the Association of Optometrists entitled Life-changing service for children with special educational needs at risk of collapse due to cuts, published on 9 May 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England has committed to investing up to £12.7 million annually from 2024/25 on the provision of sight tests and associated optical vouchers in special educational settings. This represents an approximately 87% increase compared to previous levels of spending. This additional investment has the potential to increase coverage from 4% of special educational settings to 100%.

NHS England has engaged with key stakeholders throughout the life of the programme and continues to work closely with local integrated care boards and the ophthalmic and voluntary sector, to scale up and roll out sight tests in special educational settings.

■ Palliative Care

Sir John Hayes: [\[876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take further steps to support hospices providing palliative care services.

Stephen Kinnock:

We want a society where every person receives high-quality, compassionate care, including at end of life. 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 next steps on palliative and end of life care more widely in the coming months.

■ Pancreatic Cancer: Screening

Jim Shannon: [\[1271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of diagnosis rates for pancreatic cancer in the last 12 months.

Andrew Gwynne:

We will improve cancer survival rates by hitting all National Health Service cancer waiting time targets within five years, including for pancreatic cancer. 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 single 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.

The most recent Faster Diagnosis Standard performance for upper gastrointestinal cancers, including oesophageal cancer, stomach cancer, small bowel cancer, pancreatic cancer, liver cancer and cancers of the biliary system, is 76% against the 75% standard for May 2024.

Pharmacy

Luke Akehurst: [\[442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to support community pharmacies.

Luke Akehurst: [\[446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the contribution of community pharmacies to local healthcare systems.

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. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists.

We are currently consulting with Community Pharmacy England on the national funding and contractual framework arrangements for 2024/25.

Kate Dearden: [\[489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support local pharmacies.

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. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists.

We are currently consulting with Community Pharmacy England on the national funding and contractual framework arrangements for 2024/25.

■ Pharmacy: Gedling

Michael Payne: [\[1384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to support community pharmacies in Gedling constituency.

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, including by cutting red tape. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists. We are currently consulting with Community Pharmacy England on the national funding and contractual framework arrangements, including in Gedling, for 2024/25.

■ Radiotherapy

Grahame Morris: [\[1484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that the National Equipment Tracking and Inventory System highlights radiotherapy cancer treatment machines that are over 10 years old; and if he will ensure that sufficient capital funding is available to replace those machines.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department can confirm that the National Equipment Tracking and Inventory System highlights radiotherapy cancer treatment machines within the National Health Service, as well as their associated ages.

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 NHS for 2022 to 2025, and the latest Capital Planning Guidance.

■ Rickets

Jim Shannon: [\[1274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help tackle rickets.

Andrew Gwynne:

Rickets is a condition that affects bone development in children. Cases of rickets are rare in the United Kingdom, and have been relatively consistent over recent years. The most common cause of rickets is a lack of vitamin D and calcium, although in rare cases, children can be born with a genetic form of the condition.

Since it is difficult for people to get enough vitamin D from food alone, the Government advises that everyone should consider taking a daily 10-microgram

vitamin D supplement during the autumn and winter. People at high risk of not getting enough vitamin D, pregnant and breastfeeding women, all children aged one to four years old, and all babies, unless they're having more than 500 millilitre of infant formula a day, should take a daily supplement throughout the year. People at high risk of not getting enough vitamin D include:

- those who are not often outdoors, for example if they're frail or housebound;
- are in an institution like a care home;
- usually wear clothes that cover up most of their skin when outdoors; and
- those who have dark skin, such as people with an African, African-Caribbean or south Asian background.

Government advice on vitamin D is communicated via the NHS.UK website and the social marketing campaigns Start4Life, Better Health, and Healthier Families. Through our Healthy Food Schemes, like Healthy Start, Nursery Milk, and the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme, the Government provides a nutritional safety net to those who need it the most. Beneficiaries of our food scheme Healthy Start are eligible for free Healthy Start vitamins, which include vitamin C and D. The law also requires the addition of vitamin D to all infant formula.

■ **Social Services: Career Development**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a national career framework for social care staff that is integrated with the job-evaluated Agenda for Change pay and conditions framework in the NHS.

Stephen Kinnock:

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 care workers and trade unions to deliver a long over-due new deal, which will include establishing the first ever Fair Pay Agreement for care professionals. The details of this will be agreed as part of this process.

■ **Social Services: Training**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to introduce standardised training for staff working in social care.

Stephen Kinnock:

Enhancing skills for staff working in social care is of critical importance, and we want care to be both personalised and of outstanding quality. We are currently reviewing our approach and will work with the sector and other interested organisations, such as the recently announced Skills England, to agree on the right approach.

■ Veterans: North East**Emma Foody:****[1106]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of mental health support services for veterans in (a) Cramlington and Killingworth constituency and (b) the North East.

Stephen Kinnock:

No specific assessment has been made. Op COURAGE is the existing veterans' mental health and wellbeing service. The mental health service provided by Op COURAGE includes access to dedicated support for those presenting with substance misuse and other addictions such as gambling. We would encourage any veterans living in the North of England who wish to access this service to contact Op COURAGE via phone or email, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.tewv.nhs.uk/services/op-courage/>

More widely, we are aware that many people with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they need. That is why we will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, so people can access high quality mental health support when they need it. Improved mental health services will benefit veterans as well as the wider population.

The King's speech confirmed our intention to bring forward a Mental Health Bill to give patients greater choice, autonomy, enhanced rights and support, and ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect throughout treatment.

■ Visas: Social Services**Rachael Maskell:****[1305]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the eligibility criteria for the Health and Care Worker visa on the ability of social care employers to recruit staff.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department does not intend to make a specific assessment of the impact of the eligibility criteria on the ability of social care employers to recruit staff. The Government will continue to monitor workforce capacity in the sector closely, including the role of international recruitment.

We recognise the scale of reforms needed to make the adult social care sector attractive, to support sustainable workforce growth, and reduce the reliance on international recruitment. We want it to be regarded as a profession, and for the people who work in care to be respected as professionals.

HOME OFFICE**■ Anti-social Behaviour and Crime****Sonia Kumar:****[1171]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle (a) antisocial behaviour, (b) vandalism, (c) noise disturbances and (d) public disorder (i) nationally and (ii) in Dudley constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission to take back our streets.

We will put thousands of neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities so that residents have a named officer they can turn to when things go wrong.

We will crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets by introducing tougher powers via a Crime and Policing Bill, including a new Respect Order to tackle repeat offending.

■ Anti-social Behaviour and Drugs: Newcastle-under-Lyme**Adam Jogie:****[1092]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to help tackle (a) anti-social behaviour and (b) drug use in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission to take back our streets.

We will put thousands of neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities so that residents have a named officer they can turn to when things go wrong.

We will crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets by introducing tougher powers via a Crime and Policing Bill, including a new Respect Order to tackle repeat offending.

We know that drugs drive crime and cause harm to individuals and society. We will take action as part of our Safer Streets Mission to drive down crime and anti-social behaviour across the country, drawing on evidence for what works in identifying drug users and intervening effectively to change patterns of behaviour including, where appropriate, treatment and recovery services for those dependent on drugs. We will also give detailed consideration to the findings of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs' forthcoming review of synthetic cathinones, sometimes referred to as 'monkey dust', which are a significant cause of anti-social behaviour and drug harms.

■ Anti-social Behaviour: North East**Emma Foody:** [1101]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help tackle anti-social behaviour in (a) Cramlington and Killingworth constituency and (b) the North East.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission to take back our streets.

We will put thousands of neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities so that residents have a named officer they can turn to when things go wrong.

We will crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets by introducing tougher powers via a Crime and Policing Bill, including a new Respect Order to tackle repeat offending.

■ Asylum: Housing**Helen Hayes:** [1716]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to collect data on the performance of (a) Serco, (b) Mears, (c) Clearsprings Ready Homes and (d) other providers of asylum accommodation.

Helen Hayes: [1718]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to increase the number of inspections of asylum accommodation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

This government is committed to improving service delivery of the Asylum Accommodation Support Contracts (AASC).

The Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contracts (AASC) Statement of Requirements below gives a detailed breakdown of all of the services to be undertaken by our accommodation providers and the standards expected. Details can be found at:

[AASC - Schedule 2 - Statement of Requirements.pdf \(parliament.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\).](#)

Since 2020, the Home Office accommodation providers are required to visit each property at least monthly, and assurance that contractual requirements are met is tested by the Home Office Contract Assurance Team, which inspects properties and undertakes other assurance activities on an intelligence-led basis. Formal governance mechanisms are in place, to oversee performance and delivery against contractual requirements.

The Home Office has published the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) regime covering the contractual obligations accommodation providers and others working in the asylum sector are required to deliver. This has been done since April 2020. The most recent data is available at:

[Key Performance Indicators \(KPIs\) for government's most important contracts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\).](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-performance-indicators-kpis-for-government-s-most-important-contracts)

Helen Hayes: [1717]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to (a) review and (b) update her Department's list of subcontractors working on behalf of (i) Serco, (ii) Mears and (iii) Clearsprings Ready Homes to provide asylum accommodation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Yes, the Home Office plans to review the list of material sub-contractors.

■ Common Travel Area

Sorcha Eastwood: [1446]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill on (a) free movement within the Common Travel Area and (b) the land border.

Seema Malhotra:

The Common Travel Area (CTA) supports the long-standing principle of free movement for British and Irish citizens between the UK, Ireland and the Crown Dependencies (Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man) and has been recognised in law since the 1920s.

In support of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement there is no hard border and no immigration controls between Northern Ireland and Ireland and as part of the wider CTA arrangements the UK does not operate routine immigration controls on journeys made within the CTA.

The details of the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill and the assessment of the Bill's impact will be set out in due course.

■ Community Policing: Powers

Matt Vickers: [1048]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that police officers have confidence in their ability to (a) appropriately use force and (b) use other powers available to them for community policing.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Police officers have the power to use force where it is reasonable, proportionate and necessary to do so.

Oversight of police use of force is provided by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and any death or serious injury during or following police contact must be referred to the Independent Office for Police Complaints.

The College of Policing sets training and guidance for use of force to which police are expected to operate.

■ **Demonstrations: Infrastructure**

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to implement Section 8 of the Public Order Act 2023.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Section 8 of the Public Order Act 2023.

This section came into force on 3 May 2023.

In addition, the previous Government committed to carrying out post-legislative scrutiny of the Public Order Act 2023 two years after it received Royal Assent rather than the usual three to five years, in line with the recommendation made by the Home Affairs Select Committee.

■ **Drugs: Rehabilitation**

Rachael Maskell: [\[982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing harm reduction centres for drug users.

Dame Diana Johnson:

No recent assessment has been made of the potential merits of introducing 'harm reduction centres' for drug users, including any implications for UK drug legislation. Such centres are sometimes referred to as drug consumption rooms or safer consumption facilities and are understood to be locations where drug users could lawfully consume controlled drugs that they have purchased from criminal dealers.

Specifically in relation to Scotland, the Government will not interfere with the lawfully exercised prosecutorial independence of the Lord Advocate in respect of a pilot drug consumption room in Scotland. We will consider any evidence emerging from evaluation of that pilot in due course.

■ **Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: Finance**

Emma Foody: [\[1103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the budget was for the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority in each year since 2010.

Jess Phillips:

Allocation of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority's (GLAA) annual budget has been the responsibility of the Home Office since April 2014. Prior to this, the

budget was held by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The Home Office does not have readily available access to information on total budgets covering the period of 2010-2014, when it was held by DEFRA.

Accordingly, the total GLAA budget in each financial year since its transfer to the Home Office in 2014 is presented in the following table:

YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET (£Ms)
2014-2015	£1.61
2015-2016	£1.97
2016-2017	£5.60
2017-2018	£7.66
2018-2019	£6.70
2019-2020	£6.70
2020-2021	£6.75
2021-2022	£7.12
2022-2023	£6.62
2023-2024	£7.77
2024-25	£6.26

■ Human Trafficking

Emma Foody:

[\[1102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the modern slavery strategy.

Jess Phillips:

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

I recognise that the current strategy was published a decade ago. Since its publication, referral numbers into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and the volume of victims supported have changed dramatically.

For instance, the number of NRM referrals has increased by 611% since the last quarter of 2014 and the average (median) time taken from referral to conclusive grounds decisions from January to March 2024 across the competent authorities was 491 days.

British nationals were the most commonly referred nationality to the NRM from January to March 2024, accounting for 24% (1,105) of all referrals received. Since

2014, the number of British referrals has consistently increased; their number from January to March 2024 was almost 40 times greater than their number from January to March 2014 (28).

I will update on future policies in due course and am committed to taking an approach that puts victims first.

■ Immigration: Hong Kong

Claire Hanna:

[1583]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to grant full British citizenship to Hong Kong (a) British National (Overseas) and (b) British Dependent Territories Citizen passport holders who move to the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) passport holders may apply for a BN(O) visa which entitles them, and their dependent family members, to reside in the UK. After 5 years' qualifying residence, and being free from immigration time restrictions for a further year, they may apply for British citizenship.

People from Hong Kong who were British Dependent Territories Citizens (BDTCs), and did not register as a BN(O), lost their BDTC status when Hong Kong returned to the People's Republic of China on 1 July 1997. If a person from Hong Kong did not register as a BN(O) and would have become stateless, they became a British Overseas Citizen (BOC).

British nationals, including BN(O)s and BOCs, can apply for registration as a British citizen if they meet the requirements in section 4(2) of the British Nationality Act 1981, based on a period of residence in the UK. Those who do not hold a form of British nationality can apply for naturalisation if they live in the UK.

■ Nitazenes: Misuse

Rachael Maskell:

[983]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to (a) tackle the use of nitazenes and (b) help ensure that drug users are safe in the context of trends in the use of those drugs.

Dame Diana Johnson:

A cross-Government taskforce is co-ordinating the response to the risk synthetic opioids, including nitazenes, pose to the UK. The Taskforce includes officials from the Home Office, Department for Health and Social Care, National Crime Agency, National Police Chiefs' Council and Border Force. Additionally, the NCA, working closely with policing, Border Force and international partners is ensuring that all lines of enquiry are prioritised and vigorously pursued to stem any supply of nitazenes to and within the UK.

High quality drug treatment and recovery services are crucial to the response. Across England, there has been investment in drug treatment and recovery services working to prevent drug-related deaths and harms.

In line with recent advice from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, the Government intends to control a group of harmful nitazenes as Class A drugs via a generic definition under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, subject to parliamentary approval. The generic definition will control more nitazenes than current legislation does, reducing the opportunity for criminals to circumvent sanctions under the 1971 Act. We will be laying these amendments as a matter of urgency.

The UK's early warning and surveillance system has been enhanced and captures multiple sets of data including ambulance data, post-mortem toxicology, drug seizures and wastewater analysis among other sources. Findings will be shared with law enforcement and public health agencies, at national and local level, meaning that rapid action can be taken in communities where harmful substances such as nitazenes are detected.

We are also working with the NPCC to expand provision of the lifesaving opioid antidote naloxone to police forces to reduce the risk of death from an opioid overdose.

■ **Police Stations: Cramlington and Killingworth**

Emma Foody: **[1099]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police stations were operational in the Cramlington and Killingworth constituency in (a) 2010 and (b) the most recent date for which data is available.

Emma Foody: **[1100]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of active police officers in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size of the police workforce in England and Wales on a bi-annual basis in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>.

This data is collected at Police Force Area (PFA) level only, and information at lower levels of geography, such as Parliamentary Constituencies is not collected.

Table H1 of the data tables accompanying each 31 March release of the 'Police Workforce' publication shows the number of full-time equivalent police officers that are available for duty. The number of police officers available for duty excludes those on long term absence (career break, sick leave, study leave, maternity/paternity leave, suspension, special leave, compassionate leave and study leave).

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

■ Police Stations: Horwich**Phil Brickell:** [\[1067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of re-opening the public enquiry office at Horwich police station.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Decisions relating to the police estate, including the availability of public enquiry counters, are decisions for Chief Constables and democratically elected Police and Crime Commissioners, as they are best placed to make decisions about frontline policing and how resources are best deployed at a local level.

I will write to the Hon Gentlemen with details of how he can make representations to the local police authorities about the facilities of Horwich police station.

■ UK Border Force: ICT**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the police reporting and notebook organiser (PRONTO) system to ensure its effectiveness at recording questions that deviate from the list of pre-defined ones built into it.

Ben Goldsborough: [\[753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of implementing a standardised procedure for recording debriefing records onto police reporting and notebook organisers (PRONTOs).

Dame Diana Johnson:

Historically police forces and law enforcement organisations have made local commercial buying decisions through Chief Constables and PCCs for products such as electronic notebook organisers. These organisers are used to increase efficiency whilst undertaking operational duties.

In support of increasing efficiency and effectiveness of data, the Home Office maintains under active review all processes needed to support police and law enforcement partners with their operational data requirements. However, the functioning of electronic notebooks remains a primary consideration for operational partners in policing and law enforcement.

■ Visas: Seasonal Workers**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[1400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to amend the Seasonal Worker Visa Scheme.

Seema Malhotra:

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) published a Review of the Seasonal Worker route on 16 July.

The Government will carefully consider the MAC's recommendations and will announce a detailed response in due course.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing: North East****Emma Foody:**[\[1113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help provide affordable housing in (a) Cramlington and Killingworth constituency and (b) the North East.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and ensuring that every part of the country benefits from it. We will set out further details in due course.

■ Coal: Cumbria**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[1515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish her Department's submission on the legal challenge by Friends of the Earth and South Lakes Action on Climate Change to the West Cumbria Mining planning permission.

Jim McMahon:

As the decision remains subject to ongoing litigation, it would be inappropriate to comment.

■ Combined Authorities**Martin Wrigley:**[\[1174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the governance of non-mayoral combined county authorities to include district councils as constituent members.

Jim McMahon:

Existing combined county authority legislation provides that only upper tier local authorities in the area of a combined county authority can be constituent members. District councils are an important part of local government, and as non-constituent members, can play an active role in any combined county authority in their area, should they wish.

It is important that all local authorities are engaged and actively involved in improving their areas, working across all levels of government for the interests of the local community.

■ Deputy Prime Minister: Departmental Responsibilities

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her responsibilities are as Deputy Prime Minister; and whether those responsibilities include the implementation of the Government's planned reforms of employment law.

Alex Norris:

Full details of the Deputy Prime Minister's responsibilities will be published in due course.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to establish a separate Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Alex Norris:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [1012](#) on 30 July 2024.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Ms Julie Minns: [\[1156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to (a) review and (b) expand the list of accepted forms of voter identification at polling stations.

Ms Julie Minns: [\[1157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will include shotgun certificates in the list of accepted forms of voter identification at polling stations.

Ms Julie Minns: [\[1158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will include veteran's cards in the list of accepted forms of voter identification at polling stations.

Ms Julie Minns: [\[1159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the number of people who were turned away from polling stations after attempting to use a shotgun certificate as voter ID on 4 July 2024.

Ms Julie Minns:[\[1160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, is she will make an estimate of the number of veterans who were turned away from polling stations after attempting to use their veteran's card as photo ID on 4 July 2024.

Alex Norris:

As our manifesto made clear, the Government will address the inconsistencies in voter identification that prevent legitimate electors from voting, specifically including veterans of HM Armed Forces. We are considering what changes to make in order to achieve this and will bring forward proposals in due course.

The Electoral Commission is the independent electoral regulator and will be reporting on the administration of the May local elections and the recent General Election. This will include the proportion of individuals turned away for lack of accepted identification. We anticipate publication of their initial findings on voter ID in September and their full election report later in the year.

■ Empty Property: Shops**Ben Maguire:**[\[1148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to reduce the number of unoccupied shops in town centres in North Cornwall constituency.

Alex Norris:

This Government is fully committed to rejuvenating our high streets and supporting the businesses and communities that make our town centres successful.

Through the English Devolution Bill we will introduce a strong new 'right to buy' for valued community assets, which will help this Government safeguard our high streets. This measure will empower local communities to reclaim and revitalise empty shops, pubs, and community spaces, helping to revamp our high streets and eliminate the blight of vacant premises.

In addition, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund continues to fund £3 million worth of projects in North Cornwall, such as refurbishing buildings to make them fit for purpose.

■ Homelessness: Young People**Mike Amesbury:**[\[1028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing a strategy to help tackle youth homelessness.

Rachael Maskell:[\[978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to help ensure that families are able to access emergency accommodation

in areas where capacity for accommodation has been exceeded by demand during the summer of 2024.

Alex Norris:

Homelessness levels are far too high and too many families are living in temporary accommodation. We will take the action needed to tackle this issue and develop a long-term, cross-government strategy, through working with mayors, councils and other key stakeholders, to end homelessness for good. Critical to tackling homelessness is building more affordable homes. We will deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next Parliament.

■ **Housing First**

Mike Amesbury: [1029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made an assessment of the regional disparities in Housing First services.

Alex Norris:

The previous Government commissioned an evaluation of the Housing First pilots, which is currently ongoing. Reports are made available [here](#).

Rachael Maskell: [979]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for assessing the effectiveness of the Housing First pilot schemes.

Alex Norris:

The previous Government commissioned an evaluation of the Housing First pilots, which is currently ongoing. Reports are made available [here](#).

■ **Housing: Construction**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [998]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, whether her Department plans to introduce penalties for local planning authorities that do not meet housing targets.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has set out changes to how we plan for the homes we need as part of the consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework launched today.

■ Leasehold

Clive Lewis: [\[1310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish a timeline for enacting the Law Commission's recommendations on enfranchisement, commonhold and the right to manage.

Clive Lewis: [\[1311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to regulate (a) ground rent and (b) service charges on residential buildings.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government will act quickly to provide homeowners with greater rights, powers, and protections over their homes by implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024, including those designed to increase service charge transparency.

Over the course of this Parliament, the Government will further reform the leasehold system. We will enact the remaining Law Commission recommendations relating to enfranchisement and the Right to Manage, tackle unregulated and unaffordable ground rents, reinvigorate commonhold through a comprehensive new legal framework, and ban the sale of new leasehold flats so commonhold becomes the default tenure.

The Government has made clear it intends to publish draft legislation on leasehold and commonhold reform in this session so that it may be subject to broad consultation and additional parliamentary scrutiny.

We will announce further details in due course.

■ Leasehold: Reform

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of her policies on leasehold reform on the average costs leaseholders in properties with building safety issues will incur.

Alex Norris:

In line with usual practice, the Government will consider the impact of its leasehold reform policies as part of taking any relevant future legislation through Parliament.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether money allocated through the Levelling Up Fund will be given to local authorities to spend.

Alex Norris:

This Government was elected on a manifesto that stressed a partnership approach with local authorities and an intention to stabilise the funding system, moving away

from wasteful competition. Projects continue to receive funding where agreements are in place. Local places will rightly be seeking clarity on previous commitments of funding. The Government is giving full consideration to this matter, including the hard work undertaken on projects to date, and will continue to work with local authorities on projects in their area.

■ Local Government: Cornwall

Ben Maguire: [\[1147\]](#)

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

Jim McMahon:

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and, as is usual, we will consider the funding required for social care, SEND, and road maintenance within this process. We will consult with local authorities, including Cornwall, ahead of the next provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.

■ Neighbourhood Plans

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to require local authorities to amend neighbourhood plans.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government does not intend to require local planning authorities to amend neighbourhood plans in the future. Communities will continue to be able to choose whether they review or update their neighbourhood plan.

■ New Towns

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many new towns her Department plans to help build; what her timetable is for building those towns; and if she will publish a list of their locations.

Matthew Pennycook:

Further details on how the Government will deliver the next generation of new towns will be provided in the near future.

■ Poverty

Rachael Maskell: [\[981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of local government expenditure on tackling (a) child poverty and (b) poverty.

Jim McMahon:

On 17 July, a new Ministerial Taskforce was set up to drive cross-government action on child poverty, starting with overseeing the development of our ambitious new strategy in line with the Opportunity Mission.

This Government is under no illusions about the scale of the pressure that local authorities are facing and the impact of this pressure on the services councils provide. 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.

Private Rented Housing: Evictions**Michael Payne:**[\[1080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for banning Section 21 evictions.

Matthew Pennycook:

As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July, the Government will bring forward a Renters' Rights Bill as a priority. The Bill will level decisively the playing field between landlord and tenant and end Section 21 'no fault' evictions.

Regeneration: Cramlington and Killingworth**Emma Foody:**[\[1112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has to regenerate (a) town centres and (b) high streets in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency.

Jim McMahon:

This Government is committed to working with local partners to deliver economic growth and have asked the North East Combined Authority to draw up a local growth plan. We will support these plans by transferring more powers and responsibility to local leaders. The Mayor and Combined Authority are best suited to lead regeneration plans for the areas, with an in-depth knowledge of the opportunities and constraints of both Cramlington and Killingworth constituency and the wider North East.

Wind Power**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech of 8 July 2024 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her planned timetable is to start consulting on bringing onshore wind into the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime.

Matthew Pennycook:

We are consulting on bringing larger onshore wind development back into the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime as part of the consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework launched today.

JUSTICE■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control****Sir John Hayes:****[1191]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been convicted for breaching covid-19 restrictions since January 2022.

Heidi Alexander:

The Ministry of Justice holds data on convictions for breaching coronavirus regulations covering the period requested and this can be viewed in the [Outcomes by Offence tool: December 2023](#).

Specific offences of note include the following HO codes:

16857 – Failure to comply with screening restriction/requirement (coronavirus)

16858 – Operator of Port fails to comply with direction under Coronavirus Act 2020

16859 – Offences by potentially infectious persons (coronavirus)

16860 – Breach of emergency period restrictions (coronavirus)

16861 – Offences in relation to events and gatherings (coronavirus)

These can be accessed by navigating to the ' *Prosecutions and convictions* ' tab and using the *HO Offence Code* filter to select an above offence in the Outcomes by Offence data tool.

■ **Custodial Treatment: Women****Ben Goldsborough:****[290]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women sentenced to (a) less than and (b) more than six months were taken into immediate custody from each (i) magistrates and (ii) Crown court in East Anglia in 2022-23; and what the offence classification was in each of those cases.

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:

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

- Crown Court: [Crown Court data tool](#)

However, this published data does not include breakdowns by individual courts. Therefore, the information requested for magistrates' courts has been provided in table 1 (broken down by Local Justice Area) and for Crown Court centres in table 2, both attached. The figures provided in these tables relate to criminal courts located in the police force areas of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk only, as an approximation to East Anglia.

Attachments:

1. Table [2024-07-26 PQ 290 table.xlsx]

■ Employment Tribunals Service

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[1626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) ACAS Early Conciliation Certificates and (b) Employment Tribunal cases (i) heard and (ii) settled before a hearing were found in the claimant's favour in (A) 2021, (B) 2022 and (C) 2023.

Heidi Alexander:

All claims made to the employment tribunals after 6 May 2014 (with a limited number of exceptions) will include an Acas Conciliation certificate.

Publication of Employment Tribunal by jurisdiction ceased from April 2021 when Employment Tribunals moved to an interim database with limited management information. Employment Tribunals are now in the process of transitioning to a new case management system and work is in hand as part of the HMCTS data strategy to reintroduce the publication of Jurisdictional Outcome information at the end of this calendar year.

The data for 2020/21 is available in the published statistics (tab ET_3): [Tribunals statistics quarterly: July to September 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

The information for years for (A) 2021, (B) 2022 and (C) 2023 is not held.

■ Horizon IT System: Convictions

Kevin Hollinrake:

[1307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many postmasters have been notified that their convictions have been quashed by the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act 2024.

Heidi Alexander:

As of 26 July 2024, we have issued 10 letters confirming to postmasters that their convictions have been quashed by the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act 2024.

The Ministry of Justice, Northern Irish Executive and Scottish Government are taking all reasonable steps and are working at pace to identify those within scope of the legislation. To do this, the Government is examining data spanning multiple decades and from multiple sources, including but not limited to the Post Office, the Police

National Record, and court files. It is necessary that this process is undertaken carefully.

The previous Government said publicly that most letters confirming to individuals that their convictions have been quashed would be sent by the end of July. However, since then inconsistencies have been identified between the different datasets and the Government has therefore decided to conduct extra checks to ensure that all decisions on scope are correct.

■ **Juries: Allowances**

Jess Brown-Fuller: [\[1622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to reform jury service expenses.

Heidi Alexander:

Juries are a vital part of our criminal justice system and undertake an important civic duty. The Government will keep under review the support provided to jurors throughout their service.

■ **Juries: Finance**

Lewis Atkinson: [\[1888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will take steps to help ensure that people carrying out jury duty do not suffer financial hardship; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of linking compensation to the real living wage.

Heidi Alexander:

Juries are a vital part of our criminal justice system and undertake an important civic duty. The support provided to jurors includes measures to assist those who may suffer financial hardship. The Government will keep under review all support provided to jurors throughout their service.

■ **Prison Officers: Labour Turnover**

Dan Carden: [\[1022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of trends in the level of prison officer retention.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Despite the efforts of hard-working staff, prisons are in crisis. Band 3-5 Prison Officer leaving rates peaked in 2023 and we are experiencing the impact of that now, with significant numbers of prison officers who have recently been recruited and lack experience. Although leaving rates have now lowered, we must focus our attention on retaining our dedicated staff in order to maintain a sufficiently resourced and skilled workforce to deliver quality outcomes in prisons. It takes time to build confidence, capability and the jailcraft skills that are essential to improve the system, and for

prisons to successfully carry out their vital role of protecting the public and reducing reoffending.

■ Prisons: Crimes of Violence

Dan Carden:

[\[1021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she plans to take to help tackle violence in prisons.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Reducing violence in prisons is a key priority, and we are working hard to make prisons as safe as possible.

A range of security measures are in place to clamp down on illicit items such as weapons and drugs, that can fuel prison violence. This includes X-ray body scanners at every closed adult male prison, and enhanced gate security at 42 high-risk prisons. In addition, Body Worn Video Cameras are provided to all band 3-5 prison officers on shift to prevent violence and provide valuable evidence for prosecution when it does occur.

To ensure our staff are equipped with the right tools to protect themselves and prisoners from serious assaults, PAVA – a synthetic pepper spray – has been rolled out for use by prison officers in the adult male estate alongside SPEAR, a personal safety training package.

We continue to support those at risk of violence through an estate-wide case management approach and we are providing targeted support to a number of adult male prisons with the highest rates of assaults.

■ Prisons: Education

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[1837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders (a) started and (b) completed Prison Education Service (i) catering and (ii) construction apprenticeships in 2023.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The ability of prisoners to undertake apprenticeships was introduced in October 2022.

Apprenticeships for prisoners are primarily undertaken by prisoners eligible to be released on temporary licence, where they start their employment and training in the community and fully complete the apprenticeship after release.

No prisoners started or completed a catering or construction apprenticeship in 2023. One apprentice started a Commis Chef Level 2 apprenticeship in November 2022 and completed their apprenticeship in April 2024 after release.

Three prisoners have started apprenticeships in the catering industry this year including one in a closed prison, where we are trialling the potential of prisoners in the closed estate to also undertake apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships are one part of the current employment and training offer. We are developing plans to support prisons to link with more employers and the voluntary sector to increase the number of ex-offenders in employment.

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[1840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the press release entitled New Prison Education Service to cut crime, published on 29 September 2023, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of giving prison governors in five prisons increased freedom to organise education, skills and work programmes in their prisons.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Under the current Prison Education Framework, prison governors have the freedom to design and organise delivery of education, skills and work in their prisons. This is further enabled through the Dynamic Purchasing System, which allows for the commissioning of courses in accordance with local learner need. Governor freedoms over education, skills and work will continue under the new Prisoner Education Service. Heads of Education, Skills and Work have already been introduced in all prisons to ensure Governors have the specialist knowledge and skills to maximise impact of these freedoms.

Work to increase governor freedoms in five jails was paused earlier this year to ensure successful delivery of the new Prisoner Education Service. Once this is fully mobilised in 2025, consideration of localised provision of education, skills and work will be explored further.

■ Public Order Act 2023: Prosecutions

Chris Hinchliff:

[\[1448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate her Department has made of the number of people serving prison sentences for prosecutions under the the Public Order Act 2023.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice is aware of the recent media reporting of the sentencing of individuals under the Public Order Act 2023. The Department releases statistical data on offenders on a quarterly basis, with the most recent release being 25 July 2024 covering data up to 30 June 2024. As of 30 June 2024, there were no prisoners serving prison sentences for prosecutions under the Public Order Act 2023.

■ Sentencing

Tim Roca:

[\[1392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to compel defendants to attend their sentencing.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Offenders who refuse to attend their sentencing hearings deny victims and their families the opportunity to explain how their crimes have impacted their lives. This Government wants victims to have faith that justice will be delivered and to see criminals face the consequences of their actions. That is why we intend to change the law so that courts have the powers to order the most serious offenders to attend their sentencing hearings.

■ **Tax Evasion****Phil Brickell:**[\[1602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many businesses have been found criminally liable for failing to prevent the facilitation of tax evasion in the last 12 months.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of convictions for criminal offences, however, offences specifically relating to 'failing to prevent the facilitation of tax evasion' are not separately identifiable from information held centrally. This information may be held on court records, but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

NORTHERN IRELAND■ **Apprentices: Taxation****Carla Lockhart:**[\[1587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Assembly on administration of Apprenticeship Levy funds.

Hilary Benn:

The Northern Ireland Executive receives its share of funding from the Apprenticeship Levy through the Block Grant. Policy on apprenticeships is devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive and it is up to the Executive to decide how to utilise this funding.

■ **Casement Park: Regeneration****John Glen:**[\[1225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions the Prime Minister's Office have had with (a) HM Treasury and (b) the Northern Ireland Office on the Casement Stadium redevelopment.

Hilary Benn:

The Prime Minister's Office is in frequent contact with departments across government on a whole range of issues to ensure the effective delivery of government policy, as has been the case under successive administrations.

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.

■ Employment Schemes: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[1498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Communities Minister on the termination of the JobStart programme for 16-25 year olds in Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

I have not had any discussions with the Northern Ireland Communities Minister regarding the JobStart scheme. The Northern Ireland Department for the Communities is responsible for the delivery of the scheme which has received £15 million New Deal for Northern Ireland funding from the UK Government to cover the period April 2023 to March 2025.

The JobStart application portal closed on 30 June 2024 as planned. All participants currently on the scheme will be able to complete their JobStart opportunity.

Investment in skills and employment is a devolved matter and any decision on future funding for the JobStart scheme is a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive.

■ Flags: Northern Ireland

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[1475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make it his policy to establish a new official local flag for Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

The Union Flag is the only official flag of Northern Ireland. The regulatory framework for official flag flying in Northern Ireland is determined by the Flags Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 and The Flags (Northern Ireland) Order 2000. These regulations make provision for the flying of flags on NI government buildings and courthouses only. There are no plans to further review or amend how this legislation operates in Northern Ireland.

■ Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery

Sorcha Eastwood:

[\[1169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make it his policy to publish monthly figures on the number of reviews opened by the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery following requests from (a) his Department, (b) families and (c) others, including whether the reviews relate to (i) deaths and (ii) harmful conduct.

Hilary Benn:

The Commission is independent of Government. As such, it would not be appropriate for the Government to publish information about its operational activities. This is a matter for the commission, which is, I know, committed to openness in its work.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY■ **4G and 5G: Standards**

Helen Morgan: [1590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department has made an assessment of the accuracy of Ofcom coverage maps for (a) 4G and (b) 5G signal.

Chris Bryant:

From my own experience, I am aware that Ofcom's coverage maps do not always match consumers' experience of mobile networks. My Department is working with Ofcom to identify what more can be done to improve the accuracy of its reporting, noting that all sorts of factors will impact people's experience, including how many other people are on the network at any given point, as well as weather conditions.

We have also asked Ofcom to keep under review its definitions of what constitutes "good" 4G and 5G coverage, so that they continue to reflect consumer expectations as people's usage and their requirements evolve.

■ **Animal Experiments**

Saqib Bhatti: [1045]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his planned timetable is for phasing out animal testing.

Feryal Clark:

The Government has committed to partnering with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing. Discussions on this subject are already underway, but no specific timetable has been published. The Government, via UK Research & Innovation, continues to fund the development of techniques that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research through the National Centre for 3Rs (NC3Rs).

Saqib Bhatti: [1046]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to commission an impact assessment on the proposed phasing out of animal testing.

Feryal Clark:

The Government has committed to partnering with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the requirements for phasing out of animal testing. Any policy changes as a result of this work will be assessed appropriately.

■ Artificial Intelligence

Andrew Griffith: [\[1821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps to publish an AI strategy.

Feryal Clark:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at the heart of the Government's plan to kickstart an era of economic growth, transform how we deliver public services, and boost living standards for working people across the country. Over the next few months, we will be ensuring that AI is used to drive the government's missions and priorities, including the Industrial Strategy, the AI Opportunities Action Plan, and wider commitments.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Disinformation

Sir John Hayes: [\[872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to monitor and remove harmful online deepfake material.

Feryal Clark:

Deepfakes and other forms of manipulated media are captured by the Online Safety Act where they constitute user generated content that is illegal content, or content which is harmful to children. Category 1 services will also need to remove content, including deepfake content, which they prohibit in their terms of service.

The Government is also taking steps to empower users with the skills they need to engage critically with online content and make informed decisions. Media literacy is a key tool to build citizens' resilience to misinformation, disinformation and AI-generated deepfakes.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Regulation

Andrew Griffith: [\[1073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the potential introduction of expanded AI regulation.

Feryal Clark:

In the King's speech we committed to establishing appropriate legislation to place requirements on those working to develop the most powerful artificial intelligence models. As we develop these, we recognise the need to engage with a range of international partners. This includes engaging with the US, who are a key science and technology partner, to discuss our respective approaches, as well as working alongside them and other partners in the G7, OECD, UN and other international fora.

■ **Broadband: Finance**

Andrew Griffith:

[\[1055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what funding his Department has allocated to help reach (a) full gigabit, (b) full superfast and (c) national 5G coverage by 2030.

Chris Bryant:

Over £1.6 billion of contracts have already been announced as part of Project Gigabit, to extend the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband beyond commercially viable areas across the UK. A further £1 billion of funding is proposed in live and upcoming procurements.

Superfast broadband is already available in 98% of homes and business premises.

Non-standalone 5G is available outside 92% of UK premises and two of the four Mobile Network Operators have begun to deploy standalone 5G. The previous government set an ambition for nationwide standalone 5G coverage in populated areas by 2030, but attached no government subsidy to this.

■ **Building Digital UK: Public Appointments**

Andrew Griffith:

[\[1056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his planned timetable is to appoint the chair of Building Digital UK.

Chris Bryant:

Following the announcement of Simon Blagden's resignation on 19 July 2024, the Department for Science, Innovation & Technology is working at pace to appoint an interim Chair of Building Digital UK. We will confirm in due course the timelines for the permanent Governance of BDUK.

■ **Civil Service: Artificial Intelligence**

John Glen:

[\[920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to use AI to (a) increase productivity and (b) reduce headcount in the civil service.

Feryal Clark:

The Digital Centre and individual departments are exploring the potential benefits of AI to enhance productivity. CDDO has and will continue to assess the potential impacts of AI on public service productivity, and is collaborating with departments to explore AI opportunities aimed at enhancing Civil Service productivity, including trials to assess the real-world impact.

Decisions on the future size of the Civil Service will form a key part of the next comprehensive Spending Review. Therefore, a proper and full consideration, including AI, will be given to this in due course, and the Cabinet Office will work closely with HM Treasury on the development of these plans.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Cost Effectiveness**Andrew Griffith:** [\[1827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what plans he has for efficiency savings in (a) his Department and (b) each of his arms-length bodies, beyond those planned by the previous Government; and which efficiency savings planned by the previous Government he no longer plans to implement.

Feryal Clark:

The Department will take forward a programme of work to identify and deliver efficiency savings going forward as part of the upcoming Spending Review process.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Equality**Andrew Griffith:** [\[1051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many diversity, equality and inclusion officers his Department employs.

Feryal Clark:

Currently, the Department employs two staff whose role is solely dedicated to diversity and inclusion the focus of these roles is on compliance with the statutory obligations, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), and delivering key priorities, as set out in the Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, and the Civil Service People Plan.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Public Expenditure**Andrew Griffith:** [\[1825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what amount of his 2024-25 departmental budget was underspent on 24 May 2024.

Feryal Clark:

The Department reports in year spend to Ministers and the Permanent Secretary through the monthly reporting cycle. As and when underspends or pressures emerge, the Department works with HM Treasury to take appropriate action.

The Department's audited accounts for Financial Year 2024-25 will be published at the appropriate time once the Financial Year has concluded.

■ Digital Technology: Proof of Identity**John Glen:** [\[1209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his policy is on the use of digital ID; and whether he has received representations from (a) Tony Blair and (b) his representatives on digital ID.

Feryal Clark:

The Department has not had any representations from Tony Blair or his representatives on digital identity.

The Government's policy is to enable digital identity services – which already exist – to be more trusted and secure.

The Digital Information and Smart Data Bill, announced in the King's Speech, will include measures to support the creation and adoption of secure and trusted digital identity products and services from certified providers to those who want to use them.

■ EU Framework Programme

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[1138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his planned timetable is for commencing negotiations on the UK's association to the EU's Framework Programme 10.

Feryal Clark:

The government's primary focus is on continuing efforts, both domestically and in collaboration with the EU, to boost UK participation in Horizon Europe (FP9). That must be the immediate priority.

However, the government will of course closely observe the development of any future programmes with interest. The Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides a long-term basis for cooperation in areas of shared interest, such as science, research, and innovation.

■ Innovation: Regulation

Andrew Griffith: [\[1052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when he plans to establish the Regulatory Innovation Office; and what the budget will be for that office.

Feryal Clark:

In our manifesto, the government announced its intent to establish a Regulatory Innovation Office. I am working with officials to define initial areas of focus, whilst developing long term plans to ensure the RIO can support economic growth through regulatory innovation. Further detail will be announced in due course.

■ Mobile Phones: Rural Areas

Helen Morgan: [\[1831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to improve mobile signal for (a) farmers and (b) rural businesses.

Helen Morgan: [\[1832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of progress made on the Shared Rural Network.

Chris Bryant:

The Shared Rural Network will bring 4G mobile coverage to 95% of the UK landmass. Ofcom assesses the mobile network operators progress against their individual coverage targets. Ofcom reports that 4G coverage from at least one operator currently stands at over 93%, up from 91% when the programme started.

Office for Life Sciences

Andrew Griffith: [\[1058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to help improve the Office for Life Sciences.

Feryal Clark:

The life sciences sector will play a crucial role in both kickstarting economic growth and building an NHS fit for the future. We plan to strengthen the Office for Life Sciences, so that it is politically empowered to truly drive delivery across government. We will bolster the Office for Life Science's operation across departments to cement this sector's world-leading status.

Patents

Andrew Griffith: [\[1059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what information the Intellectual Property Office holds on the number of patents registered in June 2024.

Feryal Clark:

There were 691 patents granted (registered) by the Intellectual Property Office in June 2024.

Pornography Review

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[1333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what plans he has for the continuation of the independent pornography review.

Feryal Clark:

The government will provide an update on the independent review of pornography regulation, legislation, and enforcement in due course.

The Online Safety Act 2023 has duties for providers to tackle illegal content online and prevent children from accessing pornography online. The government is committed to tackling violence against women and girls, and violent and misogynistic content online.

Public Consultation: Artificial Intelligence

John Glen: [\[929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the Government has plans to use AI to help read responses to consultations.

Feryal Clark:

The Incubator for Artificial Intelligence (i.AI) is building an AI tool called Consult, which uses topic modelling to extract common themes from consultation responses. To ensure transparency for users, Consult presents these themes alongside the raw data. The tool is currently being tested with past consultations, whether it goes on to be used will depend on the outcomes of extensive testing and evaluation.

Research: Databases**Andrew Griffith:**[\[1053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his (a) projected budget and (b) planned timetable is for the creation of the National Data Library.

Feryal Clark:

The Government will create a National Data Library to make it easier to access public sector data, help deliver data-driven public services, support our research sector, and create opportunities for economic growth. The National Data Library will include strong safeguards and maximise public benefit.

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology is leading planning of the National Data Library, including the projected budget and delivery milestones.

Research: Finance**Abtisam Mohamed:**[\[1140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which key R&D institutions will receive a 10 year budget.

Feryal Clark:

The government will set ten-year budgets for certain R&D activities, giving certainty to form long-term partnerships with industry and stay at the forefront of global innovation.

Further details will be announced in due course.

Science and Technology**Abtisam Mohamed:**[\[1136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department plans to review the Science and Technology Framework.

Feryal Clark:

The Science and Technology Framework provides a holistic picture of the critical levers to target science and technology to drive growth and improve the lives of citizens. Work under the Science and Technology Framework has shown the benefit of taking a cross-HMG, systems approach to science and technology. The Framework will act as a policy tool to support the delivery of core priorities, such as the five Missions and Industrial Strategy.

■ Semiconductors: Manufacturing Industries

Saqib Bhatti: [\[1043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to help support the semiconductor industry.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to building on the UK's world-class strengths in the semiconductor sector to accelerate growth and unlock real-world benefits for UK citizens. Our focus is on enhancing the UK's enabling environment to make this a top place to sustainably grow a business in the semiconductor sector, including support for innovation, skills and commercialisation. Deepening collaboration with international partners, including the EU and G7, is a key part of this approach and will ensure that the UK continues to be a credible player on the international stage.

■ Space Technology

Andrew Griffith: [\[1824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department plans to publish a Space Workforce Action Plan.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is determined to develop the skilled workforce that the UK needs across the whole economy, including in Space. That is why it is creating Skills England and will bring forward a comprehensive strategy for post-16 education to break down barriers to opportunity, support the development of a skilled workforce, and drive economic growth through our industrial strategy. Decisions about sector specific workforce action plans will be taken in due course.

■ Spaceflight

Saqib Bhatti: [\[1044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his planned timetable is for the next launch from a UK spaceport.

Chris Bryant:

The next UK launch will be delivered by Rocket Factory Augsburg from SaxaVord Spaceport in Scotland later this year. This will be the first vertical launch from the UK and will be a significant step for the UK space sector. Several UK spaceports are now in, or close to being, in operation.

■ Universities: Business

Andrew Griffith: [\[1054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the Independent review of university spin-out companies, published on 21 November 2023, what steps his Department plans to take to support the growth of university spin-out companies.

Feryal Clark:

Universities have a vital role to play in supporting the Government's growth mission; in 2021/22 university spin-outs raised £5.29 billion in investment. As stated in our manifesto, the Government will work with universities to support spin-outs which play a vital role in creating the innovations that will support our national Missions. We welcome the work that Irene Tracey and Andrew Williamson produced for the independent review and will consider their recommendations carefully.

TRANSPORT■ **A10: Norfolk****James Wild:**[\[1565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to approve the business case for the A10 West Winch Housing Access Road.

Lilian Greenwood:

I thank the Honorable Member for his continued support for the scheme. Officials are working closely with Norfolk County Council on the outline business case submitted to the Department. When they have completed their assessment, they will put advice to Ministers.

■ **A52: Accidents****Edward Argar:**[\[1921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many road traffic accidents involving (a) fatalities, (b) serious injuries and (c) minor injuries have occurred at (i) Nottingham road, (ii) Belvoir road, (iii) Grantham road, (iv) Castle view road and (v) Muston lane junction on the A52 in each year from 2010.

Lilian Greenwood:

The number of reported road collisions by collision severity and at the requested road junctions on the A52 between 2010 and 2022, for which is the latest reported year, can be found in the table below.

REPORTED ROAD COLLISIONS ON THE A52 BY SEVERITY AND AT THE JUNCTIONS WITH REQUESTED ROADS, 2010 TO 2022

Source: DfT, STATS19

Year Junction	Fatal collisions	Serious collisions	Slight collisions
2010 Belvoir Road junction	0	0	0
2011 Belvoir Road junction	0	0	0
2012 Belvoir Road junction	0	0	0

 REPORTED ROAD COLLISIONS ON THE A52 BY SEVERITY AND AT THE JUNCTIONS WITH REQUESTED ROADS, 2010 TO 2022

2013 Belvoir Road junction	0	0	1
2014 Belvoir Road junction	0	0	1
2015 Belvoir Road junction	0	0	0
2016 Belvoir Road junction	0	0	0
2017 Belvoir Road junction	0	0	0
2018 Belvoir Road junction	1	0	0
2019 Belvoir Road junction	1	0	1
2020 Belvoir Road junction	0	1	0
2021 Belvoir Road junction	0	0	0
2022 Belvoir Road junction	0	0	0
2010 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2011 Castle View Road junction	0	0	2
2012 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2013 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2014 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2015 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2016 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2017 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2018 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2019 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2020 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2021 Castle View Road junction	0	0	1
2022 Castle View Road junction	0	0	0
2010 Grantham Road junction	0	0	0
2011 Grantham Road junction	0	0	0
2012 Grantham Road junction	0	0	0

REPORTED ROAD COLLISIONS ON THE A52 BY SEVERITY AND AT THE JUNCTIONS WITH REQUESTED ROADS, 2010 TO 2022

2013 Grantham Road junction	0	0	0
2014 Grantham Road junction	0	0	0
2015 Grantham Road junction	0	0	1
2016 Grantham Road junction	0	0	0
2017 Grantham Road junction	0	0	0
2018 Grantham Road junction	0	0	1
2019 Grantham Road junction	0	0	0
2020 Grantham Road junction	0	0	0
2021 Grantham Road junction	0	0	1
2022 Grantham Road junction	0	0	0
2010 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2011 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2012 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2013 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2014 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2015 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2016 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2017 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2018 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2019 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2020 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2021 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2022 Muston Lane junction	0	0	0
2010 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	0
2011 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	0
2012 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	0

REPORTED ROAD COLLISIONS ON THE A52 BY SEVERITY AND AT THE JUNCTIONS WITH REQUESTED ROADS, 2010 TO 2022

2013 Nottingham Road junction	0	1	0
2014 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	0
2015 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	0
2016 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	0
2017 Nottingham Road junction	0	1	0
2018 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	0
2019 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	0
2020 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	1
2021 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	0
2022 Nottingham Road junction	0	0	0

■ **Aviation: Crew**

Melanie Ward:

[\[1417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to take steps to agree a reciprocal arrangement for (a) pilot and (b) engineer licenses with the European Union Aviation Safety Agency.

Mike Kane:

This Government is committed to resetting the relationship and seeking to deepen ties with our European friends, neighbours and allies. The Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) allows for potential cooperation on aviation safety in a number of areas, including on personnel licencing. The UK will continue to seek expansions in the aviation safety chapter of the TCA where appropriate.

■ **Bus Services: Concessions**

Sarah Champion:

[\[956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to extend the £2 cap on bus fares after 31 December 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

Delivering reliable and affordable public transport services for passengers is one of my top priorities and I know how important this is for passengers and for local growth. The government is urgently considering the most effective and affordable ways to deliver on these objectives.

■ Bus Services: Gloucestershire

Dr Simon Opher: [\[1865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of local bus services across local authority borders in Gloucestershire.

Dr Simon Opher: [\[1876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will have discussions with representatives of South Gloucestershire Council on the adequacy of local bus services in Gloucestershire.

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, and the government is committed to working at pace with local transport authorities, bus operators and passengers to ensure that our vital bus services truly reflect the needs of the local communities.

As announced in the King's Speech, the government will pass 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 Gloucestershire.

■ Driving Tests: Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard

Alex Mayer: [\[1604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency is taking to reduce waiting times for practical tests in Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) priority is to reduce car practical driving test waiting times, whilst upholding road safety standards. To increase the number of available test slots, it is conducting tests outside of regular hours, including at weekends and on public holidays, and buying back annual leave from driving examiners.

To increase the number of car driving test slots, the DVSA deployed eligible managers and administrative staff back on the front line to do driving tests from the beginning of October 2023 until the end of March 2024, which created over 145,000 additional test slots.

Driving examiners from areas with lower waiting times continue to travel and test in those centres with longer waiting times. This is in addition to the DVSA recruiting additional examiners at Luton, Leighton Buzzard and Aylesbury driving test centres that serve the Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard constituency.

The DVSA's examiner recruitment campaigns are ongoing across the country but, like many employers, the DVSA is finding the job market extremely competitive. As it

moves through each recruitment campaign, the DVSA will continually review and make changes and improvements to its recruitment and selection processes.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Deirdre Costigan: **[1901]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to increase the number of public Electric Vehicle charging points.

Lilian Greenwood:

As set out in our manifesto, the Government is committed to supporting the transition to electric vehicles by accelerating the rollout of chargepoints across the country. We will set out further plans in due course.

■ **Heathrow Airport: Noise**

Sarah Olney: **[1514]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance her Department provides on whether Heathrow Airport is legally required to support (a) noise abatement schemes, (b) sound insulation and (c) double glazing for properties affected by aircraft noise from that airport.

Mike Kane:

Heathrow Airport is a designated aerodrome under Section 78 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, for the purpose of limiting, or of mitigating the effect of, noise and vibration connected with the taking-off or landing of aircraft. Noise abatement procedures for Heathrow Airport, specified by the Secretary of State, are set out in the airport's Aeronautical Information Publication.

Existing policy on noise insulation, which would incorporate sound insulation and double glazing, is set out in the Aviation Policy Framework 2013 and in the 2017 Airspace policy consultation response.

■ **Motor Insurance: Fees and Charges**

Danny Beales: **[1624]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will hold discussions with the Competition and Markets Authority on trends in the level of car insurance premiums.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is urgently exploring options to crack down on the spiralling cost of motor insurance and continues to engage with representatives of the motor insurance industry to understand the causes of increased premiums and identify potential solutions. We will announce the next steps in due course.

■ Motor Insurers Bureau

Richard Fuller: [\[1912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to review the performance of the Motor Insurance Bureau against their statutory obligations.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport does not currently have any plans to review the performance of the Motor Insurers' Bureau against their statutory duty.

The Government is clear that addressing the rising costs of motor insurance is a priority and will set out the next steps on this in due course.

■ Network Rail

Grahame Morris: [\[1658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of Network Rail's (a) board and (b) wider governance arrangements.

Simon Lightwood:

a) In line with corporate governance best practice Network Rail (NR) appoints an independent company to undertake regular reviews of the effectiveness of the Board. A review is currently in progress. The Secretary of State and Rail Minister will meet regularly with the Acting Chair and Chief Executive Officer of Network Rail to discuss the performance of the company.

b) DfT and Network Rail have a Framework Agreement in place setting out how the Department and Network Rail interact in terms of corporate governance and financial management. DfT and Network Rail will be reviewing the Framework Agreement to ensure that the governance arrangements will be fit for purpose as the rail industry is reformed.

■ Public Transport: Disability

Sonia Kumar: [\[1835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department plans to take to increase the accessibility of public transport for (a) people with disabilities and (b) other residents in Dudley.

Simon Lightwood:

The government knows that Britain needs a modern transport network to help kickstart economic growth and we are working to address these issues and build a truly accessible and inclusive transport system that works for everyone.

I am committed to championing the rights of disabled people, putting their views at the heart of our actions. Ensuring accessibility for all passengers is at the heart of our passenger-focussed approach.

The King's Speech announced that the government will bring forward legislation through a Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill and Rail Reform Bill,

to improve the performance of railways by reforming rail franchising, establishing Great British Railways and bringing train operators into public ownership.

The Better Buses Bill will also 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. These measures will deliver benefits for all passengers, including disabled people.

Together these measures will bring benefits across the country, including to the people of Dudley.

■ **Railway Stations: Stonehouse**

Dr Simon Opher: [\[1154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she supports development of the proposed Stroudwater Railway station in Stroud.

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 proposed Stonehouse (Bristol Road)/Stroudwater station project soon.

■ **Railways: Access**

Andrew Cooper: [\[1130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to ensure that feedback is provided to applicants for Access for All funding who were not awarded such funding in the announcement on 24 May 2024; and whether she plans to provide further funding under that scheme.

Simon Lightwood:

Given the short time since the general election, I regret I am not yet able to comment on next steps regarding specific station applications through the Access for All programme. However, please be assured that we are committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognise the social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

■ **Railways: County Durham**

Luke Akehurst: [\[1155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the frequency of rail services (a) at Chester-le-Street station and (b) in County Durham.

Simon Lightwood:

My Department works with stakeholders including Transport for the North, elected mayors, transport authorities and passenger groups, as well as train operators, to assess the demand for services. Rail North Partnership, through which the

Department jointly manages Northern and TransPennine Trains' contracts with Transport for the North, monitors operators' planned train deployment to ensure this falls within the requirement on them to match capacity to demand within the constraints of the network.

■ Railways: Electric Shock

Grahame Morris: [\[1659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate she has made of the number of passengers electrocuted on trains in each of the last five years.

Simon Lightwood:

There have been 198 recorded incidents of passengers being injured through electric shocks on trains in the last five years. The breakdown per year is provided below:

YEAR	REPORTED ELECTRIC SHOCKS TO PASSENGERS ON BOARD TRAINS RESULTING IN INJURY
2019	30
2020	16
2021	37
2022	57
2023	35
2024 (incomplete year)	23

During this period, there were zero passenger fatalities on trains as a direct result of electric shocks.

■ Railways: North Cornwall

Ben Maguire: [\[1153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending railway routes into North Cornwall constituency.

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.

■ Roads: Closures**Sarah Bool:** [\[1404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to amend the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to require local consultation for event traffic road closures.

Lilian Greenwood:

As she/the Honourable Member will appreciate, this Government is still in its early stages, and is carefully considering next steps in this policy area.

■ Transport: Cramlington and Killingworth**Emma Foody:** [\[1107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to increase connectivity between (a) towns and (b) villages in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency.

Emma Foody: [\[1109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to support the use of buses in (a) Cramlington and Killingworth constituency and (b) the North East.

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 pass 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 communities across the North East.

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.

TREASURY**■ Business Rates****Sir John Hayes:** [\[1190\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will review the effectiveness of the business rates system for small business.

James Murray:

The business rates system currently offers support for small businesses through Small Business Rate Relief, which ensures that over a third of business properties already pay no business rates.

As set out in the Labour manifesto, the government intends to replace the current business rates system with one which levels the playing field between high streets and online giants, better incentivises investment, tackles empty properties and supports entrepreneurship.

■ Defibrillators: VAT

Sir John Hayes:

[871]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will remove VAT from the sale of defibrillators; and if she will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of the potential impact of doing so on access to defibrillators.

James Murray:

The Government currently provides VAT reliefs to aid the purchase of defibrillators. For example, when an AED is purchased with funds provided by a charity and then donated to an eligible body no VAT is charged.

VAT is the UK's second largest tax forecast to raise £176 billion in 2024/25. Taxation is a vital source of revenue which helps to fund public services.

The Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events

Jim Shannon:

[948]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing VAT from the sale of defibrillators; and if she will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of the potential impact of doing so on access to defibrillators.

James Murray:

The Government currently provides VAT reliefs to aid the purchase of defibrillators. For example, when an AED is purchased with funds provided by a charity and then donated to an eligible body no VAT is charged.

VAT is the UK's second largest tax forecast to raise £176 billion in 2024/25. Taxation is a vital source of revenue which helps to fund public services.

The Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events.

■ Hospitality Industry: Government Assistance

Andrew Cooper:

[1129]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps she is taking to support the independent hospitality sector; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) reducing the rate of VAT for and (b) providing other targeted support to that sector.

James Murray:

The Government very much recognises the importance of independent hospitality. As new Ministers we are keen to engage with the sector to understand its priorities.

VAT is the UK's second largest tax forecast to raise £176 billion in 2024/25, helping to fund our public services including the NHS and education.

The Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events.

■ Pay: Young People

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[1812\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average take home pay was of someone aged 23 working full-time on the minimum wage in (a) cash terms and (b) adjusted for inflation in the financial year (i) 2000-01, (ii) 2009-10 and (iii) 2023-24.

Tulip Siddiq:

The statistics requested can be calculated for a typical worker on the minimum wage using the following data sources: average hours from ONS dataset HOUR01; inflation from ONS CPI series D7BT; historic Income Tax liabilities from HMRC, "Income Tax Personal Allowances and Reliefs"; historic National Insurance liabilities from HMRC, "Main Features of National Insurance Contributions".

■ Private Education: Business Rates and VAT

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[1809\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans she has to consult on ending the VAT exemption and business rates relief for private schools.

James Murray:

As the Chancellor announced on 29 July, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training supplied by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20%. Boarding services closely related to such a supply will also be subject to VAT at 20%. Any fees paid from 29 July 2024 pertaining to the term starting in January 2025 onwards will be subject to VAT. Furthermore, where a school in England has charitable status, the government will legislate to remove their eligibility to business rates charitable rates relief. This is intended to take effect from April 2025, subject to parliamentary passage.

This was a tough but necessary decision that will secure additional funding to help deliver the government's commitments relating to education and young people, including opening 3,000 new nurseries, rolling out breakfast clubs to all primary schools, and recruiting 6,500 new teachers.

The Government engages with a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in Government policy, including VAT, as part of the policy development and implementation process as a matter of course.

A technical note setting out the details of these two tax policies has been published online here: [VAT on Private School Fees & Removing the Charitable Rates Relief for Private Schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Draft VAT legislation has also been published alongside this technical note. A technical consultation on the legislation and technical note will run from 29 July 2024 until 15 September 2024.

■ Social Security Benefits: Children

Chris Hinchliff: [\[1455\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate her Department has made of the increase in the annual rate of GDP growth that would be required to fund the removal of the two-child benefit cap.

Darren Jones:

Had the UK economy grown at the average rate of OECD economies over the fourteen years from 2010, it would be £143.3 billion larger – worth £5,053 for every household in the country. This could have brought in an additional £58 billion in tax revenues in the last year alone to sustain our public services.

Sustained economic growth is critical to fund high quality public services and improve living standards.

■ Special Educational Needs

Damian Hinds: [\[895\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether children who have an Education, Health and Care plan will be exempt from VAT on school fees.

James Murray:

The Government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity, ensuring every child has access to high-quality education, which is why we have made the tough decision to end tax breaks for private schools. This will raise revenue for essential public services, including investing in the state education system. Where pupils are placed in a private school because their needs cannot be met in the state sector, and they have their places funded by their Local Authority (in England, Scotland and Wales) or the Northern Ireland Education Authority, the Local Authority or Northern Ireland Education Authority will be able to reclaim the VAT they incur on these pupils' fees.

Where a placement at a specific private school is necessary to meet the pupil's needs in England, that school will be named in the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

■ Tax Avoidance

Sarah Dyke: [\[1887\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to commission an independent review into the loan charge by 4 October 2024.

James Murray:

I know that the loan charge is a very important matter for many members and their constituents. Within my first two weeks in office, I had my first meeting with campaigners to discuss the loan charge. The Chancellor and I have been considering this matter since taking office and will provide an update in due course.

■ Taxation

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[1811\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the tax gap was in the (a) 2005-06 financial year and (b) latest financial year for which data is available; what steps her Department is taking to close the tax gap; and whether she has set a target for closing the tax gap.

James Murray:

The tax gap is the difference between the amount of tax that should, in theory, be paid to HMRC, and the amount that is actually paid. In 2005-06 the tax gap was estimated to be 7.4% (£32.4bn). The latest estimates, published in June 2024, show the tax gap at 4.8% (£39.8bn) in 2022-23.

The government is committed to tackling the tax gap, through increasing HMRC's compliance staff, investing in HMRC's technology infrastructure, and making policy changes to tackle tax non-compliance. The government will set out further details at the budget.

■ Timesharing: Misrepresentation

Sarah Owen:

[\[1808\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has had recent discussions with the Financial Ombudsman Service on resolving complaints of mis-sold timeshares in a timely manner.

Tulip Siddiq:

The selling of timeshares is outside of Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulation and therefore outside of the remit of the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS), which can only consider complaints about FCA regulated activities. Where consumers have purchased a timeshare using a product regulated by the FCA, such as consumer credit, they may have recourse to the FOS if that product was mis-sold.

When complaints are made to the FOS, these should be dealt with in a timely manner. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) Handbook, which sets out the rules on how the FOS should handle complaints, states that 'the ombudsman will attempt to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage'. In its Plans and Budget 2024-25, the FOS has set itself the target of resolving 90 per cent of cases within 6 months and the government will continue to hold the FOS to account on this through its regular engagement with the FOS.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Child Poverty Taskforce

Andy McDonald:

[\[1277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister of 17 July 2024, official report, column 57, what the

terms of reference are for the Child Poverty Taskforce; and when she expects the Child Poverty Taskforce to complete its 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.

■ **Food Banks: Blyth and Ashington**

Ian Lavery:

[1500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families use foodbanks in Blyth and Ashington constituency.

Alison McGovern:

Statistics for the total number of families using foodbanks is not available at a constituency level.

Figures for families using foodbanks in the North East in the past 30 days and 12 months is available on Stat-Xplore: [Stat-Xplore - Home \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/stat-xplore)

■ **Food Poverty**

Rachael Maskell:

[977]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to assess the adequacy of the supply of food for people in poverty in summer 2024; and whether she has made an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential implications for the Government's policies of trends in the level of supply of emergency food for people dependant on that provision.

Alison McGovern:

We are committed to tackling poverty and ending mass dependence on emergency food parcels. We are introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school to ensure children are fed a nutritious breakfast and are ready to learn and have created a new Ministerial Taskforce to drive cross-government action on child poverty.

We are also supporting people with the cost of essentials such as food and energy through the Household Support Fund. This scheme is run by Upper Tier Local Authorities in England to provide discretionary support to those most in need.

Currently, £500m is being provided to enable the extension of the Fund, including funding for the Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion. Local Authorities in England are receiving £421m to support those in

need locally. As a new government, we are keeping all policies under review, including the Household Support Fund.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Clive Lewis: [\[1957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department will replace cash payments for the Personal Independence Payment.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We will be reviewing the responses people have made to the previous government's consultation on Personal Independence Payment, which closed on Monday 22 July.

The proposals in this Green Paper were developed by the previous government. We will be considering our own approach to social security in due course.

■ Poverty: Children

Adam Jogee: [\[1096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to help tackle child poverty in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Alison McGovern:

Tackling child poverty is a priority for the Government and a central part of delivering the Government's Mission to create and spread opportunity for every child and young person in our country.

We promised concrete actions in our manifesto to support children and families. Our initial steps to tackle poverty include free breakfast clubs in every primary school setting every child up at the start of the day ready to learn, expanding childcare to deliver work choices for parents and life chances for children, stronger protection for families who rent privately, and action to tackle high energy bills and slash fuel poverty.

We are also developing an ambitious, new child poverty strategy and have set up a Ministerial Taskforce, jointly led by the Work & Pensions Secretary and the Education Secretary, to drive cross-government action on this work.

■ Social Security Benefits: Children

Stephen Flynn: [\[1032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an estimate of the potential impact of removing the two-child benefit cap on the number of children in poverty.

Alison McGovern:

Recognising the wide-ranging causes of child poverty, our new Ministerial Taskforce 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.

Mary Kelly Foy:

[1795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential health impact of the two-child benefit cap on children's (a) mental and (b) physical health.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No formal assessment has been made.

We recognise the wide-ranging causes of child poverty, and 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.

■ Universal Credit

Mary Glendon:

[1492]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 14 May 2024 to Question 25516 on Universal Credit, when her Department plans to publish the findings of the survey of people who have not claimed Universal Credit following receipt of the migration notice.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The survey is currently being conducted. The Department intends to publish the findings once it is complete in the Autumn.

■ Universal Credit: Appeals

Helen Morgan:

[1828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the support available receivers of Universal Credit who wish to appeal a decision of her Department at an Upper Tier Tribunal.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Tribunals are administered independently of the Department and therefore appeals to the Upper Tribunal are a matter for the appellant and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS). The appellant should follow guidance from the First-tier Tribunal (FTT) on the process for appealing to the Upper Tribunal. There is also helpful information on gov.uk: www.gov.uk/appeal-benefit-decision/unhappy-tribunals-decision. This includes links to third party organisations who offer free advice on engaging with this process.

■ Universal Credit: High Peak

Jon Pearce:

[2001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of people in High Peak constituency who have not moved to Universal Credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The requested information is published in the Move to Universal Credit statistics:

[Move to Universal Credit statistics, July 2022 to March 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Worksheet 20 shows Households sent Migration Notices by Parliamentary Constituency and worksheet 22 shows households that have made a claim to Universal Credit by Parliamentary Constituency.

■ Universal Credit: Newcastle-under-Lyme

Adam Jogee: [1098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are in work and claiming Universal Credit in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Alison McGovern:

Official statistics for the number of [people on Universal Credit](#) are published each month on [Stat-Xplore](#), with breakdowns available by [Westminster Parliamentary Constituency](#). The latest statistics are to June 2024, with a breakdown by [employment indicator](#) available to May 2024.

Users can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest and, if needed, can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

Adam Jogee: [1119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the decision by the previous Conservative government to remove the £20 uplift to Universal Credit on poverty in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Alison McGovern:

The £20 uplift in Universal Credit was removed in October 2021.

Statistics on the number of Children living in absolute and relative poverty per constituency before housing costs are published annually in the "Children in low income families: local area statistics" publication. They 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The latest statistics published on 21 March 2024 cover the years 2014/15 to 2022/23.

These statistics show the impact of all policies, economic, societal and behavioural changes on child poverty levels in constituencies.

Adam Jogee: [1142]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the number of people that are in work and claiming Universal Credit in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Alison McGovern:

Under my political leadership the DWP will shift from being a department for welfare to being a department for work. We will create a new jobs and careers service, bringing together Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service.

The service will be focused on helping people get into work and get on at work, not only on monitoring and managing benefit claims. For our employment support system, the outcomes that will matter are higher engagement, higher employment, and higher earnings.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Fly-tipping: South Norfolk

Ben Goldsborough:

[1449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many instances of fly tipping there were in South Norfolk constituency in each of the last five years.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 29 July 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Mary Creagh:

The Windsor Framework maintains the free flow of trade from GB to NI in the UK internal market. We are committed to implementing the Windsor Framework in good faith and protecting the UK internal market.

DAERA as the responsible administration, and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as the regulator, liaise with manufacturers and grower groups on issues around Plant Protection Products (PPPs) availability to ensure the impacts on the farming industry in both NI and GB are minimised where possible.

Local authorities are required to report fly-tipping incidents and enforcement actions to Defra, which the department publishes annually, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/env24-fly-tipping-incident-and-actions-taken-in-england>. This data isn't available at a constituency level and excludes the majority of private-land incidents.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ **Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 consultation on turnover and control regulations**

Secretary of State for Department for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds):
[\[HCWS44\]](#)

On 30 July 2024 the Department for Business and Trade has published a consultation entitled 'DMCCA 2024: consultation on turnover and control regulations'. The consultation will be open for a six-week period and the Government will publish its response afterwards. A copy of the consultation will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on GOV.UK.

Under the DMCC Act, the Competition and Markets Authority will receive new powers to designate firms exerting significant control over digital markets as having 'Strategic Market Status' in respect of specific digital activities, for which turnover will be an important aspect of the designation assessment.

The Competition and Markets Authority, other relevant decision makers and civil courts will also be empowered to issue significant monetary penalties, up to 10% of global turnover depending on the breach, for non-compliance under the DMCC Act regimes, and up to 5% of global turnover for the road fuels regime.

This consultation seeks views on technical provisions to be made in secondary legislation to set out how turnover of a business should be determined for the purpose of the DMCC Act measures. The consultation includes the detail of each factor required to determine turnover, including: activities to be included in the calculation of turnover; the relevant period and trigger event for the determination of turnover; and the calculation of turnover in relation to financial institutions. How turnover is calculated will affect which firms are designated as having SMS and the statutory maximum values of penalties available for the relevant breaches under the digital markets, competition, road fuel and consumer regimes.

These provisions will support the Competition and Markets Authority, other relevant authorities and the civil courts to calculate turnover-based penalties accurately, fairly and proportionately, and to estimate appropriately for the purposes of SMS designation

■ **Horizon Convictions Redress Scheme**

Secretary of State for Department for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds):
[\[HCWS42\]](#)

I am today announcing the launch of the Horizon Convictions Redress Scheme, it will be delivered by the Department for Business and Trade.

The Post Office Horizon scandal, which began over 20 years ago, has had a devastating impact on the lives of many postmasters. This scandal is one of the biggest miscarriages of justice in our history.

As a result of the passage of the Horizon System (Offences) Act 2024 and the Horizon System (Offences) (Scotland) Act 2024, hundreds of postmasters in all parts of the UK have now had their wrongful convictions quashed.

The UK Government has been working very closely with both the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to identify those who have had their convictions overturned.

Those who we have identified as being wrongfully convicted will shortly receive a letter. It will confirm that their conviction has been quashed and it will provide further information on how to access financial redress.

Those who have not received a letter, and believe that they are eligible, will still be able to come forward and register for the Horizon Convictions Redress Scheme.

Victims will be able to choose from two clear options.

They can either accept a fixed settlement of £600,000.

Or they can choose a full claim assessment.

The full claim assessment is designed for cases where the victim believes their losses exceed £600,000 and they wish to have their application fully examined by the Government.

We know that every case will be different, and we fully support the right of every postmaster to choose what is best for them. Recognising that postmasters have suffered immeasurably already, we are ensuring that regardless of the settlement they choose, they will be able to receive a preliminary payment of £200,000.

We recognise, too, that many of these cases stretch far back in time and some individuals may not have all the information at their fingertips to proceed with an application right away.

To help, we're making sure they can access historical data from both the Post Office and HMRC.

As from today, victims of this scandal will be able to register and apply for financial redress by visiting www.gov.uk/horizon-convictions-redress-scheme

■ Low Pay Commission Remit

Secretary of State for Department for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds):
[\[HCWS43\]](#)

This Government is committed to making work pay.

As part of our ambitious agenda, we pledged to update the remit to the Low Pay Commission to formally take account of the cost of living for the first time, and I am pleased to confirm that this has been achieved.

As Members will know, the Government sets the minimum wage rates each year following the advice of the LPC. These recommendations are made by the LPC each October – for minimum wage rates to apply from the following April – in line with the parameters set out in the annual remit from the Department for Business and Trade.

I have written to Baroness Stroud, the Chair of the LPC, to set out an updated remit.

Following the cost of living crisis which has harmed working people in recent months and years, the remit asks the LPC to consider the cost of living for the first time. The remit highlights the need to also consider the impact on business, competitiveness, the labour market and the wider economy.

We are ambitious in developing a path towards a genuine living wage, but we know that this path must be backed by evidence and consistent with delivering inclusive growth for workers and businesses.

As part of the Government's commitment to a genuine living wage that benefits every adult worker, we also pledged to remove discriminatory age bands.

The new remit published this week will take a major step towards this – asking that the Low Pay Commission recommends a National Minimum Wage rate that should apply to 18–20-year-olds from April 2025. This should continue to narrow the gap with the National Living Wage, taking steps year by year in order to achieve a single adult rate. We are committed to achieving a single adult rate, and we will ensure that any impacts on youth employment or participation in education and training are considered carefully, as we move towards this.

Since the establishment of the Low Pay Commission, through the National Minimum Wage Act, it has become respected internationally. This Government is proud to confirm our continued commitment to the LPC, and we extend our thanks to the commissioners and the secretariat for their independence, their diligence, and their expertise.

I can confirm that the new remit maintains the request to recommend minimum wage rates for workers above school age but under 18, and for those eligible for the apprentice rate, which should increase as much as possible, without damaging these groups' employment prospects. The remit also asks the LPC to recommend next year's accommodation offset rate.

We recognise the importance of providing sufficient notice of changes to the minimum wage, so the timelines remain unchanged in the new remit. We have asked the LPC to report back by the end of October, and the rates will increase in April 2025.

The Government is also pleased to confirm that this year's remit asks the LPC to continue and expand its cutting-edge research on the impacts of the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage, in particular its assessment of the impact on groups of low paid workers with protected characteristics.

This year marked the 25th anniversary of the creation of the minimum wage in the UK. Few would now disagree that it has been one of the most consequential and beneficial economic policy interventions of recent decades. Now is the time build on this, by

delivering a genuine living wage, removing unfairness for different age groups, and making work pay.

We look forward to receiving the recommendations and wider advice of the Low Pay Commission in October.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Saving Nature

Secretary of State (Steve Reed):

[\[HCWS47\]](#)

Nature in Britain is dying.

Britain is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world.

Our wildlife is in crisis – faced by the perfect storm of habitat loss and fragmentation, climate change, pollution, resource consumption pressures and invasive species. Nearly half of our bird species and a quarter of our mammal species are at risk of extinction. Biodiversity has been declining at an unprecedented rate.

Our precious National Parks and National Landscapes are in decline. Our rivers, lakes and seas are awash with toxic sewage and pollution.

We are behind on our tree planting and woodland targets. Much of what we already have is under-managed and in poor condition, missing out on the benefits we need for carbon, nature and people.

Air pollution continues to plague our towns and cities, and remains the biggest environmental risk to human health, damaging biodiversity, our waterways and crop yields.

Waste from households recycling rates have remained largely static since 2015. Beach litter remains abundant on UK coastlines, with plastic items constituting over 88% of the total litter collected. We have over 1 million fly tipping incidents in England a year.

We feel this destruction of nature wherever we live. Fewer birds in the garden, more of our land under water, people getting sick after swimming in our lakes and sea. Birds and mammals killed by toxic plastic pollutants.

Parents now worry their children and grandchildren may never experience the beauty of the natural world as previous generations have.

And why did we get into this situation? Because the last government irresponsibly positioned themselves against nature. They let water companies pay out bonuses whilst our rivers have been filled with sewage.

It is evident that the previous Government failed to protect and restore nature. The previous Environment Improvement Plan did not focus enough on delivery of our Environment Act targets.

That is why today we begin to chart a new course.

Today I announce that the Government will launch a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan to complete before the end of the year to make sure it is fit for purpose to deliver our ambitious targets to save nature.

We will leave no stone unturned in this effort, as we embark on an intensive programme of engagement with stakeholders across the environment and nature, farming, resources and waste and water sectors, working hand in glove with businesses, local authorities and civil society across the country.

This new Government will introduce a new, statutory plan to protect and restore our natural environment, with delivery plans to meet each of our ambitious targets. This includes those on water, circular economy and air quality as well as delivering against the target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.

We recognise that without the advice, experience, evidence and actions of the voluntary and private sectors; farmers and landowners, wider public bodies and the public itself, we will not meet our targets.

That is why we will work in a spirit of openness and collaboration on this review, ensuring that experts and stakeholders have a say in plans and play a vital role in its delivery.

Nature underpins everything, but we stand at a moment in history when nature needs us to defend it.

Without nature there is no economy, no food, no health and no society. We human beings are not merely observers of nature, we are an integral part of it, and our future depends on protecting it.

That is why this government will begin the work of saving it.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Adult Social Care Workforce**

Minister of State for Care (Stephen Kinnock):

[\[HCWS50\]](#)

This Government is being honest about the appalling economic circumstances we inherited, and takes seriously its responsibility to help manage down overall fiscal pressures in 2024/25. As a result, we have decided that the Adult Social Care Training and Development Fund proposed by the last Government, decisions around which had been suspended since the announcement of the election, will not be continued

Whilst the Adult Social Care Training and Development Fund will not be taken forward, we still intend to provide funding for Adult Social Care Learning and Development, with the budget maintained at the level we spent last year. Further details about how and when this would be administered will be shared in due course. We also confirm that we will continue to develop a Care Workforce Pathway (the new national career structure) for adult social care and that, linked to this, a new Level 2 Care Certificate qualification has been developed and launched. In addition, the commitment to Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training and supporting the sector to deliver this remains

We are committed in our support for the Adult Social Care Workforce. Our long-term plans will include a new deal for care workers through a Fair Pay Agreement. We will also take steps to create a National Care Service underpinned by national standards, with the aim of delivering consistency of care across the country.

■ NHS Update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): [\[HCWS40\]](#)

Today I am accepting the recommendations of the NHS Pay Review Body (NHSPRB), the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB) and the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB). This means 1.5 million NHS staff in England will receive a significant pay rise backdated to 1 April 2024. For staff directly employed by NHS providers, this will be funded by NHS England through system allocations.

I am grateful to all the Chairs and members of the NHSPRB, DDRB and SSRB for their reports that recognise the vital contribution that NHS staff and leadership make to our country. I am accepting their pay recommendations in full, re-committing to financial prudence and fair uplifts for public servants.

The NHSPRB recommended a 5.5% increase to all Agenda for Change (AfC) staff, alongside other recommendations for a funded envelope for structural reform. In accepting these recommendations, we have committed to:

- Uplifting all pay points for AfC staff (c.1.3m staff) by 5.5% on a consolidated basis, taking effect from 1 April 2024.
- Adding intermediate pay points at AfC Bands 8a and above.
- Working with the NHS Staff Council to take forward the PRB's recommendations on AfC pay structures.

Recognising the role of the NHS Staff Council, we are accepting the second recommendation regarding the addition of intermediate pay points to bands 8a and above in principle but are asking the NHS Staff Council to ratify it before it is implemented. We want to work with the NHS Staff Council on issues with the AfC pay structure so we will work with stakeholders on the third recommendation.

The DDRB recommended a 6% increase to salary scales, pay ranges and the pay elements of contracts from 1 April 2024. It also recommended that an extra £1,000 be added to the pay points for doctors and dentists in training. In accepting these recommendations, we have committed to:

- uplifting pay points for doctors and dentists in training (c. 73,000 doctors) by 6% plus £1,000 on a consolidated basis (an average of around 8.2% increase in pay);
- uplifting the salaries of consultants (c.61,000 doctors) by 6% on a consolidated basis;
- uplifting the pay range for salaried General Medical Practitioners (c.15,000 doctors) by 6% and uplifting the pay element of the GP contract by 6% on a consolidated basis (an increase of 4% on top of the 2% interim uplift in April);

- uplifting the pay element of the General Dental Practitioners contract (c.24,000 dentists) and the minimum and maximum pay scale for salaried dentists by 6% on a consolidated basis;
- uplifting the pay scales of specialist and associate specialist (SAS) doctors on all contracts by 6% on a consolidated basis.

The SSRB recommended an increase of 5% for all Executive and Senior Managers (ESMs) and all Very Senior Managers (VSMs) in the NHS in England from 1 April 2024, which we have accepted. The Government is still considering its approach to the recommendation to have a four-week turnaround on pay cases for VSMs and ESMs and so cannot confirm acceptance at this time.

These recommended uplifts are broadly in line with private sector earnings growth.

The last Government neglected public sector pay for 14 years, and now we are resetting our relationship with public sector workforces. We will take further steps to restore confidence in the pay setting process. We are accepting those recommendations, and will reform those public services, to deliver our missions.

The reports of the DDRB, NHSPRB and SSRB will be presented to Parliament and published on Gov.uk.

■ NHS Workforce Update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): [\[HCWS41\]](#)

I am pleased to be able to inform the House that today, 29 July 2024, I have made a formal offer on pay for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years to the British Medical Association's (BMA) Junior Doctors Committee (JDC) for doctors and dentists in training in England. The BMA, which represents these staff and other unions in negotiations, will recommend the offer to their members.

I am pleased to have been able to make this offer fewer than four weeks after becoming the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. I said during the General Election campaign that I would get around the table with unions and find a way to resolve industrial action. This is a promise made, and a promise kept.

Under the offer, doctors and dentists in foundation and specialty training will receive:

- an average investment of 4.05% into 2023-24 pay scales effective from 1 April 2023, with a payment to reflect backpay; and
- a further consolidated uplift of 6% + £1,000 in 2024-25, in line with the recommendations of the Review Body on Doctors and Dentists Remuneration (DDRB).

If accepted this will mean an average pay uplift of 22.3% to basic pay for doctors and dentists in training over the past two years.

The Government will instruct the DDRB to change the approach they take when considering pay for doctors and dentists in training from 2025-26.

The Government has also committed to improve the current exception reporting process and to work in partnership with the BMA and other health organisations to reform the current system of training and rotational placements.

This offer would increase the base salary for a full-time doctor starting foundation training in the NHS to over **£36,600** compared to around **£32,400** before this offer was made. A full-time doctor entering specialty training would see their basic pay rise to over **£49,900** from around **£43,900** before this offer was made.

If this offer is accepted, the BMA will withdraw the rate card for doctors and dentists in training in England with immediate effect, and the current trade dispute with doctors and dentists in training will end.

The BMA will now begin the process of consulting their members on the offer. The BMA, JDC and its officers will recommend that members accept this deal, and I strongly encourage members to do so. I will update the House on this matter in due course.

From September, I will refer to this group of doctors as resident doctors. This is the preferred nomenclature of the BMA, and an important sign of a new collaborative relationship between the medical profession and the Government based on a firm foundation of mutual respect.

Separately, I want to inform the House that this Government will also honour the offer made by the previous Government to the BMA Specialists, Associate Specialists, and Specialty (SAS) Committee for SAS doctors. The BMA's SAS members voted to accept the offer during the pre-election period.

These commitments come alongside the publication of the Pay Review Body (PRB) reports, which I have updated the House on separately.

HOME OFFICE

■ Afghan Resettlement

Minister for Immigration and Citizenship (Seema Malhotra):

[\[HCWS45\]](#)

In August 2021, following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the UK undertook a military evacuation from Kabul. This evacuation is known as Operation Pitting.

During Operation Pitting, the UK Government “called forward” a number of people for evacuation. These people were identified as being particularly at risk. They included female politicians, members of the LGBT+ community, women’s rights activists and judges.

Due to the speed and the circumstances surrounding the evacuation, a number of families became separated, and some individuals were evacuated to the UK without all of their immediate family. The Government pledged at the time that there would be a route for separated families to reunite under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

This Government is implementing that commitment and providing a means for families who were separated by the military evacuation from Kabul in August 2021 to be reunited in the UK.

Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme Pathway 1 Stage 2: Separated Families will open today, Tuesday 30 July. The window to submit an expression of interest will remain open for 3 months until 30 October 2024.

Those who have been resettled in the UK under Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme Pathway 1 and were evacuated during Operation Pitting without their immediate family members can submit an expression of interest under this pathway. Operation Pitting refers to the military evacuation to the UK from Afghanistan between 13 August and 28 August 2021.

Eligible individuals can submit an expression of interest for:

- A spouse or unmarried partner
- Their dependent children aged under 18 at the time of the evacuation.

In addition, any children who were evacuated without their parents will be able to submit an expression of interest for their parents and siblings aged under 18 at the time of the evacuation. Additional family members may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Further information on who is eligible and how to submit an expression of interest will be made available on GOV.UK shortly.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building the homes we need

Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Angela Rayner): [\[HCWS48\]](#)

The Government has today set out the first major steps in its plan to build the homes this country needs.

Our manifesto was clear: sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of our country and the living standards of working people. Our approach to delivering this growth will focus on three pillars; stability, investment and reform. But this growth must also be generated for everyone, everywhere across the country – and so nowhere is decisive reform needed more urgently than in housing.

We are in the middle of the most acute housing crisis in living memory. Home ownership is out of reach for too many; the shortage of houses drives high rents; and too many are left without access to a safe and secure home.

That is why today I have set out reforms to fix the foundations of our housing and planning system – taking the tough choices needed to improve affordability, turbocharge growth and build the 1.5 million homes we have committed to deliver over the next five years.

RESTORING AND RAISING HOUSING TARGETS

Planning is principally a local activity, and it is right that decisions about what to build and where should reflect local views. But we are also clear that these decisions should be about how to deliver the housing an area needs, not whether to do so at all, and these needs cannot be met without identifying enough land through local plans.

We are therefore reversing last year's changes which loosened the requirement for local authorities to plan for and meet their housing needs, and we are going further still, by mandating that the standard method is used as the basis for determining local authorities' housing requirements in all circumstances.

A mandated method alone is, however, insufficient to deliver on our scale of ambition and the current 'standard method' is not up to the job. It relies on decade-old population projections, an arbitrary 'urban uplift' that focuses too heavily on London and it lacks ambition across large parts of the country. We are therefore updating the standard method and raising the overall level of these targets – from around 300,000 to approximately 370,000. The new method provides a stable and balanced approach. It requires local authorities to plan for numbers of homes that are proportionate to the size of existing communities, by taking 0.8 per cent of existing stock as a floor, which is broadly consistent with the average rate of housing growth over recent years. It also then incorporates an uplift based on how out of step house prices are with local incomes, using an affordability multiplier of 0.6 per cent, up from 0.25 per cent in the previous method.

This approach means that there is no need for any artificial caps or uplifts: the previous cap will no longer apply, and the urban uplift will be removed. With a stable number, reflective of local needs and the way housing markets operate, we will stop debates about the right number of homes for which to plan, ensure targets reflect the way towns and cities actually work, and support authorities to get on with plan making.

BUILDING IN THE RIGHT PLACES

If we have targets that tell us how many homes we need to build, we next need to make sure we are building in the right places. The first part of call for development should be brownfield land, and we are proposing some changes today to support more brownfield development: being explicit in policy that the default answer to brownfield development should be yes; expanding the current definition of brownfield land to include hardstanding and glasshouses; reversing the change made last December that allowed local character to be used in some instances as a reason to reduce densities; and in addition, strengthening expectations that plans should promote an uplift in density in urban areas.

It is however also clear that brownfield land can only be part of the answer, and will not be enough to meet our housing needs – which is why a Green Belt designed for England in the middle of the twentieth century now must be updated for an England in the middle of the twenty first. The Green Belt today accounts for more land in England than land that is developed – around 13 per cent compared to 10 per cent. Yet as many assessments show, large areas of the Green Belt have little ecological value and are inaccessible to the public. Much of this area is better described as 'grey belt': land on the edge of existing

settlements or roads, and with little aesthetic or environmental value. It is also true that development already happens on the Green Belt, but in a haphazard and non-strategic way, leading to unaffordable houses being built without the amenities that local people need.

This Government is therefore committed to ensuring the Green Belt serves its purpose, and that means taking a more strategic approach to Green Belt release. We will start by requiring local authorities to review their Green Belt boundaries where they cannot meet their identified housing, commercial or other development needs. There will be a sequential approach, with authorities asked to give consideration first to brownfield land, before moving onto grey belt sites and then to higher performing Green Belt land – recognising that this sequence may not make sense in all instances, depending on the specific opportunities available to individual local authorities. We are defining grey belt land through reference to the specific reasons for which the Green Belt exists, so that it captures sites that are making a limited contribution to the Green Belt's purposes, with additional guidance set out in the consultation. Existing protections for land covered by environmental designations, for example National Parks and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, will be maintained – and there will be a safety valve to ensure Green Belt is not released where it would fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of a local plan as a whole.

But we cannot wait for all release to come through plan making. Where authorities are under performing – be that lacking a sufficient land supply or failing to deliver enough homes as measured by the Housing Delivery Test – we will therefore also make it clear that applications for sites not allocated in a plan must be considered where they relate to brownfield and grey belt land. This route will maintain restrictions on the release of wider Green Belt land, meaning it would remain possible for other Green Belt land to be released outside the plan-making process where 'very special circumstances' exist, but such cases would remain exceptional. We are also strengthening the general presumption in favour of sustainable development, by clarifying the circumstances in which it applies and introducing new safeguards to make clear that its application cannot justify poor quality development.

Whenever Green Belt land is released, it must benefit both communities and nature. That is why we have today translated our 'golden rules' into policy, meaning that development on Green Belt will need to: target at least 50 per cent of the homes onsite being affordable for housing developments; be supported by the necessary infrastructure, like schools, GP surgeries and transport links; and provide accessible green space.

To maximise the value delivered to communities, we are making clear that negotiations on viability grounds can take place only where there is clear justification. This will enable fair compensation for landowners, but not inflated values. If we see quality schemes come forward that promise to deliver in the public interest but individual landowners are unwilling to sell at a fair price, bodies such as Homes England, local authorities and combined authorities should take a proactive role in the assembly of land to help bring forward those schemes, supported where necessary by compulsory purchase powers. If necessary, my ministers and I will consider the use of directions, including by local

authorities and Homes England, to secure 'no hope value' compensation where appropriate and justified in the public interest.

MOVING TO STRATEGIC PLANNING

These changes will enable a significant amount of land to come forward. I nonetheless recognise that delivering on mandatory and higher housing targets and releasing the right parts of the Green Belt will not always be straightforward. As such, local authorities will be expected to make every effort to allocate land in line with their housing need as per the standard method, and will need to demonstrate that they have done so at examination of their plan. There are however instances where local constraints on land and delivery – such as significant National Park, protected habitats and flood risk areas – can make it difficult for an authority to meet its full target, and the current system is not sufficiently effective in enabling need to be shared between authorities in such instances.

That is why the Government is clear that housing need in England cannot be met without planning for growth on a larger than local scale, and that it will be necessary to introduce effective new mechanisms for cross-boundary strategic planning. This will play a vital role in delivering sustainable growth and addressing key spatial issues – including meeting housing needs, delivering strategic infrastructure, building the economy, and improving climate resilience. Strategic planning will also be important in planning for local growth and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

We will therefore take the steps necessary to enable universal coverage of strategic planning within this Parliament, which we will formalise in legislation. This model will support elected Mayors in overseeing the development and agreement of Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs) for their areas. The Government will also explore the most effective arrangements for developing SDSs outside of mayoral areas, in order that we can achieve universal coverage in England, recognising that we will need to consider both the appropriate geographies to use to cover functional economic areas, and the right democratic mechanisms for securing agreement. Across all areas, these arrangements will encourage partnership working but we are determined to ensure that, whatever the circumstances, SDSs can be concluded and adopted. The Government will work with local leaders and the wider sector to consult on, develop and test these arrangements in the months ahead before legislation is introduced, including consideration of the capacity and capabilities needed such as geospatial data and digital tools.

While this is the right approach in the medium-term, we do not want to wait where there are opportunities to make progress now. We are therefore also taking three immediate steps:

- first, in addition to the continued operation of the duty to cooperate in the current system, we are strengthening the position in the NPPF on cooperation between authorities, in order to ensure that the right engagement is occurring on the sharing of unmet housing need and other strategic issues where plans are being progressed in the short-term;
- second, we will work in concert with Mayoral Combined Authorities to explore extending existing powers to develop an SDS; and

- third, we intend to identify priority groupings of other authorities where strategic planning – and in particular the sharing of housing needs – would provide particular benefits, setting a clear expectation of cooperation that we will help to structure and support, and using powers of intervention as and where necessary.

DELIVERING MORE AFFORDABLE HOMES

Although increasing supply will be an essential part of improving affordability, we must also go further in building a greater share of genuinely affordable homes. That is why the Government is committed to the biggest growth in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. As of 2023, there were 3.8 million Social Rent homes – 200,000 fewer than the four million that existed in 2013. According to revised figures we are publishing today, only 110,000 to 130,000 homes are now due to be delivered under the Affordable Homes Programme, down from an aspiration of ‘up to 180,000’ when it was launched. On current plans, delivery is due to decline. We will stop that happening. In the first instance, this Government’s aspiration is to ensure that, in the first full financial year of this Parliament (2025-26), the number of Social Rent homes is rising rather than falling.

We are therefore proposing a number of changes in planning policy designed to support the delivery of affordable homes: removing the prescriptive requirements that currently tie local authorities’ hands with respect to particular types of home ownership products, and allowing them to judge the right mix of affordable homes for ownership and for rent that will meet the needs of their communities; setting a clear expectation that housing needs assessments must consider the needs of those requiring Social Rent homes, and that local authorities should specify their expectations on Social Rent delivery as part of broader affordable housing policies; and testing whether there is more that could be done to support developments that are predominately or exclusively affordable tenures, in particular Social Rent.

It is also evident that mixed use sites, which can comprise a variety of ownership and rental tenures including rented affordable housing and build to rent, provide a range of benefits – creating diverse communities and supporting timely build out rates. Our changes today mean that local authorities will need to take a positive approach to mixed tenure sites through both plans and decisions.

Alongside our reforms to the planning system, we have today also confirmed a range of new flexibilities for councils and housing associations, with more to follow in the coming months. The first relate to the Affordable Homes Programme, which provides grant funding to support new homes for Social Rent, Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership.

We know that, particularly outside London, almost all of the funding for the 2021 to 2026 Programme is contractually committed. We have asked Homes England and the Greater London Authority to maximise the number of Social Rent homes in allocating the remaining funding.

In London, there have been significant delays, including from changed regulations on building safety and many other pressures, which mean that even existing contracts are at risk of falling through because they are no longer deliverable under the current terms. We have therefore agreed with the Greater London Authority new flexibilities to the existing

Programme so that they can unlock delivery in London, with changes to deadlines for homes completing and tenure mix to enable some intermediate rent homes.

The second relate to Right to Buy. Over the last five years, there has been an average of 9,000 council Right to Buy sales annually, but only 5,000 replacements each year. Right to Buy provides an important route for council tenants to be able to buy their own home. But the discounts have escalated in recent years and councils have been unable to replace the homes they need to move families out of temporary accommodation.

The Government has therefore acted on the commitment in the manifesto and started to review the increased Right to Buy discounts introduced in 2012, on which we will bring forward more details and secondary legislation to implement changes in the autumn. The Government will also review Right to Buy more widely, including looking at eligibility criteria and protections for new homes, and will bring forward a consultation in the autumn.

More immediately, we are increasing the flexibilities on how councils can use their Right to Buy receipts. The Government will remove the caps on the percentage of replacements delivered as acquisitions and the percentage cost of a replacement home that can be funded using Right to Buy receipts, and councils will be given the ability to combine Right to Buy receipts with section 106 contributions. These flexibilities will be in place for an initial 24 months, subject to review. I encourage councils to make the best use of these flexibilities to maximise Right to Buy replacements and to achieve a good balance between acquisitions and new builds.

To further empower and enable councils to build their own stock of affordable homes, I am today confirming our commitment to invest £450 million in councils across England under the third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund. This will create over 2,000 affordable homes for some of the most vulnerable families in society, including families currently living in cramped and unsuitable bed and breakfasts, and Afghan families fleeing war and persecution.

In addition to the actions we are taking today, we are committed to setting out details of future Government investment in social and affordable housing at the Spending Review, so that social housing providers can plan for the future and help deliver the biggest increase in affordable housebuilding in a generation. We will work with Mayors and local areas to consider how funding can be used in their areas and support devolution. The Government also recognises that councils and housing associations need support to build their capacity and make a greater contribution to affordable housing supply – which is why we will set out plans at the next fiscal event to give councils and housing associations the rent stability they need to be able to borrow and invest in both new and existing homes, while also ensuring that there are appropriate protections for both existing and future social housing tenants.

We will also engage with the sector and set out more detail in the autumn on our plans to raise standards on quality, and strengthen residents' voices. The Government is committed to introducing Awaab's Law to the social rented sector, and will set out more detail and bring forward the secondary legislation to implement this in due course.

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE TO GROW THE ECONOMY

Alongside building more houses, we also need to build more of the infrastructure that underpins modern life – so today we are taking what are just the first steps in reforming how we deliver the critical infrastructure the country needs.

With respect to commercial development, the Government is determined to do more to support those sectors which will be the engine of the UK's economy in the years ahead. We will therefore change policy to make it easier to build growth-supporting infrastructure such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, electricity grid connections and the networks that support freight and logistics.

Alongside consulting on revisions to planning policy, the Government is also seeking views on whether we should expand the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime to include these types of projects, and if so, what thresholds should be set for their inclusion.

Turning to green energy, boosting the delivery of renewables will be critical to meeting the Government's commitment to zero carbon electricity generation by 2030. That is why on this Government's fourth day in office we ended the ban on onshore wind, with that position formally reflected in the update to the National Planning Policy Framework published today. We must however go much further – which is why we are proposing to: boost the weight that planning policy gives to the benefits associated with renewables; bring larger scale onshore wind projects back into the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime; and change the threshold for solar development to reflect developments in solar technology.

We are also testing whether to bring a broader definition of water infrastructure into the scope of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects process, providing a clear planning route for new strategic water infrastructure to be delivered on time.

And recognising the role that planning plays in the broader needs of communities, we are proposing a number of changes to: support new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure; take a vision-led approach to transport planning, challenging the now outdated default assumption of automatic traffic growth; promote healthy communities, in particular tackling the scourge of childhood obesity; and boost the provision of much needed facilities for early-years childcare and post-16 education.

SUPPORTING LOCAL PLANNING

These reforms to planning policy make it more important that every local authority has a development plan in place. The plan making system is the right way to plan for growth and environmental enhancement, ensuring local leaders and their communities come together to agree on the future of their areas. Once in place, and kept up to date, local plans provide the stability and certainty that local people and developers want to see our planning system deliver. But too many areas do not have up to date local plans – just a third of plans have been reviewed and updated in the past five years. In the absence of a plan, development will come forward on a piecemeal basis, with much less public engagement and fewer guarantees that it is the best outcome for communities. That is

why the Government's goal is for universal coverage of ambitious local plans as quickly as possible.

In pursuit of that goal, we therefore propose to take a pragmatic approach to the interaction between the changes we have set out today, and the fact that local authorities across England will have local plans at various stages of development. In practice, this means that:

- for plans at examination, allowing them to continue, although where there is a significant gap between the plan and the new local housing need figure, we will expect authorities to begin a plan immediately in the new system;
- for plans at an advanced stage of preparation (Regulation 19), allowing them to continue to examination unless there is a significant gap between the plan and the new local housing need figure, in which case we propose to ask authorities to rework their plans to take account of the higher figure; and
- areas at an earlier stage of plan development should prepare plans against the revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework and progress as quickly as possible.

While this will delay the adoption of some plans, it is important to balance keeping plans flowing to adoption with making sure they plan for sufficient housing. The Government also recognises that going back and increasing housing numbers will create additional work, which is why we will provide financial support to those authorities asked to do this. While I hope the need will not arise, I will not hesitate to use my powers of intervention should it be necessary to drive progress – including taking over an authority's plan making directly. The consultation we have published today sets out corresponding proposals to amend the local plan intervention criteria.

We will also empower Inspectors to be able to take the tough decisions they need to at examination, by being clear that they should not be devoting significant time and energy during an examination to 'fix' a deficient plan. The length of examinations has become increasingly elongated, with the average going from 65 weeks in 2016 to 134 weeks in 2022. I have therefore instructed the Planning Inspectorate on my expectations for how examinations will be conducted, which will in turn mean that Inspectors can focus their effort on those plans that are capable of being found sound and which can be adopted quickly.

More broadly, the Government knows how important it will be to bolster capacity, capability and frankly morale in planning departments up and down the country. Skilled, professional planning officers are agents of change and drivers of growth, playing a crucial role in delivering the homes and infrastructure this country needs. Today we are therefore looking to build on the Manifesto commitment to recruit 300 new planning officers by consulting on increasing fees for householder applications, which for too long have been held well below cost recovery levels, constraining planning departments in the process. Moving to what we estimate is a cost recovery level of £528 would still be low when compared to other professional fees associated with an application, and is estimated to represent less than 1 per cent of the average overall costs of carrying out a

development, with homeowners also benefiting from a range of permitted development rights which allow them to improve and extend their homes without the need to apply for planning permission.

In the medium term, the Government wants to see planning services put on a more sustainable footing, which is why we are consulting on whether to use the Planning and Infrastructure Bill to allow local authorities to set their own fees, better reflecting local costs and reducing financial pressures on local authority budgets.

Finally, in demanding more of others, I am clear that we as ministers must demand more of ourselves. I have already said that when my ministers and I intervene in the planning system, the benefit of development will be a central consideration, and that we will not hesitate to call in an application or recover an appeal where the potential gain for the regional and national economies warrants it. Today I can confirm that we will also be marking our own homework in public, reporting against the 13-week target for turning around ministerial planning decisions.

FIRST STEP OF A BIGGER PLAN

The actions we are taking today will get us building, but they represent only a downpayment on this Government's ambitions.

As announced in the King's Speech, we will introduce a Planning and Infrastructure Bill later in the first session, which will: modernise planning committees by introducing a national scheme of delegation that focuses their efforts on the applications that really matter, and places more trust in skilled professional planners to do the rest; enable local authorities to put their planning departments on a sustainable footing; further reform compulsory purchase compensation rules to ensure that what is paid to landowners is fair but not excessive; streamline the delivery process for critical infrastructure; and provide any necessary legal underpinning to ensure we can use development to fund nature recovery where currently both are stalled.

We will consult on the right approach to strategic planning, in particular how we structure arrangements outside of Mayoral Combined Authorities, considering both the right geographies and democratic mechanisms.

We will say more imminently about how we intend to deliver on our commitment to build a new generation of new towns. These will include large-scale new communities built on greenfield land and separated from other nearby settlements, but also a larger number of urban extensions and urban regeneration schemes that will work with the grain of development in any given area.

And because we know that the housing crisis cannot be fixed overnight, the Government will in the coming months publish a long-term housing strategy, alongside the Spending Review, which my Rt Hon Friend the Chancellor announced yesterday.

These are the right reforms for the decade of renewal the country so desperately needs. In every area, we will endeavour to make changes with the input and support of the sector, but we will not be looking for the lowest common denominator answer, and we will not be deterred by those who seek to stand in the way of our country's future.

There is no time to waste. It is time to get on with building 1.5 million homes.

A copy of the consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework and associated documents will be placed in the libraries of both Houses, alongside an update on targets for the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme.

■ Local Audit Backlog

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution (Jim McMahon):
[\[HCWS46\]](#)

Local authorities and other local bodies, including police, fire, transport and waste authorities, as well as national parks, provide vital public services to local communities. Effective local audit ensures transparency and accountability for public money spent on these vital services, and builds public confidence.

The Government has inherited a broken local audit system in England. This is evidenced by a significant backlog of outstanding unaudited accounts. Last year, just one per cent of councils and other local bodies published audited accounts on time. The backlog is likely to increase again to around 1000 later this year, and without decisive action will continue to rise further. This is not acceptable, and it cannot continue.

This government's manifesto committed to overhaul the local audit system to enable taxpayers to get better value for money. A growing backlog will severely hamper necessary fundamental reforms to repair the system, and will continue to undermine local accountability and governance. We must act now to get the house in order and to rebuild the system so that it is fit, legal, and decent, and the public have an effective early warning system.

This statement outlines immediate actions the Government – together with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), the National Audit Office (NAO), and organisations in the wider system – is taking, which are designed to address the backlog and put local audit on a sustainable footing. The previous Government launched a welcome consultation on this issue in February. Despite a lack of action, there was clear support for the core elements of the approach to clearing the backlog. All key local audit organisations support these bold measures, recognise their exceptional nature, and continue to share the conviction that this urgent and decisive action is needed to reset the system and repair the foundations of local government.

Local authorities and other local bodies, alongside their auditors, are our partners in this plan to restore a system of high-quality and timely financial reporting and audit, while managing the impact of this in a sustainable way. I commend the commitment of local finance teams and auditors in their work to date.

Proposed secondary legislation

I intend to lay secondary legislation when parliamentary time allows, and, at the point at which the Comptroller and Auditor General requests, I would also lay a new Code of Audit Practice (again, subject to parliamentary time). Taken together, these measures aim to facilitate a return to timely, purposeful audits of local body accounts. The

secondary legislation would amend the Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015) to set a series of backstop dates.

The first backstop date would clear the backlog of unaudited accounts up to and including 2022/23, but given the size of the audit backlog, it is unlikely that all outstanding audits will be completed in full ahead of this date. The Government recognises that this is likely to have unfortunate consequences for the system in the short term, and has been forced to take this difficult decision due to the backlog we inherited. This Government is determined, however, to make the tough choices necessary to begin rebuilding the foundations of local government. Where auditors have been unable to complete audits, they will issue a 'disclaimed' or 'modified' audit opinion. Auditors are likely to issue hundreds of 'disclaimed' audit opinions and disclaimed opinions will likely continue for some bodies for a number of years.

The proposed legislation will include five further backstop dates up to and including financial year 2027/28 to allow full assurance to be rebuilt over several audit cycles. It is the aspiration of the Government and key local audit system partners that, in the public interest, local audit recovers as early in this five-year period as possible. This means disclaimed opinions driven by backstop dates should, in most cases, be limited to the next two years (up to and including the 2024/25 backstop date of 27 February 2026), with only a small number of exceptional cases, due to specific individual circumstances, continuing thereafter. The proposed backstop dates are:

- Financial years up-to-and-including 2022/23: 13 December 2024
- Financial year 2023/24: 28 February 2025
- Financial year 2024/25: 27 February 2026
- Financial year 2025/26: 31 January 2027
- Financial year 2026/27: 30 November 2027
- Financial year 2027/28: 30 November 2028

While there will be modified and disclaimed opinions, auditors' other statutory duties – including to report on Value for Money (VfM) arrangements, to make statutory recommendations and issue Public Interest Reports – remain a high priority. Our government will make that crystal clear.

For financial years 2024/25 to 2027/28, the date by which Category 1 bodies should publish 'draft' (unaudited) accounts will change from 31 May to 30 June following the financial year to which they relate. This will give those preparing accounts more time to ensure they are high-quality accounts. This in turn will benefit auditors while still ensuring publication shortly after financial year end.

The proposed legislation will outline the following scenarios in which bodies may be exempt: where auditors are considering a material objection; where recourse to the court could be required; or from 2023/24, where the auditor is not yet satisfied with the body's Value for Money arrangements. Where such an exemption exists, the legislation would include a requirement to publish the audit opinion as soon as practicable. For

transparency, if a body is exempt, they would be required to publish an explanation of their exemption at the time of a backstop date.

Bodies that are non-exempt but have failed to comply with a backstop date will be required to publish an explanation, to send a copy of this to the Secretary of State (to facilitate scrutiny) and publish audited accounts as soon as practicable. The Government also intends to publish a list of bodies and auditors that do not meet the proposed backstop dates, which will make clear where 'draft' (unaudited) accounts have also not been published. I intend to keep this under close review and may explore further mechanisms to take appropriate action, should reasons given be inadequate.

As previously committed to, the FRC and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) will not carry out routine inspections of local audits for financial years up to and including 2022/23, unless there is a clear case in the public interest to do so.

Communications to support local bodies and auditors

There will be extensive communications and engagement on these measures, to make clear the necessity of these steps and emphasise the context for modified or disclaimed opinions. Local bodies should not be unfairly judged based on disclaimed or modified opinions, caused by the introduction of backstop dates that are largely beyond their control. Auditors will be expected to provide clear reasons for the issuing of such opinions to mitigate the potential reputational risk that local bodies may face. We will work with partners to provide communications support to the system.

Guidance for auditors would be published by the Comptroller and Auditor General and endorsed by the FRC, confirming that there are no contradictions to the requirements or the objectives of International Auditing Standards (UK). A proportionate approach is required and all system partners including the FRC, NAO and auditors, are aware that this is the Government's objective. The FRC's and ICAEW's regulatory activity would consider auditors' adherence to the Code and whether proper regard has been given to the statutory guidance.

Audit fees

Issuing a disclaimed or modified audit opinion and a subsequent return to being able to fully complete audits will require differing levels of work by auditors. Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) will set scale fees and determine fee variations where the auditor undertakes substantially more or less work than assumed by the scale fee and will consult with bodies where appropriate. In doing so PSAA will apply the following principles: if auditors have worked in good faith to meet the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice in place at the time the work was conducted (and have reported on work that is no longer required), then they are due the appropriate fee for the work done, and the body is due to pay the applicable fee, including where there is a modified or disclaimed opinion. Conversely, if an auditor has collected audit fees in part or in full, and the backstop date means that the total work done represents less than the fee already collected, then the auditor must return the balance and refund the body the appropriate amount – this ensures that the bodies pay only for work that has been done and reported.

Conclusion

I recognise that aspects of these proposals are uncomfortable. Given the scale of the failure in the local audit system that this Government inherited, however, we have had to take this difficult decision to proceed. Without this decisive action, the backlog would continue to grow, and the system will move even further away from timely assurance. The secondary legislation I will lay will give effect to these proposals and start to repair the foundations of local governance. Significant reform is needed to overhaul the local audit system to get the house in order and open the books. I will continue to review the evidence, including considering the recommendations of external reviews to date, and will update the House in the Autumn on the Government's longer-term plans to fix local audit.

TRANSPORT

■ Transport Infrastructure

Secretary of State for Transport (Louise Haigh):

[\[HCWS49\]](#)

The financial inheritance this government has received is extremely challenging. The previous administration has left a £22 billion public spending gap this year alone – £2.9bn of which is unfunded transport commitments. Communities up and down the country have been given hope for new transport infrastructure, with no plans or funds to deliver them. This Government will not make that mistake. This Government will rebuild our economic foundations whilst restoring transparency and public trust.

In recent weeks, the gap between promised schemes and the money available to deliver them has been made clear to me. There has been a lack of openness with the public about the status of schemes - some of which were cancelled or paused by the previous government, without proper communication to the public.

As the Chancellor informed Parliament, I am commissioning an internal review of DfT's capital spend portfolio. We will bring in external expertise and move quickly to make recommendations about current and future schemes. This review will support the development of our new long-term strategy for transport, developing a modern and integrated network with people at its heart, and ensuring that transport infrastructure can be delivered efficiently and on time.

I am determined that we build the transport infrastructure to drive economic growth and opportunity in every part of the country, and to deliver value for money for taxpayers. That ambition requires a fundamental reset to how we approach capital projects – with public trust, industry confidence and government integrity at its heart.