



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 30 August 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:34 P.M., 30 August 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Fraud

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[1867\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, what steps her Department is taking to co-ordinate with other Departments on tackling fraud through the Serious Fraud Office.

Sarah Sackman:

I work closely with other government departments, including the Home Office and Ministry of Justice, to support the Serious Fraud Office's (SFO) mission to tackle fraud. My department will continue to support this mission through our superintendence of the SFO. I visited the SFO earlier this month to learn about their important work to deliver justice for victims of economic crime and protect the UK's reputation as a safe place to do business.

The SFO works effectively with other law enforcement agencies through the National Economic Crime Centre to collectively co-ordinate the UK's response to fraud. Earlier this year this co-ordination led to the National Crime Agency arresting four individuals following an SFO search of three sites in relation to an investigation into an alleged £140m investment fraud.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ 10 Downing Street: Conditions of Employment

John Glen:

[\[1666\]](#)

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 the trade unions' new rights will apply to unions representing Downing Street (a) staff and (b) outsourced contractors.

Justin Madders:

The Government believes strong collective bargaining rights and institutions are key to tackling problems of insecurity, inequality, discrimination, enforcement and low pay. We are committed to strengthening the rights of working people by empowering workers to organise collectively through trade unions.

We will do this by updating trade union legislation, so it is fit for a modern economy, removing unnecessary restrictions on trade union activity and ensuring industrial relations are based around good faith negotiation and bargaining. This legislation will apply to all trade unions.

■ Amazon: Trade Unions**Dr Simon Opher:**[\[1874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will hold discussions with Amazon on the operation of trade unions in that company.

Justin Madders:

The Government is committed to bringing a new era of partnership that sees representatives of employers and unions working together in co-operation and through negotiation. The Government is always willing to speak to the representatives of employers and trade unions about how to deliver this partnership.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**Mr Luke Charters:**[\[1862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent estimate his Department has made of the level of credit losses arising from fraudulent loans provided through the (a) Bounce Back Loans Scheme and (b) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Gareth Thomas:

As at March 2024, £1.51 billion has been paid out on the government guarantee on BBLS loans where there was lender reported suspected fraud, and £19.8 million has been paid out on the government guarantee on CBILS loans where there was lender reported suspected fraud.

We are committed to reducing loss to the taxpayer and continue to work across Government, law enforcement and commercial lenders to address fraud in relation to the Covid debt schemes.

Lender recovery activity is monitored via the British Business Bank (BBB) which includes data analytics, review of facilities under the Guarantee Agreement, and an ongoing assurance programme. If lenders have not fulfilled their obligations under the scheme guarantee, they would be unable to claim under the guarantee and any loss would therefore sit with the lender. The National Investigation Service (NATIS) is a secondary line of defence in recovering taxpayers' money and investigates the most egregious reports of fraudulent abuse within the BBLS. Other recovery efforts include the work of the Insolvency Service and work with lenders to pilot greater use of third-party debt collection specialists, compulsory liquidation for recovery and enforcement in fraud cases.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Cost Effectiveness**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[1712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what plans he has for new efficiency savings in (a) his Department and (b) each of its arms length bodies.

Justin Madders:

The government is taking action to make efficiency savings across back-office functions and communications and stopping non-essential spending on consultants. Further details are set out in Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2-24-25.

To support the government's ambition of making efficiency savings my department is working with the Treasury to identify opportunities to deliver the necessary saving.

Department for Business and Trade: Public Expenditure**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[1711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what underspends there have been in (a) his Department and (b) each of its arms length bodies in (i) this financial year and (ii) the Spending Review period.

Justin Madders:

As the Chancellor set out in her statement on July 29, the government's spending audit has identified a forecast Resource DEL overspend of £21.9 billion against the plans set out for departments at Spring Budget 2024. This already factors in the Treasury's assessment of a £7.1bn fallaway over the course of the year, as set out in Table 1 of Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25.

The government has announced £5.5 billion of savings in 2024-25, bringing the in-year pressures down to £16.4 billion.

The Department for Business and Trade was created in February 2023 and is therefore the current financial year represents the departments second full financial year of operation. For the financial year 2023-24 the financial outturn, including details of any underspends, is still being finalised. The final numbers will be published in the Annual Report and Accounts in the Autumn 2024.

The extent of any underspends in this financial year will be confirmed only when the financial year has concluded.

Economic Growth: Rural Areas**Stuart Anderson:**[\[1559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to help support economic growth in (a) Craven Arms and (b) other rural areas.

Justin Madders:

Craven Arms lies within Shropshire County Council area which has been allocated a total of £10.8m of core UK Shared Prosperity Funding, as well as a total allocation of £2.6m in Rural Prosperity Funding. Under the UKSPF delegated delivery model, Shropshire Council can choose to invest in supporting economic growth within specific towns like Craven Arms.

In addition, the Council has received Department of Business & Trade funding of £1.2m since FY21/22 for the Shropshire Growth Hub. Growth Hubs provide local business support and advice, to help drive regional economic growth. Growth Hub

support is available across England and businesses of all sizes and sectors can contact their local Growth Hubs, including in rural areas.

■ **Electric Bicycles and Electric Scooters: Imports**

Mark Pritchard:

[\[1647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to prohibit the importing of (a) electric scooters and (b) electric bikes from countries that do not comply with UK safety standards.

Justin Madders:

UK product safety legislation requires manufacturers or importers placing products on the UK market, including e-bikes and e-scooters, to ensure those products are safe. Regulators have powers to require that unsafe products are removed from sale.

We will introduce a new Bill to ensure the product safety framework keeps pace with modern technology, digital business models and international supply chains. This will better protect consumers and support business growth.

■ **Exports: Scotland**

Andrew Bowie:

[\[1780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he plans to take to help increase exports from companies in the north east of Scotland.

Gareth Thomas:

My department continues to work with Scottish Government and Scottish Development International to boost exports across Scotland. We specifically work with Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, North east and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to support export growth from the north east.

This Government recognises that the north east is well placed to play a key role in sectors including energy and food and drink. DBT Scotland has dedicated specialists covering these areas in addition to technology, finance and professional business services, and life sciences to take advantage of the DBT offer and increase exports from the north east of Scotland. In addition, the UK Wide Export Champions programme is uniquely operated in Scotland as a mutually appointed partnership with Scottish Development International and the Scottish Government.

■ **Horticulture: Exports**

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[1845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help increase horticulture exports.

Justin Madders:

The Department for Business and Trade provides a comprehensive package of support to increase exports, including the Export Support Service, UK Export Finance and a network of trade advisers across the UK and overseas. The department

remains committed to breaking down market access barriers affecting the horticultural industry, and to opening up new markets for horticultural exports through trade agreements.

■ **Minimum Wage: High Peak**

Jon Pearce: [\[2005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people on minimum wage in High Peak constituency.

Justin Madders:

The Department previously estimated that around 1,000 employee jobs were covered by the National Minimum and Living Wage in the High Peak constituency in 2020.

More recent estimates based on the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings are subject to a high level of uncertainty due to lower-than-usual achieved sample size.

Therefore, the Department is unable to provide a more recent estimate, as per the Code of Practice for Statistics.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[1479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support the car manufacturing industry.

Justin Madders:

The British automotive industry is the jewel in the crown of our manufacturing sector. By accelerating domestic battery making capacity, driving investment in gigafactories and removing planning barriers to get shovels in the ground, we will give our manufacturing sector the certainty it needs to flourish.

The UK is also home to a world-class and comprehensive innovation ecosystem, including the Advanced Propulsion Centre, Faraday Battery Challenge, High Value Manufacturing Catapult and the Automotive Transformation Fund.

■ **Royal Mail: Universal Service Obligation**

Jim Shannon: [\[1270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with (a) Royal Mail and (b) prospective buyers for Royal Mail on retaining the universal service obligation.

Justin Madders:

The Secretary of State and I have met with Royal Mail's parent company, International Distribution Services, and the EP Group to discuss the proposed takeover of IDS.

The universal service obligation is a legally binding commitment on the designated universal service provider and its ongoing provision would be required irrespective of ownership of the business.

■ Shipbuilding

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[1478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support the shipbuilding industry.

Sarah Jones:

The Government is committed to delivering a thriving shipbuilding sector across the UK, supporting the whole supply chain, from design to repair, systems and integration.

My Department, working alongside other Government Departments, is supporting a 30-year pipeline of shipbuilding projects, promoting UK export and investment at a wide range of international tradeshows and missions throughout the year.

Our long term industrial strategy will support sectors like shipbuilding by offering the certainty needed to attract investment.

■ Small Businesses: Rural Areas

Joe Morris:

[\[1600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help support small businesses in (a) rural and (b) semi-rural areas.

Gareth Thomas:

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

Businesses can access support through their local Growth Hubs, which provide businesses of all sizes and sectors with advice and support throughout the business journey. Growth hubs shape their offer around the unique needs, whether town or country.

The Government provides further support for small businesses through Business Support Service, Help to Grow, the UK Export Academy, International Trade Advisors, the Export Support Service, and the British Business Bank.

■ Whisky: Scotland

Andrew Bowie:

[\[1781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment his Department has made of the value of the Scotch whisky industry to the economy.

Gareth Thomas:

According to research published by the Scotch Whisky Association, the Scotch Whisky industry contributed £7.1 billion to the UK economy in 2022, supporting 66,000 jobs across the UK. Scotch Whisky is also the UK's leading food and drink export, with exports valued at £5.6 billion in 2023. My department continues to support this economically vital industry by opening new markets, tackling trade barriers and challenging unfair trade practices around the world to maximise international opportunities.

CABINET OFFICE■ **10 Downing Street: Contracts**

John Glen: [\[1253\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what Downing Street services are outsourced.

John Glen: [\[1254\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to insource the Downing Street cleaners.

Georgia Gould:

Downing Street is part of the Cabinet Office estate. Arrangements that existed under the previous Administration mean that facilities management and workplace services are provided by an external contractor. Downing Street cleaning services are provided by both civil service and non-civil service employees.

■ **10 Downing Street: Government Art Collection**

John Glen: [\[1252\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether changes to works of arts from the Government Art Collection on display within the offices of Downing Street have been made since the general election in May 2024.

Georgia Gould:

There have been no changes.

■ **10 Downing Street: Libraries**

John Glen: [\[1670\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to (a) maintain, (b) update and (c) donate a book to the Prime Minister's Library in 10 Downing Street.

Georgia Gould:

The Prime Minister will consider this at an appropriate time.

■ 10 Downing Street: Repairs and Maintenance

John Glen:

[\[1256\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Prime Minister's budget is for the refurbishment of the Prime Minister's residence in Downing Street in the first year of his administration; and which flat he plans to occupy in Downing Street.

Georgia Gould:

As was the practice under the previous Administration, any expenditure on the official residence will be accounted for in the Cabinet Office annual report and accounts. The Prime Minister has use of the official residence previously used by the Rt Hon Lord Cameron, the Rt Hon Theresa May, the Rt Hon Boris Johnson and the Rt Hon Liz Truss.

■ Blood: Contamination

Clive Lewis:

[\[1713\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many registrations have been made with the Infected Blood Interim Compensation Payment Scheme since 21 May 2024.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

In June 2024 the Government paid £728.91m in interim compensation payments to 3,659 people who were infected and registered with the Infected Blood Support Schemes (IBSS).

As of 30 June 2024, 4,606 people who were infected, or their bereaved partners registered with the IBSS have received interim compensation payments totaling over £1 billion.

Clive Lewis:

[\[1714\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme will replace the Infected Blood Support Scheme.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

There will be no immediate changes to the Infected Blood Support Schemes (IBSS). Under the current proposal published on 21 May by the previous Government, payments will continue to be made at the same level until 31 March 2025 and they will not be deducted from any compensation awards. From 1 April 2025, people who receive IBSS payments will continue to receive payments until such time that their case is assessed under the new Scheme by the Infected Blood Compensation Authority. Once assessed under the Scheme, the applicant will be able to choose how to receive their compensation, either as a lump sum or periodic payments. I gave a statement to the House on Friday 26th July to update on the progress made on responding to the Infected Blood Inquiry and committed to providing regular updates on this work going forward.

Clive Lewis: [\[1715\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme will be open.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government is committed to acting on the findings of the Infected Blood Inquiry's Report and providing compensation to victims as quickly as possible. The Infected Blood Compensation Authority is established in law and work is progressing to put the operational systems in place with the expectation of beginning payments by the end of this year. To date, over £1 billion has been paid in interim compensation to infected people who were registered with the existing Infected Blood Support Schemes and their bereaved partners.

■ **Civil Servants: Workplace Pensions**

John Glen: [\[905\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has plans to amend the Civil Service Pension Scheme in addition to implementation of the McCloud judgment.

Georgia Gould:

In 2023, regulations were made relating to the implementation of the McCloud judgement. The Government has no plans to amend the Civil Service Pension Scheme, other than such amendments necessary for technical or clarification purposes, or in order to continue to comply with legislative requirements.

■ **Civil Service: Equality**

John Glen: [\[1212\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to increase equality network time in the Civil Service during core working hours.

Georgia Gould:

There are currently no centrally set time allocation limits for cross Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion networks. Due to the delegated nature of the Civil Service, departments are able to set their own limits on these network time allocations.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion networks offer valuable support to the Civil Service, for example, inputting to policy development, creating collaborative spaces, building a sense of belonging, and in promoting us to work across-departments.

Work is underway to develop guidance to assist EDI networks to support Civil Service organisations in achieving a positive workplace culture that helps to improve delivery, innovation and creativity.

■ Community Relations

John Glen: [1226]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government plans to take to (a) reduce divisions and (b) promote unity.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Rt Hon member to the speech made by my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister on the steps of Downing Street on 5 July and which is available on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website. For the convenience of Members I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Keir Starmer's first speech as Prime Minister: 5 July 2024:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/keir-starmer's-first-speech-as-prime-minister-5-july-2024>

■ Disclosure of Information

John Glen: [1660]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to revise the transparency publication guidance for (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) senior officials.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

There are no immediate plans to revise transparency guidance issued to departments following the recent publication of new transparency guidance relating to ministers, special advisers and senior officials on GOV.UK at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6604110bf9ab41001aeea39c/2024_04_02-Ministers-Transparency-Guidance.pdf

■ Durham Miners' Association

John Glen: [1668]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister sent a (a) written and (b) video message for the Durham Miners Gala on 13 July 2024.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

A message from my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister, celebrating Gala Day, was published by the Northern Echo on 13 July 2024. For the convenience of the Rt Hon Member I will arrange for a copy to be deposited in the House Libraries for him to read.

■ Emergency Services: Medals

Tim Roca: [1390]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department plans to recognise the contribution of emergency service workers who have been severely injured.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The government recognises the invaluable contribution of emergency service workers to the people of the United Kingdom. Those that lose their lives as a result of their duties and their next-of kin are now rightly honoured with the award of the Elizabeth Emblem.

The Government is happy to consider the case for any new medal or award, subject to comprehensive assessment across relevant departments.

Ultimately, advice on new awards sit with the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decoration and Medals, which provides recommendations to His Majesty.

Ethics and Integrity Commission

John Glen: [\[1250\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the annual budget for the Ethics and Integrity Commission will be; how its members will be appointed; and whether it will include political members.

Georgia Gould:

The Government is committed to establishing a new independent Ethics and Integrity Commission, with its own independent Chair, to ensure probity in government and restore trust and confidence. We will ensure that the Ethics and Integrity Commission is set up and resourced in a manner able to deliver this reset in public life.

John Glen: [\[1251\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the remit of the proposed Ethics and Integrity Commission would be in relation to (a) the Committee on Standards in Public Life, (b) the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments, (c) parliamentary standards and (d) devolved institutions.

Georgia Gould:

The Government is a government of service and it is committed to restoring trust and confidence in public life. We will establish a new independent Ethics and Integrity Commission, with its own independent Chair. We will ensure that this Commission has the powers and remit necessary to fulfil its responsibilities and will provide an update in due course

Fraud: Politics and Government

John Glen: [\[1662\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals that create a criminal offence of deception by elected representatives, as legislated for in the Welsh Parliament.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government has no plans to bring forward legislation to create an equivalent criminal offence for elected representatives. It is for the House of Commons in

accordance with the principle of exclusive cognisance to determine whether to treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.

■ **Government Communication Service**

John Glen: [1208]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the most recent Government Communications Service audit on the size of the Government Communications Service.

Georgia Gould:

Data from the Government Communication Service Data Collection is not published publicly because it contains information that could be used to identify individuals.

Section 14 of the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey contains data by profession: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2023/statistical-bulletin-civil-service-statistics-2023>

■ **Government Departments: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**

John Glen: [1205]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to continue publishing monthly transparency data on Government Procurement Card (GPC) expenditure over £500; and what guidance his Department has issued to other Government departments on publishing GPC data.

Georgia Gould:

The guiding policy setting out the requirement to publish GPC transactions over £500 remains in place and the department will continue to comply. Data is typically published on the last Thursday of the month.

Guidance is available to all government departments on gov.uk at the following link: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e8b402686650c18ce2cb541/Procurement_Cards_-_Pan_Government_Policy_V4_06042020.pdf

■ **Government Departments: Procurement**

Mr Luke Charters: [1064]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if his Department will take steps to help SMEs access new Government procurement opportunities.

Mr Luke Charters: [1065]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that SME suppliers are paid on time.

Georgia Gould:

The Procurement Act 2023 introduces a range of reforms to make it easier for SMEs to access public sector supply-chains, and we will be ensuring that the powers in the Act are utilised to support the new government's priorities. A new duty will require contracting authorities to have regard to the particular barriers facing SMEs, and to

consider what can be done to overcome them. 30 day payment terms will apply throughout the public sector supply chain, regardless of whether they are written into the contract.

Government must lead by example and pay their suppliers on time. The most recent published payment data for the Cabinet Office shows 97% of all invoices were paid within 30 days, and 88% of all invoices were paid within 5 days. Further, all bidders for large government contracts must demonstrate prompt payment to their suppliers within an average of 55 days, regardless of whether it's in a public supply chain or not, or risk being excluded from the procurement.

■ Government Hubs: York

Rachael Maskell: [1706]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will meet the hon. Member for York Central to discuss the proposed Government Hub in York Central.

Rachael Maskell: [1707]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his timescale is for the Government Hub in York Central.

Rachael Maskell: [1708]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what consultation process is he undertaking concerning the proposed Government Hub for York Central.

Rachael Maskell: [1709]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many jobs the York Central Government Hub will (a) create in York and (b) transfer into the hub from other sites in York.

Rachael Maskell: [1710]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that the design of the Government Hub in York blends with the rest of the city.

Georgia Gould:

I would be happy to meet with the hon. Member for York Central to discuss the proposed Hub in York Central.

The Hub in York Central is expected to open late 2027/early 2028 although this remains subject to final commercial agreements and progress of the wider site infrastructure and Public Realm. The GPA is working in partnership with Homes England, Network Rail and the development partners McLaren and Arlington Real Estate to ensure the masterplan development programme works for all parties.

In support of the recent successful planning application there has been a significant amount of public consultation. This consultation informed the final design to meet local stakeholder feedback. Including:

Public Consultation 01 (17/11/2022-19/11/2022)

Public Consultation 03 (02/03/2023-04/03/2023)

Public Webinar 01 (22/11/2022)

Public Webinar 02 (08/03/2023)

York Central Design Review Panel (12/12/2022)

For the duration of the design development and leading up to the planning application submission there has been extensive discussions with the planning officers at the City of York Council (CYC) along with the relevant design and technical advisors. This proactive engagement through the pre-application process has included the following meetings:

PreApplication Meeting 01 (08/07/2022) - Massing Discussion

PreApplication Meeting 02 (13/09/2022) - Planning focus

PreApplication Meeting 03 (21/09/2022) - Design Development

PreApplication Meeting 04 (21/10/2022) - Highways and Drainage

PreApplication Meeting 05 (22/11/2022) - Design Development

PreApplication Meeting 06 (07/12/2022) - Heritage Impact

PreApplication Meeting 07 (27/02/2023) - Planning focus

PreApplication Meeting 07 (28/06/2023) - Design and Planning Focus

The above meetings sought to discuss the emerging massing, scale and materiality of the Proposed Development. The team held open conversations regarding design development and heritage impact, and planning officers have been supportive of the proposal. The Proposed Development has been sympathetically designed in line with the York Central Outline Planning Application's approved parameters and design guidance. The comments and observations of the CYC officers have informed the development of the designs throughout the pre-application process.

The Hub has been designed with York at the forefront of the scheme and has been a collaborative effort between all partners, including CYC and the York Design Review Panel. In particular, the detailed articulation of the façade design celebrates the railway history of the site and the character of its setting, whilst also considering the views from the station platforms and the city walls. The design has also been endorsed by Heritage England and the York Design Trust.

Key highlights include:

- Contextual design: Near some of the key historic assets within the City of York such as the City Walls (grade I), the adjacent York Railway Station (grade II*) and the National Rail Museum (grade II). Sustainability and Environmental Considerations: a genuine commitment to achieve BREEAM Outstanding, NABERS UK 5* and EPC A.
- Community Involvement: 2 sessions of public engagement and 2 webinars held.

- **Building Design and Functionality:** Innovative, functional well-considered design intended to feel timeless, and dynamic whilst allowing flexible spaces that meet the diverse needs of government departments.
- **Digital Innovation:** Façade patterns optimised through rapid climate assessment and development of a new core distances evaluation tool at the feasibility/massing stage.

The Hub will be a multi-occupied building, made up from over 10 different government departments and agencies, totalling approximately 2,600 FTE. The two main anchor departments are the Cabinet Office (CO) and DEFRA (Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs); both are committed in principle to the project. CO are expected to recruit in the region of 300 roles into York, some of which have already been recruited and are based at the existing office at York Kingspool which was part-refurbished in 2024 to ensure a suitable home for Civil Servants prior to the new Government Hub being built. Kingspool already houses circa 1,600 FTE who are all expected to move across to the Hub when ready.

The Hub will also generate a number of roles in facilities management, catering and security.

■ **Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests**

John Glen: [\[1237\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to change the (a) remit and (b) powers of the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests.

Georgia Gould:

This Government is committed to ensuring that the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests has the powers to start investigations into misconduct and that they will have access to the evidence they need. Further detail on this will be set out in due course.

■ **JK Rowling**

John Glen: [\[1222\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Prime Minister will meet JK Rowling to discuss (a) the rights of women and (b) transgender issues.

John Glen: [\[1234\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister has met Lord Mandelson since the general election; and whether he plans to meet him.

John Glen: [\[1236\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to meet representatives of the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign.

John Glen: [\[1238\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to meet representatives of (a) Extinction Rebellion and (b) Just Stop Oil.

Georgia Gould:

As was the practice under the previous Administration, details of the Prime Minister's official engagements will be announced in the usual way.

■ King's Speech

John Glen: [\[1210\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the internal cross-government question and answer document accompanying the King's Speech produced by 10 Downing Street on 17 July.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

It has not been the practice of successive Governments to publish internal documents and advice.

■ Ministers and Special Advisers: Codes of Practice

John Glen: [\[1223\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is his policy to revise the (a) Special Advisers' Code of Conduct, (b) model contract for special advisers and (c) Ministerial Code.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

As the Prime Minister has made clear, public service is a privilege and this Government is committed to showing how politics can be a force for good. He will issue his Ministerial Code in due course.

The Code of Conduct and Model Contract for Special Advisers are routinely reviewed to ensure that they remain current, for example by reflecting any changes to Employment Law. Any changes will be published on gov.uk in due course.

■ Ministers: Aviation

John Glen: [\[1213\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government plans to reduce the number of domestic flights taken by Ministers.

John Glen: [\[1217\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to reduce the number of separate international flights taken by Ministers to the same event.

John Glen: [\[1219\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister took a chartered flight to watch the England football match on 14 July 2024; and how this flight was paid for.

Ellie Reeves:

Ministerial travel is undertaken using efficient and cost-effective travel arrangements. Security considerations are also taken into account. Travel plans will always vary and are decided with consideration of the best use of a Minister's time and in the interests of the taxpayer. Domestic flights within the United Kingdom allow Ministers to visit more parts of the United Kingdom in the time available, particularly areas further away from London, and reduce the need for overnight accommodation for Ministers and accompanying staff.

As was the practice under the previous Administration, information about official overseas ministerial travel will be published as part of the Cabinet Office transparency returns and made available on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

■ Ministers: Conduct

John Glen: [\[1228\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on penalties applied under the Ministerial Code in the event that a Minister (a) breaks the law and (b) misleads Parliament.

Georgia Gould:

As the Prime Minister has made clear, public service is a privilege. When meeting with his new Cabinet for the first time, the Prime Minister was clear about the standards he expects of all ministers.

The Prime Minister will issue a Ministerial Code in due course which will set out the standards of behaviour expected of ministers.

John Glen: [\[1231\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to place the Ministerial Code on a statutory basis.

Georgia Gould:

The Government is committed to restoring public confidence in government and ensuring that all of those in public service are held to the highest standards. We will take the time to consider the best means to deliver this.

When meeting with the new Cabinet for the first time, the Prime Minister was clear about the standards he expects of them and their ministerial teams. He will issue a Ministerial Code in due course which will set out the standards of behaviour expected of ministers.

■ Ministers: Media

John Glen: [\[1207\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what details relating to (a) social, (b) political and (c) official meetings with senior media executive Ministers are required to publish.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Departments are required to publish details of Ministers' social, political and official meetings with senior media figures, quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK. The Cabinet Office issues guidance to departments, available on GOV.UK detailing minimum standards for meeting descriptions to ensure declarations contain relevant and instructive information. Departments are also required to disclose ministers' diarised phone calls and virtual meetings, as well as in-person meetings.

■ Ministers: Official Residences

John Glen: [\[1214\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Ministers have been allocated official residences.

Georgia Gould:

The official residences in No10 and No11 Downing Street have been allocated. The remaining official residences have not yet been formally allocated.

■ Ministers: Pay

John Glen: [\[1221\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on uprating pay for Ministers in the (a) House of Commons and (b) House of Lords over this Parliament.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Salary entitlements for ministers are set out by the Ministerial and other Salaries Act 1975. The salaries ministers will claim in this government will be confirmed in due course and published on gov.uk.

■ Ministers: Redundancy Pay

John Glen: [\[1224\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is the Prime Minister's policy to amend (a) the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991 and (b) associated policies in the context of severance payments to Ministers.

John Glen: [\[1227\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to amend the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991 and associated policy in relation to future severance payments to Ministers.

Georgia Gould:

The government is currently conducting a review of ministerial severance pay and will update Parliament on the outcome in due course.

The government will also ensure that ministers demonstrate responsibility and restraint with their pay and allowances. To support this, the government will consider tightening eligibility on severance payments to ministers leaving office to cut costs and to ensure value for money.

■ Ministers: Retirement**John Glen:** [\[1259\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government plans on introducing a mandatory retirement age for Ministers in the House of Commons.

Georgia Gould:

The Government has no current plans to introduce a mandatory retirement age for Ministers in the House of Commons.

■ Ministers: Training**John Glen:** [\[1244\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to introduce (a) anti-bullying, (b) allyship, (c) unconscious bias and (d) other training for Ministers.

Georgia Gould:

As the Prime Minister has made clear, public service is a privilege and the Prime Minister expects the highest standards of conduct from all Ministers.

All Ministers have received induction briefings from their departments to support them in their ministerial duties.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Departmental Responsibilities**John Glen:** [\[1661\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has responsibility for (a) trade unions and (b) equalities.

Georgia Gould:

A new List of Ministerial Responsibilities will be published in due course.

■ Morgan McSweeney**John Glen:** [\[1240\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Morgan McSweeney is employed as a Government special adviser.

Georgia Gould:

Mr McSweeney is employed on a part-time contract as a special adviser to the Prime Minister, and is subject to the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers.

■ News Corporation and News UK**Jamie Stone:** [\[1784\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) the Prime Minister and (b) his officials have had discussions with representatives of (i) NewsCorp and (ii) News UK on a potential part two of the Leveson Inquiry between 5 July 2024 and 24 July 2024.

Jamie Stone:

[1785]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) the Prime Minister and (b) his officials have had discussions with (i) NewsCorp and (ii) News UK on press regulation between 5 July 2024 and 24 July 2024.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

As was the practice under the previous Administration, information about official ministerial meetings with external organisations and individuals will be published as part of the Cabinet Office transparency returns and made available on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

■ Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[1257]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Prime Minister has to appoint a permanent Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

Georgia Gould:

The process to appoint a permanent Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman is in progress, with the appropriate checks on the integrity and merit of appointees applied accordingly.

■ Peers

John Glen:

[1241]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government plans to consult on (a) a mandatory retirement age and (b) the removal of hereditary peers from the House of Lords.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government set out clear plans for House of Lords reform in the manifesto. As a first step in reform, the Government announced in the King's Speech that it would introduce the House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill, which will remove the right for Hereditary Peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords. This is a long overdue measure. The continued presence of hereditary peers in the House of Lords is outdated and indefensible.

We will engage with peers to consider how best to implement this and our other manifesto commitments on Lords reform.

■ Peers: Age

John Glen:

[1663]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Prime Minister will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the minimum age at which one can become a member of the House of Lords to 16.

John Glen: [\[1671\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to nominate members of the House of Lords who (a) are over 80 and (b) will become over 80 before the end of the Parliament.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

1. The minimum age requirement for someone to be a member of the House of Lords is 21. This is provided for in the Standing Orders of the House, and as such this is a matter for the House

2. Any future nominations to the House of Lords are a matter for the Prime Minister. The Government has set out its commitment to modernise the Lords, including introducing a mandatory retirement age. The Government will continue to engage on this and the wider reform agenda.

■ Prime Minister: Special Advisers

John Glen: [\[1218\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister's chief of staff will have powers to direct civil servants.

Georgia Gould:

The Prime Minister's Chief of Staff is a political appointment and therefore does not have management responsibilities for civil servants. The government has no plans to introduce new powers for the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff to direct civil servants.

John Glen: [\[1255\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many incoming Downing Street special advisers were recruited from (a) the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, (b) Labour Together and (c) Global Counsel.

Georgia Gould:

Previous employers of current staff is personal information, and as was the practice under the previous Administration, would not be appropriate to be shared.

John Glen: [\[1258\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether special advisers working at 10 Downing Street will be able to opt-out of the 48-hour working week.

Georgia Gould:

Like other employees, special advisers are able to opt-out of the 48-hour maximum working week.

John Glen: [\[1667\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether there is a recognised trade union for No. 10 special advisers.

Georgia Gould:

As per the published Model Contract for Special Advisers, which was last updated in December 2023, no collective bargaining agreements apply to special advisers.

All special advisers have the right to join a trade union.

■ Prime Minister: Staff

John Glen: [\[1229\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister (a) has implemented and (b) plans to implement changes to the 10 Downing Street business relations team.

John Glen: [\[1230\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether there have been changes to the 10 Downing Street AI team since the general election.

John Glen: [\[1239\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether 10 Downing Street will be established as a separate department.

Georgia Gould:

For management and staffing purposes the Prime Minister's Office is a business unit of the Cabinet Office. There have been no changes since the General Election.

John Glen: [\[1243\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the employment status is of the Prime Minister's Director of Trade Union Relations; and who that post's employer is.

Georgia Gould:

As under previous Administrations, party political appointments are not a matter for the Government.

John Glen: [\[1665\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to grant the right to switch off to (a) No10 special advisers, (b) civil servants in his private office and (c) staff in the Downing Street Parliamentary branch.

Georgia Gould:

Expected working hours are set out for all Cabinet Office employees in their terms and conditions of employment.

■ Prime Minister: WhatsApp

John Glen: [\[1216\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to use Whatsapp for government business.

Georgia Gould:

Use of Non-Corporate Communication Channels by Ministers and officials, such as WhatsApp, is permitted. All use of these communication channels should follow the guidance on Non-Corporate Communication Channels (NCCCs) which can be found on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-corporate-communication-channels-for-government-business>

■ **Public Sector: Trade Unions**

John Glen: **[902]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on check-off in the public sector.

Georgia Gould:

The Trade Union (Deduction of Union Subscriptions from Wages in the Public Sector) Regulations, also known as the 'Check-off Regulations' were brought in by the previous government. This Government values the role of trade unions and is supportive of employers enabling their employees to pay their subscriptions in a straightforward and convenient way.

The Government's King's Speech committed to updating trade union legislation so it is fit for a modern economy and removing unnecessary restrictions on trade union activity.

■ **Senior Civil Servants**

Steve Barclay: **[1261]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, to provide a breakdown by (a) department and (b) job title of senior civil service jobs (i) offered and (ii) appointed since 30 May 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The information held by the Cabinet Office relating to the Senior Civil Service shows there have been 43 offers made and 41 candidates posted/taken up duty since 30th May 2024. Recruitment data from some departments is collected on a biannual basis by the Cabinet Office.

Please see the full breakdown of the data held centrally on the below table.

DEPARTMENT	VACANCYTITLE	GRADE	NUMBER OF VACANCIES	NUMBER OF JOBS	OFFER REACHED	CANDIDATES POSTED
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	DG Food Biosecurity and Trade	SCS 3	1	1	1	0
Department of Health and Social Care	DG NHS Ten Year Plan	SCS 3	1	1	1	1

DEPARTMENT	VACANCYTITLE	GRADE	NUMBER OF VACANCIES	NUMBER OF JOBS	OFFER REACHED	CANDIDATES POSTED
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology	DG Digital Centre	SCS 3	1	1	1	1
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	Director of People & Safety	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Department for Transport	Deputy Director Strategy and Programme, Euston Directorate (Maternity contract)	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Department for Business and Trade	Director, Consumer and Competition Policy	SCS Pay Band 2	1	1	1	1
Department for Transport	Deputy Director – Policy Sponsorship (Roads investment Strategy)	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Department for Business and Trade	Director, Grants Delivery	SCS Pay Band 2	1	1	1	1
Cabinet Office	SCS2 Director Digital Service Owner (Infected Blood Compensation Authority) - EOI (6-9 months initially)	SCS Pay Band 2	1	1	1	1
HM Treasury	Deputy Director - Government	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1

DEPARTMENT	VACANCYTITLE	GRADE	NUMBER OF VACANCIES	NUMBER OF JOBS	OFFER REACHED	CANDIDATES POSTED
	Financial Reporting (12 Month Fixed Term Appointment)					
Department of Health and Social Care	Head of Statistics and Data Science team- Closing date extended to 28th May 23:55	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Department for Energy Security & Net Zero	Deputy Director Energy Security and Resilience Analysis Team (ESRA)	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Department for Business and Trade	Deputy Director - Futures and Green Strategy Unit	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science	Senior Responsible Owner – Cefas Future Delivery at Sea	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Cabinet Office	Deputy Director Counter-Terrorism and Serious Organised Crime	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Cabinet Office	Deputy Director, Public Services	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Cabinet Office	Deputy Director, Defence	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1

DEPARTMENT	VACANCYTITLE	GRADE	NUMBER OF VACANCIES	NUMBER OF JOBS	OFFER REACHED	CANDIDATES POSTED
Cabinet Office	SCS1 Deputy Director Middle East Strategy Cell, National Security Secretariat - EOI (6 months)	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Cabinet Office	SCS2 Director Communications (Infected Blood Compensation Authority) - EOI (6-9 months initially)	SCS Pay Band 2	1	1	1	1
Cabinet Office	Deputy Director, i.AI Strategy and Business Engagement	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (Internal)	Deputy Director, Legal Counsellor, Joint Head Sanctions and Asia Pacific Team	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Department for Energy Security & Net Zero	Deputy Director for Operating Model & Organisational Capability Programmes	SCS Pay Band 1	1	2	2	2
Department for Work and Pensions	Deputy Director Talent and Apprenticeships (Part-Time)?	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and	Director of Strategy and Delivery	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1

DEPARTMENT	VACANCY TITLE	GRADE	NUMBER OF VACANCIES	NUMBER OF JOBS	OFFER REACHED	CANDIDATES POSTED
Aquaculture Science						
Department for Energy Security & Net Zero	Deputy Director, Net Zero Strategy Directorate	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	4	4
HM Treasury	Deputy Director, Financial Services Strategy	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Department for Work and Pensions	Deputy Director, Group Strategy and Coordination	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
National Crime Agency	Deputy Director HR Delivery Services	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Department for Business and Trade	Senior Investment Partner, Office for Investment	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Cabinet Office	SCS2 Director Operations (Infected Blood Compensation Authority) - EOI (6-9 months initially)	SCS Pay Band 2	1	1	1	1
Department for Energy Security & Net Zero	Deputy Director for Shared Services,	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Department for Business and Trade	UK Pavilion Director – Osaka World Expo 2025	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1

DEPARTMENT	VACANCY TITLE	GRADE	NUMBER OF VACANCIES	NUMBER OF JOBS	OFFER REACHED	CANDIDATES POSTED
Department for Energy Security & Net Zero	Deputy Director, Smart Metering Implementation Programme, Stewardship Team	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	Deputy Director, BBC Policy	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	2	2
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology	Deputy Director, Head of Office for Quantum Technologies	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
HM Treasury	Deputy Director, Education & Skills	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	1	1
Cabinet Office	Deputy Director, National Security Communications	SCS Pay Band 1	1	1	2	1

■ Special Advisers

John Glen:

[\[1215\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Prime Minister will publish the list of special advisers before the summer recess.

Georgia Gould:

Information on Special Adviser numbers and costs will be published in the Annual Report on Special Advisers as per the requirements of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, as was the case under the previous Administration.

■ Special Advisers: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

John Glen:

[\[1249\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to issue special advisers with Government Procurement Cards.

Georgia Gould:

There are only very limited circumstances in which a Procurement Card would be required by Special Advisers and, in such circumstances, procurement methods are a matter for individual departments. As per the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, special advisers cannot authorise expenditure of public funds.

■ **Special Advisers: Pay**

John Glen: [1247]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Prime Minister's Office plans to finalise the salaries for each special adviser.

Georgia Gould:

Information on Special Adviser numbers and costs will be published in the Annual Report on Special Advisers as per the requirements of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, as was the case under the previous Administration.

■ **Vidhya Alakeson**

John Glen: [1245]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Vidhya Alakeson is employed as a Government special adviser.

Georgia Gould:

Ms Alakeson is employed on a part-time contract as a special adviser to the Prime Minister, and is subject to the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Arts: Basildon and Billericay**

Mr Richard Holden: [1814]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what funding is available from the Arts Council for schemes in Basildon and Billericay constituency; how much funding has been awarded to those schemes; whether the Arts Council has sponsored any events in Basildon and Billericay constituency; and what is the criteria for sponsoring events.

Chris Bryant:

Arts Council England's £100 million programme, National Lottery Project Grants, is open for applications to organisations and individuals from across England, from north to south and east to west, including in Basildon and Billericay. The criteria for applying are available on the [Arts Council's website](#).

Grants awarded from the Arts Council's main funding streams within the last 5 financial years (2023/2024 inclusive) are published online and provide details of all organisations that receive funding. They are available in the following locations:

- [National Lottery Project Grants](#)

- [Developing Your Creative Practice](#)
- [Investment Programme](#) (2018-2022 NPO)
- [Investment Programme](#) (2023-2026 NPO)
- [Cultural Recovery Fund](#)
- [Emergency Response Fund](#)

Since 2019, Arts Council England has provided over £5.8 million of funding to organisations in the Basildon and Billericay constituency.

■ **BBC: Finance**

Julia Lopez: [\[1788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she will continue the BBC Funding Model Review.

Julia Lopez: [\[1789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when she expects her Department's BBC Funding Model Review is to conclude and publish its findings.

Stephanie Peacock:

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

■ **BBC: Political Impartiality**

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions her Department has had with the BBC board on impartiality in news coverage of the conflict in Israel and Gaza.

Stephanie Peacock:

My Department meets regularly with representatives of the BBC on a range of matters.

The BBC is editorially and operationally independent of the Government. As the external independent regulator of the BBC, Ofcom is responsible for ensuring BBC coverage is duly impartial and accurate under the Broadcasting Code and BBC Charter.

■ **Casement Park: Regeneration**

Julia Lopez: [\[1790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what the cost is of redeveloping Casement Park for Euro 2028.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Department for Communities in Northern Ireland is responsible for the redevelopment of Casement Park. We want the whole of the UK to benefit from hosting EURO 2028, which is why the Government is looking closely at the Casement Park redevelopment.

This Government has taken swift action, working at pace with all the partners involved to assess the options available.

We will update the House regarding redevelopment of the stadium for EURO 2028 as soon as we are in a position to.

■ Creative Europe**Rachael Maskell:**[\[1705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of rejoining Creative Europe.

Chris Bryant:

Our arts and creative industries significantly bolster the UK's economic prosperity, contributing 5.7% of the UK's total Gross Value Add in 2022 (£124.6 billion). These sectors enrich citizens' lives, and play a vital role in presenting the UK as an attractive location to visit and invest.

The Government is dedicated to fostering their growth and improving the UK's trade and investment relationship with the EU by dismantling unnecessary barriers to trade and will explore all funding options and opportunities for the arts and creative industries. We recognise that this will take time.

This Government is ambitious and wants to move forward as fast as possible, in line with our clear manifesto priorities for the creative and cultural sectors around supporting touring artists and facilitating cultural exchange.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Cost Effectiveness**Julia Lopez:**[\[1792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has for new efficiency savings in (a) her Department and (b) each of its arms length bodies.

Stephanie Peacock:

As laid out in the Spending Review 21 Settlement, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport was required to manage a decreasing funding settlement over this period. This department's funding was further reduced following the Machinery of Government change in February 2023. This reduction has therefore been incorporated into our yearly budget planning, ensuring greater levels of efficiency.

Our arm's-length bodies have had to absorb below-inflation increases to their budgets through this Spending Review period, and so have been required to continuously generate further efficiencies.

Future efficiency plans will be incorporated into the next Spending Review, and this government is committed to ensuring that this department and its arm's-length bodies are providing the greatest levels of efficiency and productivity.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Public Expenditure

Julia Lopez:

[1787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what amount of her 2024-25 departmental budget was underspent on 24 May 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

As of 24 May 2024, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is not forecasting to underspend on the budget as agreed at the Main Estimate. As the Chancellor set out in her speech on Monday 29 July, this department, along with other government departments, has inherited a number of forecasted spending pressures.

Julia Lopez:

[1791]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what underspends are projected in (a) her Department and (b) each of its arms length bodies in (i) this financial year and (ii) the Spending Review period.

Stephanie Peacock:

As of 24 May 2024, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is not forecasting to underspend on the budget as agreed at the Main Estimate.

As the Chancellor set out in her speech on Monday 29 July, this department has inherited a number of forecasted spending pressures. This is also the case for each of the department's arm's-length bodies.

We are currently in the final year of this Spending Review period with no budget set beyond March 2025. Future budgets will be dealt with as part of the upcoming Spending Review.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Licensing

Rachael Maskell:

[1295]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to introduce a licensing scheme for short term holiday lets.

Chris Bryant:

Short-term lets are an integral part of the UK's visitor accommodation offer. The government is clear that they bring a range of benefits to local and national economies.

The government also recognises that communities in tourism destinations, particularly coastal and rural communities, must be able to benefit from thriving tourism but ensure the spirit of their community is preserved when holiday season ends.

Parliament legislated for a registration scheme for short-term lets in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The government is continuing to explore the introduction of such a scheme, which is now a statutory requirement.

■ Museums and Galleries: Concrete

Rachael Maskell: [\[1293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete being present on heritage buildings that serve as (a) museums and (b) galleries; and if she will take steps to support their restoration.

Chris Bryant:

Individual building owners are responsible for health and safety, including responding to safety alerts such as reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). DCMS is in regular contact with museum and gallery sector bodies, who have consulted their members and report that RAAC is not a widespread issue.

The department funds the Museum Estate and Development Fund through Arts Council England. The Fund makes substantial grants of up to £5 million to support infrastructure works and repairs, and RAAC mitigation works are eligible. DCMS Arm's Length Bodies also provide a variety of Capital funds, resilience grant schemes, and expert buildings advice to the museums sector.

■ Musicians: EU Countries

Rachael Maskell: [\[1704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Secretary of State for the Home Department on (a) tours in European Union countries by UK musicians and (b) tours in the UK by musicians and artists from European Union countries.

Chris Bryant:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is committed to working closely with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Home Office, Cabinet Office and other relevant Whitehall departments to address key issues for our outstanding world-class musicians and performing artists on areas such as visas and the movement of goods.

We seek to reset the relationship with our European friends, neighbours and allies. We recognise that strengthening the relationship will take time, but this Government is ambitious and wants to move forward as fast as possible, in line with our clear manifesto priorities in relation to the creative and cultural sectors.

■ SV Tenacious

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[1564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will hold discussions with representatives of the Save Tall Ship Tenacious campaign on saving the SV Tenacious to support future generations of seafarers with disabilities and long-term health conditions.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is aware of the campaign regarding the future of the SV Tenacious after its owner and operator, The Jubilee Sailing Trust (Tenacious) Limited, entered administration. Unfortunately, the department does not have a suitable funding stream or policy lever to meet the unique and necessary means required to support the ship, and therefore does not believe it would be appropriate to hold discussions with representatives of the organisation. However, if an organisation offers to take over the running of the ship, then officials could potentially provide advice on how to access funding streams.

■ Tourism: VAT

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the introduction of a tourism tax.

Chris Bryant:

We have no plans to introduce a tourism tax.

■ World Heritage Sites

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she plans to take to help support locations that are on the tentative list for designation as a world heritage site.

Chris Bryant:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is actively engaging with all the sites on the UK's Tentative List, which includes regular check-in meetings and the provision of specific guidance on both UK Government and UNESCO processes for nominations.

DEFENCE

■ A400M Aircraft

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[1469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Atlas A400M for meeting the military transport requirements of the Royal Air Force.

Maria Eagle:

The Atlas has proven very capable in the Air Transport role. With superior range, speed and load capacity, the Atlas Force can deliver a variety of military equipment and vital spare parts.

The Atlas Force has also conducted rapid deployment of humanitarian aid relief to disaster hit regions and efficient evacuations of civilians from regions that had become unstable.

■ Ammunition: Manufacturing Industries

James Cartlidge: [\[1741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many jobs are (a) directly and (b) indirectly linked to munitions production.

Maria Eagle:

This Government recognises the vital role defence plays not only in our national security but also to the economic prosperity and growth of the United Kingdom.

The most recent estimates show that in 2021-22, MOD spent £950 million in the Weapons and Ammunition industry which supported an estimated 5,200 industry wide jobs in the UK. This included 2,700 direct jobs specifically in the Weapons and Ammunition sector and a further 2,500 indirect jobs across all industry sectors to deliver end products and service requirements. Updated jobs figures for 2022-23 will be published later this year.

■ Ammunition: Procurement

James Cartlidge: [\[1735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he plans to provide an additional £10bn of funding for munitions replenishment over the next ten years.

James Cartlidge: [\[1736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of munitions stockpiles for each of the Front Line Commands.

James Cartlidge: [\[1737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he is taking steps to ensure that the volume of his Department's munitions orders from the UK armaments industry delivers a level of output that sustains warfighting levels of production over the Parliament.

James Cartlidge: [\[1739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has set targets for the replenishment of munitions stocks in (a) the Army, (b) the Royal Navy, (c) the Royal Air Force and (d) Strategic Command.

James Cartlidge:

[\[1740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will have discussions with UK armaments manufacturers about the adequacy of the munitions stockpile.

Maria Eagle:

Munitions stockpile levels and requirements are kept under constant review, balancing current holdings against threats, availability, industrial capacity and evolving technology.

The Ministry of Defence is engaging closely with industry partners and developing a new Defence Industrial Strategy to ensure we have the industrial base we need to support our, and our allies', requirements. The Government is committed to a long-term partnership with our domestic defence industry to support innovation and resilience.

The Strategic Defence Review will determine the capabilities and reforms required by UK defence to meet the threats of the 21st century. The Government is committed to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence as soon as possible.

■ **Armed Forces' Pay Review Body**

John McDonnell:

[\[796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of when the independent report entitled Armed Forces' Pay Review Body: Fifty-Third Report 2024 will be published.

Al Carns:

The Armed Forces' Pay Review Body's (AFPRB) Fifty-Third Report 2024 was published on 29 July 2024.

To recognise the commitment and service of our Armed Forces personnel, HMG accepted in full the 2024 Pay Award recommendations made by the independent Armed Forces' Pay Review Body and Senior Salaries Review Body. This year's award provides a targeted and significant pay uplift for new recruits alongside a large headline increase of 6%.

■ **Armed Forces: Mental Health**

Andrew Bowie:

[\[1774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to tackle the (a) risks and (b) challenges arising from their service that military personnel can face to their mental health.

Al Carns:

Ensuring veterans have access to the mental health support they need is a priority for this Government. I am leading work across Government and with Civil Society to look at the best ways to ensure veterans and their families get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need

The MOD delivers a number of existing initiatives that firstly aim to prevent mental ill-health through adopting healthy practices and awareness training, and subsequently to provide support to those who may be struggling.

For those personnel requiring medical intervention the Defence Medical Services (DMS) provide a responsive, flexible, accessible, and comprehensive treatment service, through its mental health clinical professionals who have extensive experience in treatment of mental health problems and psychological injury.

In addition to the specialist diagnosis and treatment, there is a range of other options for mental health support for Service Personnel including on-demand digital resources, and in-person welfare establishments. Pre and post deployment briefing is provided to all personnel (whether Regular or mobilised Reservists) to ensure that the availability of support is highlighted at times when stressors may be heightened.

■ **Armed Forces: Public Appointments**

James Cartlidge: [\[1729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how he plans to assess the performance of service chiefs two years after their appointment.

AI Carns:

The Secretary of State for Defence, supported by the Permanent Secretary and the Chief of the Defence Staff, regularly takes stock of the performance of the Service Chiefs.

Andrew Bowie: [\[1777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where the office of Armed Forces Commissioner will be based.

Andrew Bowie: [\[1778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the salary will be of the Armed Forces Commissioner.

Andrew Bowie: [\[1779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to appoint the Armed Forces Commissioner.

Luke Pollard:

The Armed Forces Commissioner is the first in a series of steps that will be taken by the new Government to improve Service life and renew the contract between the nation and those who serve.

The Armed Forces Commissioner will be a direct point of contact for Service personnel and their families to raise issues which impact on service life.

The Armed Forces Commissioner will have the power to investigate individual complaints and to proactively launch independent reviews into issues affecting Service personnel and their families more widely, and to lay those reports before

Parliament. The new Commissioner will have a right of access to information, sites and personnel in order to fulfil their role. The Commissioner will incorporate the functions currently undertaken by the Service Complaints Ombudsman.

The Armed Forces Commissioner will strengthen Parliamentary oversight of issues facing our Armed Forces personnel and their families. The Commissioner will be subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by the Defence Select Committee and will report directly to Parliament, not ministers, via an annual report.

There will be opportunities to debate all aspects of the role, remit and operation of Armed Forces Commissioner when the Government brings forward the Legislation outlined in the King's Speech. Details on budget, pay, grade, staffing and office location will be set out in due course.

■ **Armed Forces: Suicide**

Andrew Bowie:

[\[1772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will fund further research relating to suicide amongst (a) serving personnel and (b) veterans.

AI Carns:

The Ministry of Defence continues to monitor the long-term impact of operational deployments. A study mapping the mortality rates and causes of death, including suicide, of military personnel who served since 2001, including those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, is underway. The focus of this study is to understand the long-term impact of military service. It will compare findings with the general population.

The Defence Suicide Register has also been launched. This is an ongoing Defence-led project to provide an evidence-base specific to Serving personnel by better understanding circumstances surrounding individual deaths. It draws together information from multiple data sources across Defence, enabling internal analysis across organisational boundaries to inform evidence-based prevention, intervention, and postvention activity.

Research suggests that the risk of suicide in our veteran population as a whole is no higher than that in the general population. However, it suggests that certain younger cohorts of veterans may be at a higher risk. The Office for Veterans' Affairs is working across Government and with civil society to ensure veterans have access to the health support they need.

■ **Boxer Vehicles: Procurement**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his policy to continue the development of the Remote-Controlled Howitzer 155mm Wheeled Artillery Systems (RCH 155) with Germany.

Maria Eagle:

Working with Germany through this landmark defence agreement to collaborate on the Boxer based Remote Controlled Howitzer 155mm Wheeled Artillery Systems (RCH 155), the Defence Secretary will build on existing cooperation, and develop this important programme to strengthen our respective artillery capabilities and promote shared national and European security objectives.

Defence Equipment: Infrastructure**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[1468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the UK's air defence systems for defending critical infrastructure.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is reviewing its air defence capabilities and contribution to wider national defence as part of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) and is in close collaboration with other Government Departments to help develop the future proposition. The UK currently has a wide range of capabilities to counter the Air and Missile threat facing us. This includes but is not limited to: Typhoon aircraft on Quick Reaction Alert readiness, Type 45 destroyers, short and medium range ground-based air defence, and numerous critical supporting elements. The MOD constantly reviews its policies and capabilities in line with developing threats. The air and missile threat is proliferating and Defence will ensure that this changing threat picture is factored into the SDR work.

Defence: Expenditure**Jim Shannon:**[\[1494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts on increasing defence spending.

Luke Pollard:

At the NATO Summit earlier in July 2024, the Prime Minister, Foreign and Defence Secretaries discussed a range of issues with our NATO allies at the NATO Summit. This included making the case for all NATO allies to increase defence spending, in light of the grave threats to our security.

The UK continues to work internationally with our allies to encourage all NATO allies to spend at least 2% of their GDP on defence, with 23 allies now meeting this target. We see this as a minimum not a ceiling for defence spending in these more difficult times.

This Government is committed to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence.

■ Guided Weapons

James Cartlidge: [\[1742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of changes to the timing of defence spending being 2.5 per cent of GDP on the UK's stock of MBDA-manufactured missile systems.

Maria Eagle:

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

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

■ Ministry of Defence: Cost Effectiveness

James Cartlidge: [\[1963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to (a) implement and (b) cancel efficiency savings budgeted for by the previous Government for (i) his Department and (ii) departmental arm's length bodies; and what plans she has for further such efficiency savings.

Maria Eagle:

Plans for future efficiency savings across the Department will be considered as part of the Spending Review.

■ Ministry of Defence: Departmental Coordination

James Cartlidge: [\[1728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to reset relations (a) with the Treasury, (b) with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and (c) within Whitehall.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence works closely with other Government Departments, including HM Treasury and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, on a range of issues. The Secretary of State for DEfence and the Foreign Secretary have already held a joint briefing on Ukraine and NATO for MPs.

The terms of reference for the Strategic Defence Review outlines the reviewers will consult widely with stakeholders, including across Whitehall, particularly HM Treasury and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, on areas where they support Defence.

■ Ministry of Defence: Departmental Responsibilities

James Cartlidge: [\[1723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure clear strategic authority over the capability of the armed forces.

James Cartlidge: [\[1724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost of establishing a Military Strategic Headquarters within his Department.

James Cartlidge: [\[1725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of how many (a) officials and (b) military personnel will be required to (i) deliver and (ii) staff a Military Strategic Headquarters within his Department.

James Cartlidge: [\[1726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to give the Chief of the Defence Staff new authority.

James Cartlidge: [\[1727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that officials in his Department have a stronger voice across Government.

James Cartlidge: [\[1730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how he plans to establish a Military Strategic Headquarters.

James Cartlidge: [\[1731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he has taken to establish a Military Strategic Headquarters.

James Cartlidge: [\[1732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to establish new strategic leadership in procurement.

James Cartlidge: [\[1734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to give more influence to his Department's civil service.

Luke Pollard:

To align with the Government's vision for reform in Defence, and the Secretary of State's priority to strengthen leadership through overhauling the Defence Operating Model, we are developing options for establishing a Military Strategic Headquarters, a stronger Department of State, and the role of the National Armaments Director. Further detail will be made available in due course.

■ Ministry of Defence: Procurement

James Cartlidge:

[\[1738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to improve his Department's acquisition system.

Maria Eagle:

The Strategic Defence Review launched on 16 July 2024 will determine the reforms required by UK Defence to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. In doing so it will consider the approach taken to acquisition and support to deliver required capabilities in a timely way, secure the best possible value for money and leverage rapidly changing technology.

■ Ministry of Defence: Public Appointments

James Cartlidge:

[\[1733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the remuneration package of the National Armaments Director will be.

Maria Eagle:

To align with the Government's vision for reform in Defence, and the Secretary of State's priority to strengthen leadership through the Defence Operating Model, we are developing options for establishing a Military Strategic Headquarters, a stronger Department of State, and the role of the National Armaments Director (NAD). Advice and recommendations on potential changes to the NAD role are being scoped for consideration. Further detail will be made available in due course.

The current NAD's salary is routinely published in the Defence Equipment and Support Annual Report and Accounts.

■ Ministry of Defence: Public Expenditure

James Cartlidge:

[\[1962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the underspends within (a) his Department and (b) each of its arms length bodies in (i) this financial year and (ii) across the Spending Review period.

Maria Eagle:

The Department's financial outturn is set out in the published Annual Report and Accounts. Figures for 2024-25 will be made available in next year's Annual Report and Accounts following the end of the financial year.

For individual Arms Length Bodies (ALB) underspends, ALBs are responsible for producing their own Annual Report and Accounts and these are available in the public domain. The ALBs within the boundary of Ministry of Defence are listed in the Departmental Annual Report and Accounts.

■ Veterans Welfare Service: Northern Ireland**Andrew Bowie:** [\[1775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what funding he plans to provide to support the Veterans Welfare Service in Northern Ireland.

AI Carns:

The Veterans Welfare Service (Northern Ireland) became the responsibility of Defence Business Services on 1 April 2023. Budgets are allocated within Defence Business Services at the delivery of veterans' services level, and it is not normally possible to break this information down to individual services. As part of the transfer of responsibility, funding of £805,000 for Financial Year 2024-25 was transferred to Defence Business Services to cover the pay and ongoing contract costs of the Veterans Welfare Service (Northern Ireland).

■ Veterans: Cramlington and Killingworth**Emma Foody:** [\[1105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to support veterans in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency transition back into civilian life.

AI Carns:

I am working across Government and with civil society to help those who leave the Armed Forces, including those in Cramlington and Killingworth, transition back into civilian life.

Currently the Defence Holistic Transition Policy (JSP100) sets out how the Ministry of Defence supports Service leavers to assist in a successful transition, including through the Career Transition Partnership, Veterans Welfare Service (VWS), Defence Transition Services (DTS) and Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans (IPC4V).

■ Veterans: Gedling**Michael Payne:** [\[1385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to support veterans in Gedling constituency.

AI Carns:

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country, across the whole of the UK. I am working across Government and with civil society to ensure veterans, including those in Gedling, get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need, and looking at the best way to deliver this support.

■ Veterans: Homelessness

Andrew Bowie:

[658]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to reduce veteran homelessness.

AI Carns:

The level of homelessness, including for our veterans, is too high.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is working across Government to ensure veterans have access to the support they need on housing, as well as mental health, employment and other areas.

The Government will develop a new cross-Government strategy, working with Mayors and Councils across the country, to put Britain back on track to ending homelessness. The MOD will work with other departments to take a long term approach and to tackle the root causes of homelessness.

■ Veterans: Mental Health Services

Andrew Bowie:

[1773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to help ensure better provision of mental health support for veterans.

AI Carns:

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country. I am leading work across Government and with Civil Society to look at the best ways to ensure veterans and their families get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need.

NHS England offers Op COURAGE: the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, which provides a broad range of specialist mental health and wellbeing care and support for service leavers, reservists, veterans and their families. More information and contact details on Op COURAGE can be found here:

www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/mental-health/veterans-reservists.

As health is devolved, I am also looking forward to working with counterparts in the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Governments on this important issue.

■ Veterans: Northern Ireland

Andrew Bowie:

[1762]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve support for veterans in Northern Ireland.

AI Carns:

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who have served our country. I am leading work across Government and with civil society to ensure

veterans and their families get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need, across the whole of the United Kingdom.

In Northern Ireland, the Veterans Welfare Service provides information and practical support to veterans and their families, including timely physiotherapy and psychological therapies to eligible veterans. The Defence Medical Welfare Service pilot supports veterans' health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland and provides insight that will improve our understanding of veterans' health needs. Veterans in need of housing advice can contact the Government's single housing support pathway, Op FORTITUDE, where a dedicated team of advisers work to assist veterans across the UK.

■ Veterans: Women

Andrew Bowie: [\[1776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve support for female veterans.

Al Carns:

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country. I am leading work across Government and with Civil Society to look at the best ways to ensure all veterans, including women veterans, and their families get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices

Mr Richard Holden: [\[1439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students (a) began and (b) completed level (i) 3, (ii) 4, (iii) 5, (iv) 6 and (v) 7 apprenticeships in each year between 1997 and 2024.

Janet Daby:

Apprenticeship starts and achievements are published by level from academic year 2002/03 and can be found in the following links:

2017/18 to 2023/24 (reported to date):

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/c63cef58-95e2-4f9e-b7d1-08dcab23a860>.

2014/15 to 2016/17:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/bd0d64fd-52e9-4a1e-b7d2-08dcab23a860>.

2002/03 to 2013/14 apprenticeship starts:

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F5a82b65940f0b62305b93f40%2Fapprenticeships-starts-by-framework-level-and-gender.xls&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>.

2002/03 to 2013/14 apprenticeship achievements:

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F5a7f5c50e5274a2e8ab4bb61%2Fapprenticeships-achievements-by-sector-subject-area-level-and-age.xls&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>.

To note, intermediate apprenticeships are equivalent to level 2, Advanced apprenticeships are equivalent to level 3 and Higher apprenticeships are equivalent to those at level 4 and above. Apprenticeship starts and achievements within an academic year cannot be used to infer the proportion of apprenticeships that are achieved. They are independent performance metrics. Typically, apprenticeships are achieved in a subsequent academic year to the one they started in.

■ Apprentices: Birmingham Northfield

Laurence Turner:

[762]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeships have started in Birmingham Northfield constituency in each of the last five years.

Janet Daby:

Apprenticeship starts by parliamentary constituency are published in the Apprenticeships Statistics publication. Figures for Birmingham Northfield constituency can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/2abb827d-653c-4a6f-5350-08dca71310d3>.

Note: Figures are based on parliamentary constituency boundaries as at July 2024.

Further information on apprenticeship starts can be found in the Apprenticeships Statistics publication, which can be accessed at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships>.

■ Apprentices: Degrees

Jon Pearce:

[2015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many degree apprenticeships were (a) advertised and (b) completed in (i) High Peak constituency, (ii) Derbyshire and (iii) Greater Manchester in each of the last five years.

Janet Daby:

The table below provides details of degree level apprenticeship (Level 6 and 7) vacancies in High Peak constituency, Derbyshire and Greater Manchester that were advertised on the Find an Apprenticeship (FAA) service on GOV.UK in each of the last five years.

The department encourages employers to advertise on FAA to maximise engagement with their vacancies and to ensure that they are accessible to all

potential apprentices, but not all choose to use the service. Employers may choose to recruit apprentices through their own channels, for example via their own websites, which the department does not monitor. The figures below therefore do not represent the total number of degree level apprenticeship vacancies advertised.

ACADEMIC YEAR	HIGH PEAK	DERBYSHIRE	GREATER MANCHESTER
2018/19	Low	50	170
2019/20	0	80	130
2020/21	Low	90	220
2021/22	Low	370	400
2022/23	Low	270	430

To note:

- Figures rounded to the nearest 10.
- 'Low' indicates a value of fewer than 5.
- Vacancies are total number of positions within an advert. Each advert on FAA can have more than one position advertised.

The table below provides details of degree level (Level 6 and 7) apprenticeships that have been achieved in High Peak constituency, Derbyshire and Greater Manchester in each of the last five years, as published in the Apprenticeships statistics publication.

ACADEMIC YEAR	HIGH PEAK	DERBYSHIRE	GREATER MANCHESTER
2018/19	Low	10	20
2019/20	10	20	190
2020/21	20	60	420
2021/22	20	190	670
2022/23	30	310	980

To note:

- Figures rounded to the nearest 10.
- 'Low' indicates a value of fewer than 5.
- Source is the Individualised Learner Record.

- Geography is based on the learner home postcode.

■ Apprentices: Small Businesses

Sir John Hayes:

[17]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to help small businesses take on apprentices.

Janet Daby:

Small businesses are important to the economy and to apprenticeships. This government will transform the skills system by developing a growth and skills levy so that opportunities, including apprenticeships, are available across the country and businesses of all sizes can meet their ambitions, fill their skills gaps and stimulate the economic growth that the country needs.

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Sorcha Eastwood:

[1881]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has plans to review the apprenticeship levy.

Janet Daby:

Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

Meeting the skills needs of the next decade is central to delivering the government's mission. To support business and boost opportunity, the department will transform the existing Apprenticeship Levy into a more flexible Growth and Skills Levy. This will allow employers to invest in a wider range of training and empower them to upskill their workforces for current and future challenges.

The department has already established Skills England which will work closely with employers, training providers, unions, Mayoral Combined Authorities and others across the skills landscape to identify the training for which the Growth and Skills Levy will be accessible.

■ Bus Services: Training

Alex Mayer:

[1606]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to allow local leaders to use Skills Bootcamp funding to support training for bus drivers.

Janet Daby:

Skills Bootcamps are a great way for learners and local areas to develop the skills they need and the department provides grant funding to 30 mayoral combined authorities and local areas to deliver Skills Bootcamps training that meets local skills' priorities. In the 2023/24 financial year, the total value of grant funding contracts awarded was approximately £114 million.

The department continues to keep the sectors eligible for Skills Bootcamps funding under review.

■ Childcare

Damian Hinds: [\[1656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on potential workforce participation effects of the availability of (a) year-round and (b) term-time only childcare provision.

Stephen Morgan:

Ensuring that parents are able to access affordable and high-quality childcare is a priority for this government. This means ensuring that a variety of different types of provision are available, including year-round and term-time only, that suit the needs of different parents.

Regular discussions are held with Cabinet colleagues on how this government can deliver these priorities, including through our work on our mission to break down opportunities for every child.

■ Children in Care: Innovation

Mr Richard Holden: [\[701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department has taken to implement the recommendations of the Twenty-Seventh Report of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 2022-23 on Evaluating innovation projects in children's social care, HC 38, published on 22 November 2022.

Janet Daby:

The recommendations from the Twenty-Seventh Report of the Committee of Public Accounts rightly highlighted that the innovation projects in children's social care needed to be fully evaluated and that the subsequent learning from previous innovation work should be sufficiently scaled and spread.

The department is committed to ensuring that evaluation and learning drive how it sets the direction for practice in children's social care. Whilst the recommendations from the Public Accounts Committee have been enacted, there is more that will be done to work with the sector, key stakeholders and those with lived experience, to ensure that this learning translates into improvements for children, young people and their families.

■ Children: Mobile Phones

Sir John Hayes: [\[1639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she will take steps to regulate smartphone use for children.

Stephen Morgan:

In February 2024, the department published non-statutory guidance for schools on how to develop, implement and maintain a policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones throughout the school day. As has been the longstanding policy of successive governments, headteachers remain responsible for deciding how they choose to implement this policy.

The Online Safety Act protects children from accessing harmful and age-inappropriate content and ensures that technology companies take more responsibility for the safety of their users, particularly children.

Children's Social Care Independent Review**Rachael Maskell:**[\[108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she plans to implement the recommendations of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

Janet Daby:

The department is committed to helping children thrive and wants the best for every child and family.

Reforming children's social care (CSC) is critical to giving hundreds of thousands of children and young people the start in life they deserve. It is also necessary to achieve financial stability for local authorities.

That is why the government commits to working in partnership with local government to continue the work to reform CSC. The department will build on the foundations already laid by dedicated social care professionals and go further to deliver a social care system that works for everyone.

Department for Education: Public Expenditure**Damian Hinds:**[\[1654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what underspends are projected in (a) her Department and (b) each of its arms length bodies in (i) this financial year and (ii) the Spending Review period.

Stephen Morgan:

As my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, set out in her statement on July 29, the government's spending audit has identified a forecast Resource Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) overspend of £21.9 billion against the plans set out for departments at Spring Budget 2024. This already factors in the Treasury's assessment of a £7.1 billion fallaway over the course of the year, as set out in Table 1 of 'Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25'.

The government has announced £5.5 billion of savings in the 2024/25 financial year, bringing the in-year pressures down to £16.4 billion.

■ Further Education and Training: Leeds**Alex Sobel:** [674]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the number 16-18 year-olds who will not be able to secure a place in (a) further education and (b) training because not enough suitable places are available in Leeds in September (i) 2024 and (ii) 2025.

Janet Daby:

The department is working closely with Leeds City Council, Luminate Education Group and other providers in Leeds to ensure all 16-19 learners can access places, both in 2024 and in 2025.

■ Further Education: Boarding Schools**Andrew George:** [1635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students are required by geographic circumstances to board at night to receive post-16 education by local authority area.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on the reason pupils board overnight at school is not held centrally by the department.

Information on the number of pupils who board is published in the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' publication, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

■ Further Education: Finance**Rachael Maskell:** [1287]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will commission a review into the funding of further education.

Janet Daby:

Further education (FE) plays a critical role in delivering the government's missions and ensuring that everyone has access to the opportunities they need, breaking down the barriers to their success and boosting economic growth.

FE funding in future years will be considered as part of the Spending Review.

■ Further Education: Isles of Scilly**Andrew George:** [1634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to ensure that post 16 year old pupils who live on the Isles of Scilly have equality of affordable opportunity to state sector study as their mainland counterparts.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to providing high quality education to all young people, regardless of their background or where they live. The department understands the unique challenges students and families from the Isles of Scilly face in accessing study programmes on the mainland due to there being no post-16 education available on the Isles.

The department will provide funding to the Council to cover their predicted number of post-16 students in 2024/25 to meet the students' travel and accommodation needs.

The government will keep all of its student financial support programmes under review, including considering what more can be done to support post-16 students from the Isles of Scilly, as part of the next Spending Review.

Andrew George:[\[1636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much was provided to the Council of the Isles of Scilly for post-16 education for students in each of the last five years for which records are available; and how much was (a) unspent and (b) returned.

Janet Daby:

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) allocates a boarding and accommodation allowance to the Isles of Scilly. This is a contribution of funding towards boarding, accommodation and travel costs for students who are permanent residents on the Isles of Scilly and who are eligible for 16 to 19 education. This is a special arrangement to support students with their full-time education on the mainland of England.

The funding values and unspent/returns funds are shown in the table below:

ISLES OF SCILLY COUNCIL (UKPRN 10001710) ESFA BOARDING AND ACCOMMODATION ALLOWANCE

Academic Year	Funding Allocation	Funding Unspent (a) and Returned (b)
2024/25	£318,250	New Year
2023/24	£305,520	Information due September 2024
2022/23	£217,208	£77,134
2021/22	£222,924	£36,109
2020/21	£194,344	£22,109

■ Further Education: Students

Damian Hinds:

[1653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the (a) capacity and (b) number of students on roll was for 16 to 19 education in (i) state-funded (A) sixth-forms and (B) colleges and (ii) independent schools in each parliamentary constituency in the most recent period for which data is available.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on the capacity and pupils on roll in primary and secondary state-funded schools, including sixth forms, as at May 2023, which is the latest period for which data is available, is published in the annual 'School capacity' in England statistics.

This can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>.

Data is published at school level and has been joined with information from Get Information About Schools to aggregate to parliamentary constituency. The attached document 'Table 1_1653' provides this data. Information is not available on the capacity of independent schools.

Information on the number of students enrolled in state-funded and independent schools as at January 2024, which is the latest published census data available, is published in the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' statistics. This can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. Under 'additional supporting files' is a school-level file titled 'School level underlying data - 2023/24 (csv, 22 Mb)' which includes phase of school (column 'O'), type of establishment (column 'S') and parliamentary constituency (column 'AB')

Please note that where statistics were published prior to the changes in parliamentary constituency boundaries, they will be updated to reflect the new boundaries in the next publication of the statistics.

Attachments:

1. [1653 Table](#) [Table 1_1653.xlsx]

■ Further Education: Trade Unions

Mr Richard Holden:

[1440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has for the role of trade unions in working with specialist technical excellence colleges.

Janet Daby:

The department will be bringing forward further details on the role of all local partners working with Technical Excellence Colleges in due course. These colleges will work with businesses, trade unions and local government to provide young people and adults high quality training that local economies need.

■ Higher Education: Disadvantaged

Sonia Kumar:

[1173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to (a) improve university access for students from underrepresented backgrounds and (b) tackle financial barriers faced by such students.

Janet Daby:

The government will support the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university, regardless of their background.

Too many people across our country do not get the opportunity to succeed. The government will act to change this.

The government recognises that UK higher education creates opportunity, is a world-leading sector in our economy and supports local communities. The government is committed to a sustainable funding model, which supports high value provision thereby powering opportunity and growth and meeting the skills needs of the country.

■ Higher Education: Finance

Jim Shannon:

[71]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government has plans to review the higher education funding model; and if she will take steps to ensure the sustainability of university funding through a model that balances the (a) needs of students and (b) constraints on public finances.

Janet Daby:

Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

It is important for universities, their students and staff, that there is a sustainable higher education (HE) funding system that provides opportunities, supports students and maintains the world-leading status of our universities. The government is committed to a sustainable funding model, which supports high value provision, thereby powering opportunity and growth and meeting the skills needs of the country.

The government keeps the HE funding system under continuous review. The department will work with universities to support students and deliver for the economy. An announcement on student finance arrangements for the 2025/26 academic year will be made in due course.

■ Home Education

Mr Richard Holden:

[1574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children are home schooled in each local education authority area.

Stephen Morgan:

The department publishes information on children in elective home education (EHE), which can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/elective-home-education>.

The number of children in EHE, at any point in the 2022/23 academic year, by local authority can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/3a87f0ae-7cfd-4b6c-b8de-08dcab23db45>.

Please note that approaches to recording of EHE vary across local authorities. This is a new data collection since 2022/23 and, as such, the department expects the quality of the data returns from local authorities to continue to improve over time. In the latest term, data was received from 95% of local authorities. The data is adjusted for non-response and combined with population data for comparable ages to produce the national rate of EHE published in the release, which was 1.1% in autumn 2023.

The Children's Wellbeing Bill will legislate for local authority registers of children not in school. This will include a duty on parents to provide the necessary information for these registers if their child is eligible, which would improve the accuracy of data and ensure that fewer children slip under the radar when they are not in school.

■ Overseas Students: Nigeria**Kate Osamor:****[1722]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department provides support to international students unable to afford university fees due to high inflation in Nigeria.

Janet Daby:

Our universities are autonomous bodies, independent of government, and are therefore responsible for managing their own budgets. Student Support Regulations ensure that the support provided by British taxpayers is targeted at those who have a substantial and recent connection with the UK.

Higher education (HE) providers operate their own hardship funds to support students who have financial issues. Like domestic students, international students can apply to their provider to request support. HE providers also offer dedicated support to their international students pre-arrival, on-arrival and during their studies. Students experiencing financial difficulties should contact their university to discuss their circumstances.

The UK Council for International Student Affairs offers information and guidance for international students who may be experiencing unexpected financial hardship, which is available here: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Fees-and-Money/Unexpected-financial-hardship>.

■ Primary Education: Nurseries

Damian Hinds: [1657]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of the proposed additional nursery places in primary schools will be (a) year-round and (b) term-time only.

Stephen Morgan:

There are a range of models of nursery provision run on school sites, including nursery classes attached to primary schools, provision for 2 year olds and full day care run by schools, as well as private and voluntary providers running provision on school sites. The department will be working closely with the sector as it develops this commitment to ensure new nursery provision meets the varied needs of parents, children and schools.

■ Pupil Exclusions: Somerset

Anna Sabine: [1620]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number of (a) suspensions and (b) exclusions from schools in Somerset by age in each of the last ten years.

Stephen Morgan:

The department publishes figures from the school census on suspensions and permanent exclusions from state-funded schools in England. The most recent release can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england>.

The number of suspensions and permanent exclusions in Somerset by age, for the 2013/14 to 2022/23 academic years, which is the latest data available, can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/31f23f0d-20c2-4c95-b8d0-08dcab23db45>.

■ Pupil Numbers

Damian Hinds: [1652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the (a) capacity and (b) number of pupils on roll was in (i) state-funded and (ii) independent schools at each phase of (A) primary education and (B) secondary education to the end of key stage four in each parliamentary constituency in the most recent period for which data is available.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on the capacity and pupils on roll in primary and secondary state-funded schools as at May 2023, which is the latest period for which data is available, is published in the annual 'School capacity' in England statistics. This can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>.

Data is published at school level and has been joined with information from 'Get Information About Schools' to aggregate to parliamentary constituency. The attached

document 'Table 1_1652' provides this data. Information is not available on the capacity of independent schools.

Information on the number of students enrolled in state-funded and independent schools as at January 2024, which is the latest published census data available, is published in the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' statistics. This is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. Under 'additional supporting files' is a school-level file titled 'School level underlying data - 2023/24 (csv, 22 Mb)' which includes phase of school (column 'O'), type of establishment (column 'S') and parliamentary constituency (column 'AB'). Please note that where statistics were published prior to the changes in parliamentary constituency boundaries, they will be updated to reflect the new boundaries in the next publication of the statistics.

Attachments:

1. [1652 Table](#) [Table 1_1652.xlsx]

■ **Pupils: Per Capita Costs**

Jon Pearce:

[2019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average funding per pupil in mainstream schools was in (a) High Peak constituency, (b) Derbyshire and (c) England in each of the last three years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The average funding per pupil in mainstream schools in (a) High Peak constituency, (b) Derbyshire and (c) England for the 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years can be found in the tables below.

The department is only able to provide the schools national funding formula (NFF) allocations for the High Peak constituency. The schools NFF determines school revenue funding for all mainstream schools in England, although schools' actual allocations are based on local authorities' local funding formulae. Constituency figures are based on an aggregate of schools' NFF allocations. The aim of the NFF is to distribute funding in a fair way and the government therefore keeps it under review.

Average Per Pupil Funding through the Schools NFF:

FINANCIAL YEAR	HIGH PEAK CONSTITUENCY
2022/23	£5,300
2023/24	£5,605
2024/25	£5,956

Per-pupil school funding is the aggregated school-level NFF allocation divided by the number of pupils in mainstream schools in the constituency.

Funding figures for Derbyshire and England are provided based on the actual allocations of the schools block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), the core allocations received by local authorities for funding mainstream schools.

Average Per Pupil Funding in Mainstream Schools through the DSG:

FINANCIAL YEAR	DERBYSHIRE	ENGLAND
2022/23	£5,456	£5,534
2023/24	£5,788	£5,838
2024/25	£5,935	£5,957

To note:

- In 2022/23, on top of funding through the NFF/DSG, all schools received additional funding through the Schools Supplementary Grant.
- In 2023/24, on top of funding through the NFF/DSG, all schools received additional funding through the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) and the Teachers' Pay Additional Grant (TPAG). The DSG figures provided here include the MSAG (but not TPAG) allocations.
- In 2024/25, on top of funding through the NFF/DSG, all schools will receive additional funding through the through the TPAG, Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant 2024 and Core Schools Budget Grant.

In addition to this core revenue funding and additional grants noted, schools received funding through a number of separate streams, including Pupil Premium, Universal Infant Free School Meals funding; PE and sport premium funding and the recovery premium and National Tutoring Programme to support education recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Schools: Finance

Damian Hinds:

[\[1655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has set aside capital funding for the provision of potential additional places in state schools in the event they are required as a result of pupils moving from the independent sector to the state sector.

Stephen Morgan:

Education is at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity so every child gets the best start in life. Ending tax breaks on private schools will help raise revenue to drive forward the change this government is committed to deliver. The department is supporting HM Treasury, which will deliver the tax changes. Further details were published by the government on 29 July 2024 and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools>.

The department collects pupil forecasts and school capacity data from local authorities annually through the School Capacity survey. This data shows that, in May 2023, 11.7% of primary capacity and 11.5% of secondary capacity was unfilled nationally, meaning school places are available in many parts of the country.

■ Schools: Food

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will support food growing schemes in schools.

Stephen Morgan:

It is important that children eat nutritious food at school and the department encourages schools to have a whole school approach to healthy eating.

Having a school garden or setting up a gardening club are some of the ways schools can achieve this approach. This is a decision for schools to make, dependent upon local circumstances. The department recognises a lot of schools find ways to collaborate between headteachers, school cooks, children, teachers, governors and parents to make this happen.

All education settings are welcome to register as participants in the National Education Nature Park. This initiative inspires children and young people to learn about and connect with nature, spend time outdoors and develop valuable green skills.

■ Schools: Safety

Mark Pritchard:

[\[1648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to ensure Ofsted includes the adequacy of the physical security of school buildings in their inspection reports.

Catherine McKinnell:

Ofsted's overall role is to make sure that schools provide high and rising standards for every child through its inspection and reporting process. The School Inspection Handbook does not set any specific expectations for schools regarding site security. However, if inspectors had particular concerns about the adequacy of the physical security of school buildings, those concerns would be reported on.

Self-employed: Apprentices**Jim Shannon:**[\[75\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to encourage self-employed tradesmen to take on apprentices.

Janet Daby:

Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

Small businesses are important to the economy and to apprenticeships. This government will transform the skills system by developing a Growth and Skills Levy so that opportunities, including apprenticeships, are available across the country and businesses of all sizes can meet their ambitions, fill their skills gaps and stimulate the economic growth that this country needs.

Skills England**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[44\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the remit of Skills England will be.

Janet Daby:

Skills England will ensure the supply of skills needed for growth, which is crucial for supporting the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and to kickstart economic growth.

Skills England will bring together businesses, education and training providers, unions, and regional and national government to ensure we have the highly trained workforce needed to deliver the government's forthcoming industrial strategy.

It will work with the Migration Advisory Committee to make sure skills training in England accounts for the overall needs of the labour market, and it will coordinate between local areas to ensure everyone can access all the opportunities available.

The government's ambition for Skills England is that it will bring coherence to the assessment of skills' needs and to the training landscape. It will ensure that training programmes are well designed and delivered so that they meet these needs and ensure businesses have the highly skilled workforce they require to thrive.

■ Special Educational Needs

Clive Lewis: [\[1509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Safety Valve intervention programme on the provision of SEND services by local authorities.

Clive Lewis: [\[1510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to review Safety Valve agreements with local authorities.

Clive Lewis: [\[1511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will publish any data it holds on the potential impact of the Safety Valve agreement on the provision of special educational needs support in Norfolk.

Clive Lewis: [\[1512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of Safety Valve agreements on the delivery of local authorities' statutory obligations to children and young people with SEND.

Catherine McKinnell:

Local authorities high needs budgets are under significant pressure, and the department is considering what support and reforms are needed to secure better outcomes and experiences for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and to secure local authorities financial sustainability.

The Safety Valve programme is intended to help local authorities provide an improved SEND service by maximising the impact of their high needs budget and promoting a more stable and effective system for children and young people with SEND. Safety Valve agreements have been established only where both the local authority and the department agreed that the proposals would improve services for children and young people with SEND.

Safety Valve agreements are not intended to release local authorities from their obligations to fulfil their statutory duties to children and young people with SEND, and the department would not enter into an agreement with a local authority if it compromised their ability to meet these obligations. The department regularly reviews the implementation of all Safety Valve agreements through its monitoring process and provides support and intervention if they go off track. The future use of Safety Valve agreements is also under review. The department does not hold any specific data on the potential impact of Norfolk's Safety Valve agreement.

■ Special Educational Needs: City of Durham

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[1794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the provision of special educational needs and disability services for children in City of Durham constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission inspected local arrangements for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in County Durham in June 2024. The report is due to be published in August 2024.

County Durham is part of the department's Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. The DBV programme, which was established by the previous government, aims to work with selected authorities to review how services are structured and delivered to achieve better outcomes for children and young people with SEND in a sustainable way. The DBV programme achieves this by helping each of the participating local areas complete a diagnostic to work out the root causes of their challenges and identify local opportunities to sustainably improve the outcomes and experiences of the children and young people with SEND in their care.

On completion of their diagnostic, County Durham created an action plan to address their key local challenges and implement service reforms. Based on this, the department provided grant funding of £1 million to support the delivery of their plans.

This government is committed to providing the necessary support to improve the experiences for children and young people with SEND and their families. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach, to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and alternative provision settings, and to ensure that special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

■ Special Educational Needs: East Riding

Graham Stuart:

[\[1906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of re-allocating the SEND per pupil funding allocation for the East Riding in line with other local authorities.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department will take time to consider whether to make changes to the high needs national funding formula (NFF) that is used to allocate funding for children and young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities. The department will also consider the impact of any formula changes on local authorities, including East Riding of Yorkshire Council. It is important that there is a fair education funding system that directs funding to where it is needed.

Budgets for the 2025/26 financial year have not been set, which means that decisions on the high needs NFF and the publication of allocations for that year will not be to the usual timescales.

■ Special Educational Needs: High Peak

Jon Pearce:

[2017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of how many children in High Peak constituency have been identified as having Special Education Needs.

Catherine McKinnell:

The special educational needs (SEN) publication publishes data on pupils with SEN support or education, health and care (EHC) plans. This publication can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>.

The figures requested are derivable from the underlying school data and have been summarised in the table below:

Pupils with SEN in High Peak constituency, January 2024

PUPILS BY SEN TYPE	TOTAL NUMBER	TOTAL PROPORTION
Total pupils	12,304	100%
SEN support	1,787	14.5%
EHC plan	526	4.3%

■ Special Educational Needs: Neurodiversity

Gregory Stafford:

[448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to support the families of neuro divergent children while an education, health and care plan is being agreed.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is aware that the number of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in England continues to rise, and that parents have struggled with getting the right support for their children, particularly through a sometimes long and difficult education, health and care plan process.

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 is committed to taking a community-wide approach, to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and to ensuring 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 our children.

■ Special Educational Needs: Rural Areas

Jon Pearce:

[2018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department provides for SEND children in schools in rural constituencies.

Catherine McKinnell:

For too long, the education and care system has not met the needs of all children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with parents and carers struggling to get their children the support they need and deserve.

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, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, and ensuring 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 our children.

■ Teachers

Dan Carden:

[1978]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the amount of time teachers are allocated to undertake (a) planning, (b) preparation and (c) assessment.

Catherine McKinnell:

All teachers who participate in the teaching of pupils are entitled to reasonable periods of planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time, which is a minimum of 10% of their timetable. This government is committed to resetting the relationship between the government and education profession in order to improve the experience of being a teacher. In July, alongside delivering a fully-funded 5.5% pay award, we clarified that teachers can use PPA time at home, to provide greater flexibility for teachers. The department knows that improving workload will play a key role in recruiting and retaining excellent teachers and leaders, which will support the government's mission to transform the education system so that all children and young people get the skills, care and opportunities they deserve.

The department is now considering all options for future policy interventions to improve teacher workload and wellbeing to help deliver on the government's ambition to recruit 6,500 additional new teachers, and is working with partners across the sector to achieve this.

■ Teachers: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:****[1185]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve recruitment and retention rates of teachers in schools in Lincolnshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

High-quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education, therefore delivering the government's agenda to break down the barriers to opportunity relies on a highly skilled workforce in schools.

There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England. However, the department needs to do more to recruit additional teachers, especially in shortage subjects in secondary schools, which is why the government has set out the ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers.

Financial incentives are one of the most effective ways to increase teacher supply. The department's initial teacher training financial incentives package this year is worth up to £196 million, including bursaries of up to £28,000 tax free for trainees in mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing. Although the minimum starting salary for teachers in Lincolnshire increased to £30,000 from 2023/24, the department knows fair pay going forward is key to ensuring teaching is an attractive and respected profession. This is why this government has accepted the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools from September.

The department is providing schools with almost £1.1 billion in additional funding, in financial year 2024/25, to support schools with overall costs. This matches what we have calculated is needed to fully fund, at a national level, the teacher pay award and the support staff pay offer in financial year 2024/25, over and above the overall available headroom in schools' existing budgets.

Recruiting more teachers is a key part of the opportunity mission, but this government is also committed to tackling long-standing retention challenges to ensure teachers stay and thrive in the profession. This is why the department is continuing to support mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing teachers in the first five years of their careers, who chose to work in disadvantaged schools, through retention payments worth up to £3,000 after tax. For the 2023/24 academic year, teachers in 55 schools in the Lincolnshire local authority were eligible for these retention payments.

To further help retention, the department is also addressing teacher workload and wellbeing and supporting schools to introduce flexible working practices. Lupal School of Hales Valley Trust, as one of the department's flexible working ambassador schools, is helping schools across East Midlands and Lincolnshire to introduce flexible working practices.

In addition, local teaching school hubs, including the L.E.A.D Teaching School Hub and DRET Teaching Hub, are supporting schools across Lincolnshire to deliver teacher training and development.

■ Teachers: Training

Jo White:

[\[1850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her planned timetable is for issuing contracts to the providers who have been selected to deliver the pilot teacher degree apprenticeships.

Catherine McKinnell:

In early 2024, the department invited applications from initial teacher training (ITT) providers and degree-awarding institutions to participate in the Teacher Degree Apprenticeship (TDA) funding pilot in secondary mathematics.

The department assessed all bids and selected eight providers to offer the pilot in March 2024. As part of the pilot, providers received a course development grant. The grant offer letters were agreed between April and July 2024.

Schools that employ trainees on their mathematics TDA courses as part of the funding pilot will receive additional grant funding to support with trainee salary costs. These grants have not yet been paid and will be distributed once candidates have been recruited to courses.

The department continues to work closely with pilot providers to monitor and support course development, candidate recruitment and delivery. The pilot will allow the department to gauge the impact of salary grant funding on recruitment to the TDA.

TDA courses are expected to be published from autumn 2024, with the first cohort of training commencing in autumn 2025.

■ Universities: Antisemitism

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[\[1928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-Semitism on university campuses.

Janet Daby:

As autonomous institutions, universities are responsible for tackling antisemitism on campus and should have processes in place to deal with unlawful abuse and harassment.

Universities, as well as Jewish groups and other stakeholders, have told us that the previous government's Freedom of Speech Act prevented them from taking effective action. The department is stopping further commencement of the Act, in order to consider the options, including its repeal.

The department will continue to work closely with Jewish groups, including the Union for Jewish Students and the University Jewish Chaplaincy, to understand their concerns and what further action is needed.

Universities: Finance**Rachael Maskell:** [\[1288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with Universities on the financial viability of the sector.

Janet Daby:

The Office for Students (OfS), as the independent regulator of higher education (HE) in England, is responsible for monitoring the financial sustainability of registered HE providers, and therefore undertakes regular engagement with the sector.

The government recognises the financial strain that some providers are facing, and works closely with the OfS to monitor emerging risks and issues within the sector and to ensure there are robust mitigations in place to ensure the interests of students are protected.

The department also undertakes regular engagement with sector representatives and providers to understand the risks and issues facing the sector and to discuss the overall climate for HE provider financial sustainability.

The department is looking forward to speaking with providers in the coming weeks, months and years on a variety of matters, including financial sustainability.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce****Andrew Bowie:** [\[1541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has met with the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce.

Michael Shanks:

Details of Ministers' and Permanent Secretaries' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

Published declarations include the purpose of the meeting and the names of any additional external organisations or individuals in attendance.

Carbon Emissions**Clive Lewis:** [\[1954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of regulating embodied carbon to help meet net zero targets.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Last year, the Government consulted on the possible introduction of Mandatory Product Standards, in other words regulations to limit the embodied emissions of products.

In response, the previous Government set out it would not commit to introducing Mandatory Product Standards for any specific sector at that stage. Instead, it was planning to focus on introducing Voluntary Product Standards, which would be a necessary first step.

Voluntary Product Standards will establish definitions of low carbon products that can be used as a basis for policies such as green public procurement. The Government plans to consult on these standards in due course.

■ Carbon Emissions: Artificial Intelligence

Mr Luke Charters:

[1872]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of artificial intelligence for reducing emissions.

Kerry McCarthy:

The Department is funding the “Artificial Intelligence for Decarbonisation's Virtual Centre of Excellence” (ADVICE), run by consortium composed of the Alan Turing Centre, the Energy Catapult and the Digital Catapult, to make an assessment into how AI can be used to achieve our net zero goals. They have produced two reports which can be downloaded here: <https://www.turing.ac.uk/research/research-projects/advice>.

■ Civil Servants: Scotland

Andrew Bowie:

[1538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many civil service jobs his Department plans to create in north-east Scotland.

Michael Shanks:

Aberdeen was announced as one DESNZ's second headquarters in December last year. This highlights the important role the north east Scotland will play in our net zero transition.

The headquarters already has over 100 staff (104 as of end June 2024), and our ambition is to increase this to 135 by March 2027.

We plan to review DESNZ's overall location strategy and associated growth targets later this year, to ensure alignment with the departmental objectives.

■ Coal: Imports and Production

Mr Richard Holden:

[1982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much coal is (a) required annually by the UK heritage rail sector and (b) produced in the UK; which countries the non-UK supplies originate from, by annual tonnage; and what assessment he has made of the comparative CO2 impact of (i) importing coal from overseas and (ii) domestically producing coal.

Michael Shanks:

The Department does not hold specific data on coal and the heritage rail sector. Breakdowns of coal usage, production and imports are available in the Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/solid-fuels-and-derived-gases-chapter-2-digest-of-united-kingdom-energy-statistics-dukes>

The source of coal for use in heritage steam and other industries is a private matter for the organisations involved. The coal extraction industry is in decline in the UK and there is currently only one commercial coal mine in operation. We do not intend to grant new coal licences.

■ Domestic Visits: Aberdeen

Andrew Bowie: [1532]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to visit Aberdeen.

Michael Shanks:

The Secretary of State looks forward to visiting all areas of the United Kingdom including Scotland.

■ Electric Cables

Andrew Bowie: [1526]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a presumption in favour of offshoring energy infrastructure where agricultural land would be affected by overhead cables or undergrounding.

Michael Shanks:

The energy National Policy Statements (NPS) require developers to minimise impacts on agricultural land and preferably use land in areas of poorer quality. The NPS sets out a starting presumption for overhead lines in most cases and identifies when undergrounding or subsea cables should be considered.

■ Electricity: Infrastructure

Mr Richard Holden: [1981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with his German counterpart on the potential impact of an underground first policy towards new electricity infrastructure.

Michael Shanks:

Details of Ministers' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Housing

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing minimum energy performance certificate requirements for owner occupied dwellings at (a) sale and (b) purchase.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The government is considering options to ensure a fair, proportionate and affordable approach to improving the energy performance of owner-occupied homes. The Warm Homes Plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation and other improvements.

We will also work with the private sector, including banks and building societies, to provide further private finance to accelerate energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Rented Housing

Ellie Chowns: [\[1617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to require landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their properties to a EPC C rating.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

This government is committed to reducing the number of fuel poor households in England. We will require landlords to improve their properties to Energy Performance Certificate standard C by 2030. Ensuring warmer, healthier private rented homes will lift many families out of fuel poverty and reduce energy bills.

■ Energy: Infrastructure

Andrew Bowie: [\[1527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether communities will receive remuneration for hosting energy infrastructure.

Michael Shanks:

Communities will continue to have a say on proposals in their area. It is important that communities feel the benefit of energy infrastructure. This is a matter the Government takes seriously and is considering carefully.

Andrew Bowie: [\[1528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will give communities the ability to express opposition to hosting grid infrastructure.

Michael Shanks:

For England and Wales, the Planning Act 2008 requires developers to show they have effectively engaged with communities, considering and incorporating feedback. This includes a requirement on developers to demonstrate that they have consulted

adequately with communities before they submit applications for consent. In Scotland, the Scottish Government's good practice guidance sets out the expectations and requirements for consultation.

■ Hinkley Point C Power Station

Claire Coutinho: [\[1571\]](#)

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 Sizewell C.

Michael Shanks:

The capital costs for Sizewell C are commercially sensitive, and subject to ongoing development. We cannot comment further on the cost at this time, but we are committed to Sizewell C, which with other new nuclear projects will play an important role in the Government's vision for achieving energy independence, lowering consumers' bills, and securing thousands of good, skilled jobs. Work continues at pace to secure a final investment decision.

■ Insulation: Housing

Ellie Chowns: [\[1616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential (a) economic, (b) social and (c) environmental impact of poor home insulation; and if he will make it his policy to establish a local-authority-led street-by-street retrofit programme to insulate homes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Energy efficiency improvements remain the best way to tackle fuel poverty in the long term, contributing to the reduction of energy bills, as well as reducing carbon emissions in line with Net Zero.

The Warm Homes Plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation, low carbon heating and other home improvements to cut bills. We will partner with combined authorities and local and devolved governments to roll out this plan.

We will announce further policy detail in due course.

■ Nuclear Power

Andrew Bowie: [\[1764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to his Department's policy paper entitled Civil nuclear roadmap to 2050, published in January 2024, whether he plans to meet the target of producing 24GW of energy by nuclear by 2050.

Michael Shanks:

The Government supports new nuclear and believes there is a strong role for it in making this country a clean energy superpower.

We want to see Hinkley Point C operational this decade and extensions to the currently operating fleet, and we are working at pace to reach a Final Investment Decision for Sizewell C, in which the Government is the majority shareholder. Furthermore, Great British Nuclear is continuing to deliver the SMR technology selection process, with bids now being evaluated.

■ Nuclear Power: Scotland**Andrew Bowie:**[\[1767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his Department's policy is on the deployment of new nuclear technologies in Scotland.

Michael Shanks:

The UK Government recognises Scotland's significant contributions to British nuclear power and values the expertise and skills within the nuclear industry there. We are aware of the Scottish Government's approach to nuclear energy, we work productively with them on a range of energy issues and remain open to discussions on deploying new nuclear technologies in Scotland.

■ Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf**Andrew Bowie:**[\[1542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he will take to ensure the UK Continental Shelf remains (a) viable and (b) investable.

Michael Shanks:

This Government will ensure a phased and responsible North Sea transition. We will manage the North Sea in a way that does not jeopardise jobs.

As Britain becomes a clean energy superpower, the government is determined to create new high-quality jobs, working with industry and trade unions as we manage the transition.

■ Offshore Industry: North Sea**Andrew Bowie:**[\[1531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he plans to have with OEUK on the future of the North Sea Basin.

Michael Shanks:

This Government will engage with industry to ensure a phased and responsible North Sea transition. The Secretary of State has had introductory discussions with OEUK and the North Sea Transition Authority and we will continue to engage with industry.

Andrew Bowie: [\[1535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of his policy on granting new North Sea exploration licences on employment levels in (a) Aberdeen and (b) Aberdeenshire.

Michael Shanks:

This Government will ensure a phased and responsible North Sea transition. We will manage the North Sea in a way that does not jeopardise jobs.

The Government is taking action to coordinate our approach to ensure a just transition, which would allow offshore oil and gas workers to benefit from the economic opportunities arising from the net zero transition, particularly in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire

We will share more details on our plans for oil and gas in due course. Any future legislative changes would follow the relevant processes, including an impact assessment where appropriate.

Andrew Bowie: [\[1536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the impact of banning new exploration licences on the economy in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Michael Shanks:

This Government will ensure a phased and responsible North Sea transition. We will manage the North Sea in a way that does not jeopardise jobs.

The Government is taking action to coordinate our approach to ensure a just transition, which would allow offshore oil and gas workers to benefit from the economic opportunities arising from the net zero transition, particularly in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

We will share more details on our plans for oil and gas in due course. Any future legislative changes would follow the relevant processes, including an impact assessment where appropriate.

■ Offshore Industry: Scotland

Andrew Bowie: [\[1533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to consult business leaders in north-east Scotland on the potential impact of his policy on oil and gas.

Michael Shanks:

This Government will engage with industry to ensure a phased and responsible North Sea transition. The Secretary of State has held initial, introductory discussions with industry and we will continue to engage to ensure a just transition where offshore oil

and gas workers are able to benefit from the economic opportunities from our transition to net zero.

■ Offshore Industry: Training

Andrew Bowie: [1540]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department plans to take to help support offshore oil and gas workers transitioning to alternative energy industries.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is taking action to coordinate our approach to ensure a just transition, which would allow offshore oil and gas workers to benefit from the economic opportunities from our transition to net zero, particularly in Scotland. As Britain becomes a clean energy superpower, the government is determined to create new high-quality jobs, working with business and trade unions, as we manage the transition.

■ Oil and Natural Gas: Imports

Andrew Bowie: [1534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of projected imports of oil and gas over the next five years.

Michael Shanks:

The Government closely monitors and forecasts UK's supply and demand needs for both oil and natural gas. The [Energy Security Plan Update](#), published in December 2023, includes an assessment of the role of imports in meeting our domestic gas demand until 2050. The department also publishes [projections](#) of the UK's future demand for oil (under existing and near-final policy) and monitors both UK production and demand as part of the [regular departmental output](#). These assessments will be updated in due course to reflect the new government's policy.

■ Oil and Natural Gas: Reserves

Andrew Bowie: [1543]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he will take to ensure that the UK maintains a strategic reserve of oil and gas.

Michael Shanks:

As a member of the International Energy Agency, the UK has an obligation to hold emergency oil stocks equivalent to a minimum of 90 days of net oil imports for use in the event of a major global oil supply disruption.

The Government recognises the need to have natural gas storage to help respond to short-run changes in supply and demand or during cold winter months.

Oil: Licensing**Andrew Bowie:** [\[1530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, which oil and gas industry bodies he consulted with before making his decision to ban new oil exploration licences.

Michael Shanks:

Details of Ministers' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

Oil: Russia**Rachael Maskell:** [\[1300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment has he made of the feasibility of replacing Russian crude oil imported through a third country with renewable and sustainable energy production.

Michael Shanks:

All importers of oil and oil products into the UK must provide proof of origin to demonstrate that goods are not of Russian origin to enforcement authorities. The Government is committed to ensuring that third countries are not used by Russia to evade sanctions and will continue to keep sanctions under review.

The UK will continue to have reliable supplies of fuels from a diverse range of suppliers while we transition to Net-Zero.

Oldbury Power Station**Andrew Bowie:** [\[1765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his Department's policy is on the deployment of nuclear technology at Oldbury.

Michael Shanks:

Nuclear can play an important role in helping to achieve energy security and clean power while securing thousands of skilled jobs. As a site which has previously hosted a nuclear power station, and is now owned by Great British Nuclear, Oldbury can play an important role in new nuclear in the UK, and we will set out our plans for the site in due course.

Renewable Energy: Prices**Mr Luke Charters:** [\[1871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the transition to clean energy on (a) businesses and (b) consumer energy bills.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes that 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. The creation of Great British Energy will help us to harness clean energy and take back control of our energy security.

A renewables-led system is the cheapest foundation for a decarbonised grid, and scaling up home-grown renewables reduces the UK's exposure to volatile global fossil fuel prices, which protects consumer energy bills against future price shocks of the kind which helped drive increases in the electricity price cap of over £1,300 for a typical household during Winter 2022/23.

■ Sizewell C Power Station

Andrew Bowie: [\[1544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he is taking steps to seek new investors for Sizewell C.

Michael Shanks:

Discussions with potential investors participating in the equity raise process are ongoing. We cannot comment further on the process, as it is commercially sensitive.

We are committed to Sizewell C, which with other new nuclear projects will play an important role in the Government's vision for achieving energy independence, lowering consumers' bills, and securing thousands of good, skilled jobs. Work continues at pace to secure a final investment decision.

■ Small Modular Reactors

Andrew Bowie: [\[1763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department plans to take to support the roll-out of small modular reactors.

Michael Shanks:

Great British Nuclear, the Department's arm's-length body responsible for helping deliver the government's nuclear programme is currently running a small modular reactor technology selection process for UK deployment. This is a live procurement and is on-going. The window for submitting tenders has now closed and Great British Nuclear is currently evaluating bids. We look forward to providing further information in due course.

Andrew Bowie: [\[1766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to improve access to market for small and advanced modular reactors outside of the down-selection process.

Michael Shanks:

New nuclear power stations will play an important role in helping the UK achieve energy security and clean power while securing thousands of good, skilled jobs. As

the government has already demonstrated, it will consider measures to break down barriers to delivery of clean energy, including nuclear, and support this country becoming a clean energy superpower.

■ Small Modular Reactors: Exports

Andrew Bowie: [\[1769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support exports of small modular reactor technologies to Sweden.

Andrew Bowie: [\[1770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support exports of small modular reactor technologies to Czechia.

Andrew Bowie: [\[1771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support exports of small modular reactor technologies to Poland.

Michael Shanks:

The UK has established strong civil nuclear relationships with Czechia, Sweden and Poland, and is working closely to coordinate and drive collaboration, including on critical enabling policy such as regulation, financing, operator capabilities, fuels, supply chains, and waste management. We want the UK to be a clean energy superpower, delivering net zero and industrial decarbonisation at home and overseas, so we are pleased to support the nuclear supply chain, including UK Small Modular Reactor (SMR) vendors, seeking to export to responsible nuclear nations, including across Europe.

■ Small Modular Reactors: Procurement

Andrew Bowie: [\[1545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how he intends to shortlist for the small modular reactor competition.

Michael Shanks:

Great British Nuclear, the Department's arm's-length body responsible for helping deliver the government's nuclear programme, is currently running a small modular reactor technology selection process for UK deployment. This is a live procurement and is on-going. The window for submitting tenders has now closed and Great British Nuclear is currently evaluating bids. We look forward to providing further information in due course.

■ Solar Power

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[1904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he intends to publish the Solar Roadmap report.

Michael Shanks:

The Government recently announced the re-establishment of the Solar Taskforce to bring together experts from across Government and industry. Publication of the Solar Roadmap will follow shortly and that will set out recommendations on how we and industry will work together to achieve our ambition to triple the UK's solar capacity by 2030.

Mr Richard Holden:[\[1983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the amount of solar energy generated by ensuring that five per cent of (a) industrial and (b) commercial roofs are covered with solar panels.

Michael Shanks:

The Government does not take a prescriptive approach to the amount of rooftop solar deployment required, nor to the mix between installation on domestic and non-domestic properties. Therefore, no such estimate has been made. However, the Government is clear that rooftop solar will play an important role in achieving its ambition of tripling existing solar capacity by 2030. Further details will be included in the upcoming publication of the Solar Roadmap.

■ Wind Power: Noise**Andrew Bowie:**[\[1529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his planned timetable is for publishing the updated ETSU-R-97 guidelines.

Michael Shanks:

We aim to publish the updated ETSU-R-97 guidance in Spring 2025. In the meantime, the current ETSU guidance remains suitable for assessing wind turbine noise and should continue to be applied accordingly.

■ Wylfa Power Station**Andrew Bowie:**[\[1768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential economic impact of proceeding with the construction of a GW scale reactor at Wylfa.

Michael Shanks:

As a site which has previously hosted a nuclear power station, and is now owned by Great British Nuclear, Wylfa can play an important role in new nuclear in the UK, and we will set out our plans for the site in due course. The Government has not yet carried out an assessment of the economic impact any future project would have at that location. However, according to EDF, Hinkley Point C is supporting up to 12,000 jobs during construction and will support 900 permanent jobs during its 60 years of operation.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture and Food: High Peak****Jon Pearce:**[\[2008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage (a) farmers and (b) food producers to use sustainable farming methods in High Peak constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

The new Government are fully committed to the Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes.

Government will restore stability and confidence amongst farmers and will not overturn the applegart by overhauling the schemes. Instead, we will optimise schemes and grants in an orderly way, ensuring they produce the right outcomes for all farmers, food security *and* nature's recovery in a just and equitable way.

The best way to do all of this effectively is to listen to farmers and others with a stake in our food system, countryside and nature. The Government is doing this as well as assessing data and information about what's working and what isn't before setting out detailed plans.

We plan to increase the transparency of schemes and will continue to design our policies in partnership with farmers to make sure there is something for everyone- including small, grassland, upland and tenanted farms.

■ Agriculture: Finance**Victoria Atkins:**[\[1923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to announce funding levels for agriculture in 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.

■ Agriculture: High Peak**Jon Pearce:**[\[2006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many farms are part of the Sustainable Farming Incentive in High Peak constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

As of 29 July 2024, there are 58 farmers with a live Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) agreement (SFI Pilot and SFI 23) in the High Peak constituency.

■ Badgers: Disease Control

Steve Barclay: [\[1263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, by what date he expects to have ceased badger culling.

Daniel Zeichner:

This government will respect the advice of the widest range of expert advisers when considering the end of the badger cull.

There has not been a major bovine TB strategy review in nearly six years. The last was commissioned by the then Secretary of State Michael Gove and was carried out by Professor Sir Charles Godfray. It informs our starting point as we increase the effort to achieve bovine TB free status by 2038.

Steve Barclay: [\[1264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has commissioned an impact assessment on the proposed ending of the badger cull.

Daniel Zeichner:

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to the reply I gave to [PQ 1263](#).

Sarah Champion: [\[1675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether it is his policy to end licenses for badger culling that have already been issued.

Daniel Zeichner:

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to the reply I gave to [PQ 1263](#).

■ Biodiversity: Regulation

Ben Goldsborough: [\[1843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the potential impact of biodiversity net gain regulations on local planning authorities.

Ben Goldsborough: [\[1844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the preparedness of local planning authorities to meet their obligations under the biodiversity net gain regulations.

Mary Creagh:

Ministers and officials from Defra and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have regular discussions on a range of issues. Officials from both departments continue to work very closely together on biodiversity net gain (BNG) implementation to ensure local planning authorities have the guidance and tools in place to deliver BNG.

Defra has committed £35 million since financial year 2021/2022 to enable Local Planning Authorities to prepare for and implement BNG. On top of this, Defra has funded the Planning Advisory Service to support Local Planning Authorities to prepare for and deliver BNG.

Defra and MHCLG will continue to monitor the roll out of BNG.

■ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

David Simmonds: [\[1986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department will disapply the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Mary Creagh:

A healthy natural environment is critical to a strong economy. This government is committed to delivering for nature and will work with stakeholders, including nature conservation organisations, to develop an approach that both restores nature and enables economic growth. We will only legislate where we can confirm to Parliament that the steps we are taking will deliver positive environmental outcomes.

■ Convention on Biological Diversity

Adrian Ramsay: [\[1889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether Government Ministers plan to attend the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, COP16, in Colombia taking place from 21 October to 1 November 2024.

Mary Creagh:

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs intends to attend the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Full details about the Ministerial and official delegation will be made available in due course.

■ Crops: Somerset

Anna Sabine: [\[1884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) apple farmers and (b) cider makers whose crops have been affected by ermine moths in Somerset.

Daniel Zeichner:

Dessert and culinary apples play an important role in local economies, with the sector worth a combined £188 million in 2023.

The Government is committed to championing British farming and, in partnership with the sector, we are considering a number of ways to achieve our ambitious, measurable and long-term goals for the sector, including development of new crop varieties that are more resistant to pests such as ermine moths.

■ Environmental Land Management Schemes: York Outer

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[1866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that environmental land management schemes support (a) farmers and (b) the rural economy in York Outer constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

The new Government are fully committed to the Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes.

Government will restore stability and confidence amongst farmers and will optimise schemes and grants in an orderly way, ensuring they produce the right outcomes for all farmers, food security and nature's recovery in a just and equitable way.

The best way to do this effectively is to listen to farmers and others with a stake in our food system, countryside and nature. The Government is doing this as well as assessing data and information about what's working and what isn't before setting out detailed plans.

Government will also go further by introducing a new deal for farmers to boost Britain's food security, restore nature and support rural economic growth. We will protect farmers from being undercut in trade deals, make the supply chain work more fairly, protect farmers from shock rises in bills by switching on GB Energy and use the Government's purchasing power to back British produce.

■ Farmers: Lincolnshire

Victoria Atkins:

[\[1924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help support farmers in (a) Lincolnshire and (b) Louth and Horncastle constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

For this government, food security is national security.

That is why this Government will introduce new deal for farmers to boost rural economic growth and strengthen Britain's food security.

- We will cut energy bills by switching on GB Energy
- Protect farmers from being undercut in trade deals
- Use the Government's own purchasing power to back British produce.

Furthermore, the new Government are fully committed to the Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes. Government will restore stability and confidence amongst farmers and will not overturn the applegart by overhauling the schemes.

Instead, we will optimise schemes and grants in an orderly way, ensuring they produce the right outcomes for all farmers, food security and nature's recovery in a just and equitable way.

The best way to do all of this effectively is to listen to farmers and others with a stake in our food system, countryside and nature. The Government is doing this as well as assessing data and information about what's working and what isn't before setting out detailed plans.

■ Flood Control: Chesterfield

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to improve the flood resilience of the river (a) Rother and (b) Hipper in the Chesterfield area.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency is:

- Developing a business case for a flood alleviation scheme to reduce the risk of flooding to properties on the River Hipper in Chesterfield. The project currently has a significant funding gap. Funding will need to be identified for the project to be delivered.
- Investigating the removal of a disused bridge over the River Hipper at Clayton Street to reduce obstructions to flow during flood events.
- Developing a project to refurbish a flood defence wall in the St Augustine's area. This asset reduces risk from the River Rother to properties on Hawthorne, Sherwood, Bridge Street and River View. The Environment Agency, Derbyshire County Council and Chesterfield Borough Council have undertaken a community flood resilience event to discuss how to be better prepared in the event of a flood.
- Reviewing flows and performance of the Avenue Flood Storage Area following Storm Babet. This asset reduces risk from the River Rother to communities downstream in Chesterfield. Subject to funding, the Environment Agency will undertake an optimisation study to assess whether there are any operational improvements that can be undertaken to further reduce flood risk.
- With other partners, investigating any potential for further storage on tributaries of the Rivers Rother and Hipper, for example Spital Brook and Holme Brook.
- Continuing to work with partners to develop natural flood management opportunities within the Rother and Hipper Catchments to help slow the flow and reduce risk to downstream communities.

The Environment Agency also carried out a flood warning validation exercise following Storm Babet to help improve the flood warning service.

To ensure that communities are better protected, Defra has established a ministerially led cross-governmental Flood Resilience Taskforce, with the first meeting taking place in September. The Flood Resilience Taskforce will ensure that preparedness and resilience to flooding is reviewed regularly before the start of the main flood season; and that it is continuously improved to ensure optimum protection

to people, homes and businesses. It will also provide ministers with longer-term oversight of wider floods resilience strategy and investment programmes.

■ Floods: Beverley and Holderness

Graham Stuart:

[1907]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take legislative steps to ensure all domestic insurers offer Build Back Better policies to protect victims of flood damage in Beverley and Holderness constituency.

Emma Hardy:

Build Back Better (BBB) was introduced in 2022 to allow and encourage the insurance industry to provide their claimants with the opportunity to install flood resilient measures when repairs to their property are made.

Insurers representing some 75% of the domestic home insurance market have already signed up to offering BBB. Flood Re has taken several steps to encourage the take up of BBB, including running a series of workshops for insurance company staff and developing a toolkit for insurers.

I will be meeting with representatives of the insurance industry in September to explore with them how they can work with householders to encourage a high take up of the Build Back Better offer, ensuring as many householders as possible benefit.

■ Housing: Gardens

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[1516]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the recommendations of the Mayor of London's London Climate Resilience Review to levy charges on households that pave their front gardens.

Emma Hardy:

On 13 March 2024 the previous government published its [response](#) to the National Infrastructure Commission's study into [Reducing the risk of surface water flooding](#) accepting four recommendations and partially accepting five.

This included the recommendation to undertake a review of the effectiveness of all available options to manage unplanned increases in impermeable (or hard) surfaces, and their costs and benefits. Defra, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and other key stakeholders will be taking this review forward in due course.

The Mayor of London's London Climate Resilience Review expanded on the impermeable surfaces review and recommended that "the government consider introducing stormwater charges for people who pave over gardens and incentives to remove paving". We will consider whether to include this as part of the review during the scoping phase.

■ Internal Drainage Boards: Finance

Sir John Hayes:

[1184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of directly fully funding internal drainage boards.

Emma Hardy:

Defra has committed to work with the internal drainage board (IDB) sector and MHCLG to review IDBs' current funding and costs. This will include examination of whether any changes are needed to their funding model.

IDBs are local independent statutory public bodies, mainly funded by the beneficiaries of their work. This includes farmers who pay drainage rates and local authorities that pay special levies. Those beneficiaries are represented on the boards of IDBs, where decisions on the forthcoming programme of work and sets the annual drainage rates and special levies.

■ Meat: Nutrition

Rachael Maskell:

[1941]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to help reduce the meat intake in people's diets.

Daniel Zeichner:

A balanced diet is rich in fruit and vegetables, beans, pulses and wholegrain starchy carbohydrates. It can also include dairy and alternatives and protein sources such as fish and meat which are valuable sources of many nutrients important for human health.

Defra will work collaboratively across government to deliver a resilient food system that promotes health and food security, protects the environment and champions British farming.

■ Motor Vehicles: High Peak

Jon Pearce:

[2007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent recreational off-road vehicles from causing damage to (a) farmland and (b) countryside in High Peak constituency.

Mary Creagh:

While many users make use of these rights in a responsible way, the Government is aware of damage and disturbance caused by excessive use of off-road motor vehicles on highways where such activities are legal, such as byways open to all traffic and on other unsealed roads which carry motor vehicle rights, often referred to as 'green lanes'. Motor vehicle use on green lanes can damage the surface and reduce enjoyment of the route by other users. Defra consulted on banning vehicles from green lanes as part of the 2019 Landscapes Review, but a legislative ban to remove vehicular rights was not supported. Defra believes that the current Traffic

Regulation Order process is legally robust enough to protect green lanes with carefully targeted local action to protect sensitive areas, while allowing vehicle users to responsibly enjoy the countryside.

It is local authorities' responsibility to monitor and repair public rights of way, which includes green lanes.

■ National Food Strategy Review

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the will National Food Strategy.

Daniel Zeichner:

It's time for a change. We need a resilient and healthy food system, that works with nature and supports British farmers. The only way to do this effectively is to listen to farmers and others with a stake in our food system, countryside and nature.

We will consider relevant evidence and analysis, including that contained in Henry Dimbleby's National Food Strategy, as we develop our plans to support our farmers and food and drink businesses, boost food security, invest in rural communities, deliver growth, manage waste more effectively across the supply chain, improve resilience to climate change and tackle biodiversity loss.

■ Nature conservation: Land

Daisy Cooper:

[\[1366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the guidance entitled Local Sites: Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management, published by the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister in 2006, whether local wildlife trusts require landowner permission to designate an area as a local wildlife site.

Mary Creagh:

Local Wildlife Sites are designated by local authorities for their significant nature or geological conservation value and should be identified, mapped and safeguarded through Local Plans.

Local Wildlife Sites Partnerships, set up by the local authorities for their areas, have responsibility for selecting the sites. The Partnerships are often hosted by or include the Local Wildlife Trust and may include landowners. The decision for selection (or deselection) of sites, informed by local criteria and surveys, rests with the relevant Partnership. Each Partnership determines the approach to site selection for their area. Although they do not require landowners' consent prior to designation, they will require approval to undertake necessary surveys on the land and should engage with relevant landowners before selecting sites.

■ Neonicotinoids**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[1387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to ban the use of neonicotinoids.

Emma Hardy:

This government recognises that nature is at a crisis point across Britain. We will therefore change existing policies to prevent the use of those neonicotinoid pesticides that threaten our vital pollinators.

A Defra spokesperson said: "We are at a crisis point – nature is dying across Britain. This government will change existing policies to ban the use of bee-killing pesticides to protect our vital pollinators."

■ Neonicotinoids: Bees**Dan Norris:** [\[1630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the continued use of neonicotinoid pesticides on bee populations.

Emma Hardy:

This government recognises that nature is at a crisis point across Britain. We will therefore change existing policies to prevent the use of those neonicotinoid pesticides that threaten our vital pollinators.

■ Poultry: Import Controls**Alex Burghart:** [\[1969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to review the import ban on French ducks.

Daniel Zeichner:

It is important to protect animal health and welfare and avoid the economic impacts posed by disease incursion. Therefore, UK businesses importing duck products or meat must currently ensure they are sourced from unvaccinated animals. The Department understands the concerns of GB importers and remains in close dialogue with industry and the French authorities to seek further information relating to France's Avian Influenza Vaccination Plan.

■ River Exe: Pollution**Steve Race:** [\[1897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of (a) the levels of pollution in the River Exe and (b) what the sources of this pollution are.

Emma Hardy:

This government is committed to tackling pollution. The Water (Special Measures) Bill, announced during the King's Speech, delivers on our manifesto commitment to put water companies under tough special measures and begin the work of cleaning up our waterways.

Water quality assessments are underpinned by Environment Agency monitoring programmes, focussing upon a broad range of biological, chemical and physico-chemical parameters. Monitoring and assessment are undertaken throughout the River Exe catchment, from the headwaters on Exmoor, to the bathing waters at Exmouth and Dawlish Warren. Water quality data is publicly available via [Ecology and Fish Data Explorer](#) and [Open WIMS](#). These data are assessed against standards set under the Water Environment Regulations (WER) and Bathing Water Regulations, and are published on [Catchment Data Explorer](#).

In the River Exe catchment, there are 27 waterbodies. Of these, 10 are at good ecological status (under WER), 16 at moderate status and one at poor status. This equates to 37% of waterbodies in the River Exe catchment achieving good or higher status, compared to 16% nationally. Bathing waters at Exmouth and Dawlish Warren received a classification of 'Excellent' in 2023.

I would 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](#)

■ River Exe: Pollution Control

Steve Race: [\[1898\]](#)

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

Steve Race: [\[1899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve the quality of water in the River Exe.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State recently met with water company bosses, including South West Water, to make it 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 reduce sewage pollution 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 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](#)

■ River Wye: Pollution Control

Ellie Chowns: [\[1614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential (a) impact of agricultural run off on and (b) merits of introducing a water protection zone for the river Wye.

Emma Hardy:

The River Wye is one of Britain's most important, iconic rivers. We share concerns about its declining condition and the impact of agricultural pollution. Cleaning up our rivers is one of this Government's top priorities. We are working closely with the Welsh Government to tackle agriculture pollution and restore the river's health.

■ Sewage: Hemel Hempstead

David Taylor: [\[1625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the number of sewage discharges into watercourses there have been in Hemel Hempstead constituency in the last 12 months.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State recently met with water company bosses, including Thames Water, to make it clear that water firms will be held accountable for their performance for customers and the environment. Furthermore, after writing to Ofwat, the Secretary of State has secured agreement that funding for vital infrastructure investment is ringfenced and can only be spent on upgrades benefiting customers and the environment. Ofwat will also ensure that when money for investment is not spent, companies refund customers, with money never allowed to be diverted for bonuses, dividends or salary increases.

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, [HCWS3](#).

The Environment Agency will publish the 2024 Event Duration Monitoring data, showing how long and how often storm overflows have been used, in March 2025. The data for previous years is available [here](#).

■ Thames Water: Insolvency

Charlie Maynard: [\[2024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will appoint a special administrator for Thames Water; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the decision by Moody's to downgrade Thames Water's credit rating to junk status on its licence obligations.

Emma Hardy:

The company remains stable and we are closely monitoring the situation.

It would be irresponsible to comment on hypotheticals.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Greg Smith: [\[1980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to roll out the not for sale in EU labelling scheme in October 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is committed to implementing its obligations under the Windsor Framework in good faith, including commitments on the use of 'Not for EU labels', as well as taking all steps necessary to protect the UK internal market. As per guidance published on GOV.UK, from 1 October 2024 milk and dairy products moving under the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme will need to be individually labelled.

The previous Government held a consultation on extending the 'not for EU' labelling requirements across Great Britain earlier this year and this, as well as further discussion with business, will inform our future approach.

■ Water: Pollution Control

David Simmonds: [\[1987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of her policies on (a) the mitigation credit market and (b) investor confidence in nature markets.

Mary Creagh:

This government was elected on a mandate to get Britain building again, alongside protecting and restoring the natural environment. We are determined to transform the system to ensure a win-win for people and nature.

The existing nutrient mitigation market plays an essential role in enabling housing to go ahead in areas affected by nutrient neutrality without making pollution worse. The Government is continuing to support mitigation provision through Natural England's Nutrient Mitigation Scheme and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund, which work with and alongside private sector providers.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement**

Damien Egan: [\[1418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to ratify the Global Ocean Treaty by June 2025.

Anneliese Dodds:

Ratification of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) is in line with this Government's determination to reinvigorate the UK's wider international leadership on climate and nature and our mission to 'create a world free from poverty on a liveable planet.' Legislation to implement the BBNJ Agreement will be introduced as soon as the legislative timetable allows. There is no deadline for ratification.

■ Developing Countries: Education

Claire Hanna: [\[1816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reinstating funding to the Global Education Project.

Claire Hanna: [\[1817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of developing a national strategy for global education.

Anneliese Dodds:

Access to education for all is a priority for the FCDO. Education supports a country's economic growth and enables children to live lives where they have a wider range of choices. Since 2015, the UK has ensured 19.8 million children have received a decent education (a quality education that improves what children currently receive, including in emergency contexts). We have prioritised improving learning outcomes through securing foundational learning skills for all. It is not within FCDO's remit to develop a national strategy for global education, although we recognise the benefits that this kind of educational activity can bring.

■ Developing Countries: Food

Steve Race: [\[1878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support global progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK has a mission to create a world free from poverty on a liveable planet. Achieving SDG2 (Zero Hunger) is essential to accomplishing this mission, working in genuine partnership with others.

During the G20 Development Ministers Meeting in Rio on 22-24 July, I announced our intention to join the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty when it launches in November. The Alliance will be an essential platform for sharing solutions, exchanging expertise and unlocking much-needed finance to accelerate progress against hunger, poverty and malnutrition.

■ Development Aid**Cat Smith:**[\[1508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 210, whether he has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the fiscal circumstances within which the level of the Official Development Assistance budget will be raised to 0.7% of gross national income.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Foreign Secretary and Chancellor regularly discuss a wide range of issues. This Government is committed to restoring ODA spending at the level of 0.7 per cent of GNI as soon as fiscal circumstances allow and will set out its approach to the House in due course.

Rachael Maskell:[\[1703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will restore the parameters for spending of overseas development aid to its previous criteria.

Anneliese Dodds:

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is an international standard used to measure aid flows to developing countries. Spend classified as ODA must meet the definition and rules that are set and governed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). All UK ODA spending is classified according to the ODA rules set by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee. This Government is committed to restoring ODA spending at the level of 0.7 per cent of GNI as soon as fiscal circumstances allow. The Government will set out its approach to the House in due course.

■ EU Countries: Travel**Chris Hinchliff:**[\[1453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to negotiate improved mobility rights for UK citizens travelling to EU countries.

Stephen Doughty:

We want to strengthen ties with the UK's immediate neighbours and allies and explore areas where we can boost our prosperity and security through mutually beneficial agreements.

We will continue to support opportunities to build our people-to-people links with our partners, but we have been clear that there will be no return to free movement with the EU.

■ **Gaza: Hamas****Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[1435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of the misappropriation of international aid by Hamas in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

FCDO has systems in place to monitor how UK funding is safeguarded against aid diversion. Measures include rigorous due diligence assessments, thorough and regular risk management assessments, and clauses on preventing aid diversion in our Memoranda of Understandings and agreements with partners. We continuously monitor our programmes and partners, including through annual review processes. We coordinate closely with our partners and any concerns about misappropriation of aid are proactively raised to us.

■ **Gaza: Israel****Andy McDonald:**[\[1278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral contribution of 19 July 2024, Official Report, column 307, if he will publish all assessments made by the Government on whether international law has been breached in Gaza since 7 October 2023 before the Summer recess.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As the Foreign Secretary has made clear, he is not able to look back on advice made available to previous Government Ministers. That review process is underway. It is complex and requires careful consideration. The Foreign Secretary has committed to being transparent when making decisions on International Humanitarian Law assessments.

Sarah Owen:[\[1807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement of 19 July 2024 on Israel and Gaza, Official Report, column 301, what his planned timetable is for (a) the completion of his Department's comprehensive review of Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law and (b) updating the House when that process is complete.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As soon as the Foreign Secretary came into office, he commissioned new advice on Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law, in the context of the war. This is an important and complex process, requiring detailed analysis of evidence, and close co-operation with other Government Departments, and is being undertaken urgently. The Foreign Secretary's decision, and the Government's decision on the related issue of arms exports, will be made public when the process is complete.

■ **Gaza: Polio****Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[1799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is providing emergency humanitarian assistance to help prevent a polio outbreak in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is supporting humanitarian agencies including UNRWA, UNICEF and UK Med to provide essential healthcare to civilians in Gaza. This includes activities to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) - which is important to help prevent the spread of diseases such as polio.

The UK is also supporting the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) which, since 1988, has led global efforts to reduce Polio Virus cases by more than 99 percent. In Gaza, GPEI is working with partners including WHO, UNICEF, UNWRA and local NGOs, to plan a response campaign that will integrate polio vaccination alongside other essential health and nutrition services. This will be dependent on securing safe access and a safe environment in which to conduct the campaign, through either a ceasefire or a temporary cessation of hostilities.

■ **Hezbollah****Jim Shannon:**[\[1496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on Hezbollah.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The situation on the defacto border between Lebanon and Israel is very concerning. A widening of the conflict is in nobody's interest and the Government condemns the strike in the Golan Heights that has tragically claimed at least 12 lives. We have been clear that Hizballah must cease their attacks. Our assessment remains that a strong, sovereign Lebanon with strong state institutions, including the Lebanese Armed Forces, is the best way to tackle Hizballah's influence in Lebanon. The Government continues to press these messages in engagement with counterparts and partners from both Israel and Lebanon, including with Israel's Foreign Minister, Israel Katz, during the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel on 14 July and during the Foreign Secretary's call with Lebanon's Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, on 29 July.

■ Iran: Kurds**Steve Race:**[\[1857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of potential impact of Iranian interference in the Kurdistan region on that region.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK Government is clear eyed that Iran continues to destabilise the Middle East through its military, financial and political support for its proxies and partners.

Long-term peace and security cannot be achieved without addressing such activity.

The UK works closely with our international partners to hold Iran to account and encourage de-escalation.

■ Iraq: Kurds**Steve Race:**[\[1860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help (a) promote and (b) support democracy in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK supports a thriving Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) within a peaceful and prosperous Iraq. Through our diplomatic engagements, we continue to encourage cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil to resolve outstanding issues, including around Kurdish representation in Iraqi politics.

Elections are essential for the people of the KRI to express their voice and for the future of the region. We are monitoring the situation with long-overdue KRI elections closely and we are encouraging a solution that allows free and fair elections to take place as soon as possible.

■ Israel: Arms Trade**Clive Lewis:**[\[1955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his policy on arms transfers to Israel will use the principle of atrocity prevention.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary's advice on arms sales follows the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, (SELC) including an assessment of commitment to IHL Compliance (SELC 2c) using a methodology that the Court of Appeal has accepted in judicial reviews. It draws on open-source evidence, intelligence, accounts of diplomatic and ministerial engagements, and correspondence with Israel.

That review process is underway. It is complex and requires careful consideration. The Government will make public its decision as soon as that process is complete.

■ Israel: International Law

Chris Law: [\[1506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish his Department's legal advice on Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary has committed to being transparent when making decisions on IHL assessments. As soon as the Foreign Secretary took office, he commissioned new advice on Israel's compliance with IHL, in the context of the war in Gaza. This decision on IHL, and the Government's decision on the related issue of arms exports, will be made public when the process is complete.

Clive Lewis: [\[1956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is using the same system for (a) collating and (b) reviewing evidence on Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law during the conflict in Gaza as was used by the previous Government.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As the Foreign Secretary has made clear, he is not able to look back on advice made available to previous Government Ministers. That review process is underway. It is complex and requires careful consideration. The Foreign Secretary has committed to being transparent when making decisions on International Humanitarian Law assessments.

■ Israeli Settlements

Andy McDonald: [\[1279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion entitled Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem of 19 July 2024 on Israel's settlement policy.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We have received the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on Friday 19 July and are considering it carefully before responding. The UK respects the independence of the International Court of Justice. The government is absolutely clear on the fundamental importance of the international rule of law.

■ Kurds: Foreign Relations

Steve Race: [\[1861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help promote relations with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK supports a secure, stable and thriving Kurdistan Region in Iraq (KRI) within a peaceful and prosperous Iraq. The UK regularly engages with leaders of the KRI and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), including through their representations in London. We maintain our diplomatic presence in the KRI through the British Consulate General in Erbil. Through this platform, we continue to cooperate closely on our shared bilateral priorities, such as security and migration issues.

■ Kurds: Peace Negotiations**Steve Race:**[\[1859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help promote stability in (a) Kurdistan and (b) the surrounding area.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Through our diplomatic engagements, we continue to encourage greater cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil to resolve their outstanding issues, as well as between the political parties in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

Our focus remains on bolstering the region's stability through our bilateral programming and defence offer. As a leading member of the Global Coalition, the UK supports the Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga to tackle the threat from Daesh and promote stability. This is in addition to the UK's contribution to NATO Mission in Iraq.

■ Kurds: Turkey**Steve Race:**[\[1858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help improve relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and Türkiye.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Our diplomatic missions are in regular contact with the authorities in Turkey, as a close NATO ally, and Iraq. We reiterate to all parties the need for dialogue and cooperation between the Kurdistan Regional Government and Turkey to combat terrorism, ensure regional security, and protect civilians.

The UK recognises Turkey's right to self-defence but also fully supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. It is critical that Turkey and Iraq reach a way of addressing their security concerns that does not lead to greater regional instability.

■ Migration and Economic Development Partnership

Sir John Hayes:

[\[1640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has held discussions with his Rwandan counterpart on the UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership.

Anneliese Dodds:

The British High Commission in Kigali has been in regular contact with the Rwandan Government regarding the Migration and Economic Development Partnership and the Home Secretary has spoken to the Rwandan Foreign Minister to confirm that this government will not be continuing with the policy. The Prime Minister also met President Kagame on 27 July and discussed their shared commitment to a strong bilateral relationship.

■ Morocco: Overseas Trade

Ben Lake:

[\[1977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in Morocco on the trade of natural resources originating in Western Sahara.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We do not consider commercial activity to be illegal in Western Sahara, providing it respects the interests of the Sahrawi people. The UK continues to support the UN-led efforts and the work of Staffan de Mistura as Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Western Sahara, and we continue to encourage constructive engagement with the political process.

■ Morocco: Western Sahara

Ben Lake:

[\[1975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the UN Security Council to send a fact finding mission to investigate the human rights of Saharawis in the (a) occupied territory of Western Sahara and (b) prisons in Morocco.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide, including in Western Sahara and the Tindouf refugee camps. We have consistently supported language in relevant UN Security Council Resolutions that encourages the parties to continue their efforts to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in Western Sahara, including the freedoms of expression and association. We strongly support the work of Staffan de Mistura, Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Western Sahara, and we continue to engage key partners to encourage constructive engagement with the political process.

■ Palestinians: Human Rights

Layla Moran:

[R] [\[1336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will (a) sanction violent settlers who have committed human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank and (b) sanction all entities connected to those settlers.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

[Holding answer 26 July 2024]: The UK has already moved to sanction those responsible for violence in the West Bank and announced designations against eight extremist Israeli settlers perpetrating human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank. The UK has also designated two groups known to have supported, incited and promoted violence against these communities.

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

We do not comment on future sanctions designations as to do so would reduce their impact.

■ Palestinians: Recognition of States

Chris Law:

[\[1507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the Knesset's decision not to recognise a Palestinian state.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK's position remains the same, we are committed to recognising a Palestinian state as a key step in the path to a two-state solution. Palestinian statehood is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people. It is not in the gift of any neighbour and is also essential to the long-term security of Israel. We will recognise a Palestinian State as a contribution to a peace process to deliver a two-state solution, with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

■ Prosperity Fund

Kate Osamor:

[\[1721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the closure of the Prosperity Fund in 2021 on his Department's work to reduce poverty.

Anneliese Dodds:

The cross-government Prosperity Fund ended on 31 March 2021 and prosperity programming moved to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. While

some programmes closed, other programmes continued to run and continue to support fighting global poverty.

The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) regularly reviews FCDO programming. Their 2023 impact review, covering the organisation's reports from 2019 to 2023, noted that, despite pressures, many aid programmes are still making a positive difference globally.

The new government is committed to strengthening international development work within the FCDO. We will continue to prioritise support for economic transformation, tackling unsustainable debt, empowering women and girls, supporting conflict prevention, and unlocking climate finance.

■ Robert Carr Civil Society Networks Fund

David Mundell: [\[881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's policy is on future funding for the Robert Carr Fund.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is proud to be a long-term funder of the Robert Carr Fund (RCF). Our assessments have found it to be a very effective mechanism that supports the leadership, priorities and rights of some of the most marginalised people, in order to expand their access to the HIV, SRHR and health services they need.

Robert Carr is the world's leading international fund focused on funding global and regional networks led by, involving, and serving people who face a higher HIV risk than the general population, systematic human rights violations and barriers to information and HIV and SRH services.

■ Russia: Freezing of Assets

Rachael Maskell: [\[1297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on repurposing frozen Russian assets to support Ukraine.

Stephen Doughty:

This Government is clear that Russia is responsible for its illegal war in Ukraine. That includes its obligations under international law to pay for the damage it has caused in Ukraine. Together with our G7 partners, we have agreed to make available approximately \$50 billion to Ukraine by the end of the year, by advancing the extraordinary profits generated by immobilised Russian Sovereign Assets. The FCDO is working closely with HM Treasury to deliver this commitment as soon as possible. We will continue to explore further options to support Ukraine with our allies.

■ Russia: Oil**Rachael Maskell:** [\[1296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to ensure that oil from Russia is not imported to the UK through a third party.

Stephen Doughty:

The action taken by the UK and partners to limit Russian energy revenues is having a significant impact, with Russia forced to shoulder a 24% reduction in oil and gas revenues in 2023 compared to 2022. We took robust action against Russia's 'shadow fleet' alongside allies at the European Political Community, and we are exploring further options to strengthen our sanctions, including in the energy sector.

Rachael Maskell: [\[1298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero on the potential merits of dis-investing from oil products which originated from Russian-based crude oil.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office works closely with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to ensure the effective design and implementation of relevant sanctions. The action the UK and its partners have taken to limit Russian energy revenues is having a significant impact, including reducing Russia's oil and gas revenues by 24% in 2023 compared to 2022. We are exploring further options to strengthen our sanctions, including in the energy sector.

■ Southern Africa: Droughts**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[1800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle drought in southern Africa.

Anneliese Dodds:

Severe drought has tipped Southern Africa into a food security crisis, where acute humanitarian needs are already emerging. The UK is a major contributor to humanitarian funds which have made allocations totalling £36 million to tackle drought and disease risks. We are a founding member and donor of Africa Risk Capacity, which has provided timely disaster risk financing pay outs to member states. The UK is adapting existing programmes to support national responses and deploying a regional adviser to improve humanitarian risk analysis and coordination. We are also raising the humanitarian needs with our international partners, maintaining focus on long-term, anticipatory solutions to climate-related crises in the region.

■ Tibet: Human Rights

Kate Osamor: [\[1959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of potential implications for his policies of the human rights situation in Tibet.

Kate Osamor: [\[1960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support the preservation of the Tibetan language and culture across Tibet.

Kate Osamor: [\[1961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect freedom of religious belief in Tibet.

Catherine West:

This Government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests. We will co-operate where we can, compete where we need to, and challenge where we must.

We will stand firm on human rights, including China's repression of the people of Tibet. We will champion freedom of religion or belief for all abroad, and work to uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief through our position at the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora, and through bilateral engagement.

Blair McDougall: [\[1999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Chinese counterpart on (a) the use of residential boarding schools as a means of undermining Tibetan culture, (b) the release of the Panchen Lama from detention, (c) the right of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to choose his successor and (d) other issues relating to human rights in Tibet.

Catherine West:

This Government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests. We will co-operate where we can, compete where we need to, and challenge where we must.

We will stand firm on human rights, including China's repression of the people of Tibet. We will champion freedom of religion or belief for all abroad, and work to uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief through our position at the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora, and through bilateral engagement.

■ UNRWA: Finance

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement on 19 July 2024, Official Report, column 300 on Israel and

Gaza, what assurances his Department received that the UN Relief and Works Agency has no links to Hamas in Gaza prior to resuming funding for that agency.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

UNRWA plays a critical role in Gaza and the wider region, providing essential services, including healthcare and education, to Palestinian refugees.

Following the independent review by Catherine Colonna, UNRWA set out an action plan with detailed management reforms including stronger independent oversight, better detection systems, improved screening procedures, mandatory training for staff on humanitarian principles and more proactive donor engagement. We are now confident that UNRWA is taking action to ensure it meets the highest standards of neutrality, staff vetting and transparency.

■ **USA: Diplomatic Service**

John Glen:

[\[1242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, who he plans to appoint as the next Ambassador to the United States.

Stephen Doughty:

The appointment of the next HMA Washington has not been decided. An appointment will be made in due course.

■ **Western Sahara: Human Rights**

Ben Lake:

[\[1974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the UN Security Council on giving the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara the legal mandate to (a) monitor and (b) report on human rights in Western Sahara.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK supports UN-led efforts to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The UK continues to support the UN-led efforts and the work of Staffan de Mistura as Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Western Sahara. Officials regularly discuss Western Sahara with international partners, including the UN, and we continue to encourage constructive engagement with the political process.

■ **Western Sahara: International Law**

Ben Lake:

[\[1973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help prevent breaches of international law in Western Sahara.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is committed to the promotion of respect for International Law worldwide. With regard to Western Sahara, we strongly support the work of Staffan de Mistura, Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Western Sahar, and we continue to encourage constructive engagement with the political process.

■ Western Sahara: Non-governmental Organisations**Ben Lake:**[\[1976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the UN Security Council on unfettered media and humanitarian NGO access to the occupied territory of Western Sahara.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We have consistently supported language in relevant UN Security Council Resolutions that encourages the parties to continue their efforts to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in Western Sahara, including the freedoms of expression and association. Officials regularly meet and consult with international partners to discuss the issue of Western Sahara, including those from the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, the UN, civil society and the broader international community.

■ Western Sahara: Self-determination of States**Ben Lake:**[\[1972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to promote the right to self-government for the people of Western Sahara.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK supports UN-led efforts to reach a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The UK also supports the work of Staffan de Mistura, Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Western Sahara. Officials regularly discuss Western Sahara with international partners, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, the UN and civil society. We will continue to encourage constructive engagement with the political process.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Abortion: Demonstrations****Munira Wilson:**[\[1806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the national provision of safe access zones around (a) abortion clinics and (b) hospitals providing abortion services.

Karin Smyth:

No recent discussions have been held with the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on the national provision of safe access zones around abortion clinics and hospitals providing abortion services.

■ **Alcoholic Drinks****Rachael Maskell:**[\[1951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will produce an alcohol strategy in this Parliament.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government has set out its ambition to create a National Health Service that is fit for the future, which includes prioritising preventative public health measures to support people to live longer, healthier lives. The Government will continue to consider how best to address and reduce alcohol-related harms

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Sales****Rachael Maskell:**[\[1950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of banning the sale of alcohol before 11am on use by people who have an alcohol dependency.

Andrew Gwynne:

Preventative public health measures are vital in supporting people to live longer, healthier lives. The Government will continue to consider the most effective interventions to reduce alcohol-related harms across society.

■ **Ambulance Services: Labour Turnover****Laurence Turner:**[\[R\]](#) [\[300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of trends in the retention of ambulance workers aged fifty and over in the last ten years.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to tackling the workforce crisis across the National Health Service. This will be achieved through better workforce planning, which will address the recruitment and retention challenges facing the NHS.

Valuing and supporting our NHS workforce will be essential in delivering our mission to build an NHS fit for the future and the pay uplifts announced on 29 July 2024 will mean paramedics will see their pay increase by 5.5%, backdated to April 2024.

In the meantime, NHS England continues to lead on a range of initiatives to boost retention, with a strong focus on improving organisational culture, supporting staff wellbeing, and promoting flexible working opportunities. It is continually reviewing the effectiveness of these and their impact on the workforce.

New retirement flexibilities were introduced in the legacy NHS Pension Scheme last year. These measures are designed to allow older staff to choose to work for longer in a more flexible way, thereby helping to boost capacity, supporting patient care.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Primary Health Care

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[1868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of artificial intelligence on access to primary care.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government will make better use of artificial intelligence (AI) and other technologies, in order to bring the National Health Service into the digital age. The NHS AI Lab has allocated £113 million to support the development and evaluation of 86 AI technologies, which are now live in hundreds of Primary Care Networks across the United Kingdom.

We will rebuild an NHS that is fit for the future, and innovation in general practice is key to this. That is why the Government will develop an NHS innovation and adoption strategy in England, which will drive innovation and faster regulatory approval for new technologies and medicines.

■ Asthma: Prescriptions

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[1312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of adding asthma to the list of long-term medical conditions that are exempt from prescription charges.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: There are no current plans to review the list of medical conditions that entitle someone to apply for a medical exemption certificate. Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge in the community in England, and there are a wide range of exemptions from prescription charges already in place for which those with asthma may be eligible. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, or whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are also available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with three month and 12-month certificates available, and PPCs can be paid for in instalments.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Diagnosis**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[1803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support adults affected by backlogs for ADHD assessments.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including support for those waiting for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessments, in line with the relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

We are supporting a cross-sector taskforce that NHS England has launched to explore challenges in ADHD service provision and to help provide a joined-up approach for the growing numbers of people coming forward for support.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs**Peter Swallow:**[\[1851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help increase supplies of ADHD medication.

Andrew Cooper:[\[1900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle shortages in ADHD medications.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working hard with industry to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of this intensive work, some issues have been resolved. Many strengths of lisdexamfetamine and all strengths of atomoxetine capsules and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available. We are working to resolve medicine supply issues, where they remain, for some strengths of lisdexamfetamine and methylphenidate. These are anticipated to resolve by August and October 2024, respectively.

We are asking suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term.

The Department has worked with specialist clinicians to develop management advice for National Health Service clinicians, to consider prescribing available alternative brands of methylphenidate prolonged release tablets. We would expect ADHD service providers and specialists to follow our guidance to offer rapid response to primary care teams seeking urgent advice for the management of patients, including those known to be at a higher risk of adverse impact because of these shortages.

To aid ADHD service providers and prescribers further, we have widely disseminated our communications, and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/prescribing-available-medicines-to-treat-adhd/>

Sojan Joseph:

[519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to improve the availability of (a) methylphenidate and (b) other ADHD medication.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working hard with industry to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of our intensive work, some issues have been resolved. Many strengths of lisdexamfetamine and all strengths of atomoxetine capsules and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available. We are working to resolve medicine supply issues, where they remain, for some strengths of lisdexamfetamine and methylphenidate. These are anticipated to resolve by August and October 2024, respectively.

We have engaged with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to discuss the challenges faced and their actions to address them. We are asking suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term.

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<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/prescribing-available-medicines-to-treat-adhd/>

Dan Carden:

[666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the (a) supply and (b) availability of ADHD medications.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 23 July 2024]: The Department has been working hard with industry to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of our intensive work, some issues have been resolved. Many strengths of lisdexamfetamine and all strengths of atomoxetine capsules and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available. We are working to resolve medicine supply issues, where they remain, for some strengths of lisdexamfetamine and methylphenidate. These are anticipated to resolve by August and October 2024, respectively.

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<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/prescribing-available-medicines-to-treat-adhd/>

■ Autism: Newcastle-under-Lyme**Adam Jogee:****[1089]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the process to secure an autism diagnosis for children living in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including autism assessment services, in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to deliver improved outcomes in all-age autism assessment pathways. This guidance will help ICBs and the National Health Service to deliver improved

outcomes for children, young people, and adults referred to an autism assessment service.

■ **Baby Care Units: Finance**

David Davis: [28]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional funding NHS trusts receive per cot for high-risk neonatal units.

David Davis: [29]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional funding NHS trusts receive per cot for low-risk neonatal units.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: All neonatal units receive funding depending on the number of days that care is provided, as well as the type of care provided. Specific prices for a 'cot day' of neonatal care activity are agreed between local commissioners and National Health Service providers.

From the most recent National Cost Collection for the NHS, in 2022/23, the average national unit cost for neonatal intensive care was £1,879 per bed day. The average national unit cost for neonatal intensive care, special care without an external carer, was £976 per bed day.

■ **Baby Care Units: Nurses**

David Davis: [878]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent guidance his Department has issued on safe staffing limits for nurses qualified in intensive neonatal care in a high-risk neonatal unit.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: NHS England recently completed an update to the Neonatal Critical Care service specification. Service specifications set national standards which all commissioned providers of Neonatal Critical Care services are required to meet. The updated specification for Neonatal Critical Care outlines nurse staffing requirements for the three different levels of neonatal care, including high-risk neonatal intensive care services. The specification requires neonatal units to meet the British Association of Perinatal Medicine's (BAPM) standards in relation to safe staffing limits for registered nurses with a neonatal Qualification in Specialty. The service specification is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Neonatal-critical-care-service-specification-March-2024.pdf>

Furthermore, the BAPM standards are available at the following link:

<https://www.bapm.org/resources/service-and-quality-standards-for-provision-of-neonatal-care-in-the-uk>

■ Bisphenol A: Breast Cancer**Julia Lopez:** [\[1548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the National Institute for Health and Care Research has commissioned any research into the link between Bisphenol A (BPA) and breast cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

Cancer remains a priority for the Government, and we spend £1.5 billion on health and care research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) each year. Cancer is our biggest area of spend, and in 2022/23 the NIHR spent over £121.8 million on cancer research. This includes significant research on breast cancer risk, screening, and early detection and diagnosis.

While we have not funded research looking into a link between Bisphenol A and breast cancer, we welcome high quality research proposals into any aspect of health and care, including potential cancer risks.

■ Breast Cancer**Claire Hanna:** [\[1818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure that people with breast cancer receive (a) an early diagnosis and (b) swift treatment.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department is responsible for healthcare in England. In Northern Ireland, health is a transferred matter.

Improving early diagnosis of cancer, including breast cancer, is a priority for NHS England. NHS England has an ambition to diagnose 75% of cancers at stage 1 or 2 by 2028, which will help tens of thousands of people live longer. The National Health Service in England carries out approximately 2.1 million breast cancer screens each year in hospitals and mobile screening vans, usually in convenient community locations.

The Department is committed to improving waiting times for cancer treatment across England. We will start by delivering an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, as the first step to ensuring early diagnosis and faster treatment.

■ Cancer: Health Services**Grahame Morris:** [\[1483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) access to radiotherapy cancer treatment and (b) overall cancer treatment waiting times are within the scope of the independent investigation of NHS performance led by Professor Lord Darzi.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has commissioned Professor Lord Darzi of Denham to conduct an immediate and independent investigation of the National Health Service. Professor Lord Darzi will be considering data and intelligence across a broad range of measures, assessing patient access to healthcare, the quality of healthcare being provided, and the overall performance of the health system. Full Terms of Reference for the review can be found on GOV.UK website.

■ Cancer: Research**Sorcha Eastwood:****[316]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of funding allocated to cancer research by his Department; and if he will have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on increasing such funding.

Andrew Gwynne:

Cancer remains a priority area for the Government, and £1.5 billion has been invested on health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR's research expenditure for all cancers was over £121.8 million for 2022/23, with more spent on cancer than any other disease group. The overall budget for research investment is agreed with the Treasury at the outset of each Spending Review period, and the Department regularly engages with the Chancellor of the Exchequer about a range of issues.

Our investments in cancer are pivotal to informing efforts to improve cancer prevention, treatment, and care.

The NIHR continues to encourage and welcome applications for research into any aspect of human health, including all cancer types. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients, health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality.

■ Care Workers**Jim Shannon:****[1495]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking with social care providers to ensure that the social care sector meets required staffing levels.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government recognises the scale of reforms needed to make the adult social care sector attractive, to support sustainable workforce growth, and to 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.

Those working in social care have been ignored for too long, and so will be at the heart of our initial reforms. We will engage with the workers and trade unions to

deliver a long over-due new deal for care workers, including establishing the first ever Fair Pay Agreement for care professionals, learning from countries where they operate successfully.

■ Clinical Trials

Andrew Griffith:

[1057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what metrics his Department plans to use to monitor the UK's progress on (a) developing and (b) supporting clinical trials.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department publishes a UK Clinical Research Delivery Performance Indicators Report monthly, which is available at the following link:

<https://sites.google.com/nih.ac.uk/thefutureofukclinicalresearch/home/news-updates/performance-indicators-report?erca=1>

The metrics of the report include, but are not limited to:

- the proportion of all studies receiving combined regulatory review achieved within 60 days, measured from submission to combined regulatory decision;
- the proportion of commercial contract studies open to recruitment within 60 days of the Health Research Authority's approval letter, or equivalent process used by the devolved administrations;
- the proportion of commercial contract studies recruiting their first participant within 30 days of the sites opening to recruitment, except where this is not expected in the study milestone plan, for example rare disease studies;
- the proportion of all open studies on track, delivering on time and target; and
- the recruitment to all studies, including all commercial studies.

By monitoring these key performance indicators, the Department is committed to improving clinical trial performance in the United Kingdom.

■ Community Diagnostic Centres: Epping

Dr Neil Hudson:

[1586]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Community Diagnostic Centre at St Margaret's Hospital, Epping will go ahead as planned.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: West Essex Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) is not yet fully open and is planned to be completed by summer 2025. Currently, St Margaret's Hospital is being funded to deliver additional out of hours and weekend activity while work on completion of the CDC continues.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Sir Christopher Chope:

[594]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential risk of people with partial trisomy experiencing heart complications following an mRNA vaccine; and if his Department will take steps to ensure that the decision of Mr Justice Hayden in the Court of Protection is communicated to all health service professionals.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 23 July 2024]: There has been no formal review of the potential risk of people with partial trisomy experiencing heart complications following an mRNA vaccine, although the safety of vaccines is continually monitored by the independent Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The MHRA conducted detailed analysis of all Yellow Card reports of heart inflammation, specifically myocarditis and pericarditis, which occurred following an mRNA vaccine. Details of these analyses were published weekly in the MHRA's Coronavirus Vaccine - Summary of Yellow Card Reporting, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine-adverse-reactions/coronavirus-vaccine-summary-of-yellow-card-reporting>

These analyses did not identify a specific safety concern in relation to patients with congenital conditions, such as trisomy, who received an mRNA vaccine.

In relation to the judgement of the Hon. Mr Justice Hayden, there are currently no plans to communicate the decision from this specific case to all healthcare professionals. As with all vaccines, should any information indicate a possible new safety concern, the system is well placed to rapidly and thoroughly investigate this, with advice for healthcare professionals and patients updated where appropriate.

■ Covid-19 Inquiry

Sir Christopher Chope:

[1179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Prime Minister's Written Statement of 18 July 2024 on the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report, HCWS11, whether the Prime Minister's personal commitment to each and every family who lost loved ones includes those who lost loved ones as a result of a Covid-19 vaccine.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 26 July 2024]: In the Prime Minister's written ministerial statement to Parliament, he said that ensuring that the United Kingdom is prepared for a future pandemic is a "top priority" for his government and that the Government is determined to learn the lessons from this Inquiry.

Further to this, on the 19 July, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster made an oral statement in the House of Commons in response to the Module 1 report where he said "this government's first responsibility is to keep the public safe. We cannot

rebuild our national resilience overnight. But we will learn the lessons from this Inquiry – from this Module and every Module that follows”.

The issue of Covid-19 vaccines will be discussed in Module 4 of the Covid-19 Inquiry, where the hearings are planned to start from 14 January 2025 to 30 January 2025.

■ Dental Services

Graham Stuart: [1642]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to reform the provision of dental care.

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, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

Jon Pearce: [2013]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of (a) adults and (b) children going 24 months or more without a dental check-up.

Stephen Kinnock:

In the 24 months to June 2023, 18.1 million adults saw a National Health Service dentist in England, the equivalent to 41% of the adult population. In the 12 months to June 2023, 6.4 million children saw an NHS dentist in England, the equivalent to 53% of the child population. Further information is available at the following link:

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

■ Dental Services: Cramlington and Killingworth

Emma Foody: [1116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people living in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency do not have access to an NHS dentist.

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.

The Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), which includes the Cramlington and Killingworth constituency, have taken a number of steps to help improve access in this area, but we know we must do more.

In the 2024 GP Patient Survey, 59% of respondents in Northeast and North Cumbria ICB had tried to get an NHS dentist appointment in the last two years. Of those who did try to get an appointment in the ICB, 24% were unsuccessful. This data is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/2024/07/11/gp-patient-survey-dental-statistics-january-to-march-2024-england/>

■ Dental Services: Exeter

Steve Race: [1891]

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 Exeter 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 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.

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 Devon ICB is responsible for having local processes in place to identify areas of need, and determine the priorities for investment across the ICB area.

Patients unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through an NHS dental practice are advised to contact NHS 111 for assistance. NHS dentists are now required to update their NHS website profiles at least every 90 days to ensure patients have access to up-to-date information on where they can access care.

■ Dental Services: High Peak

Jon Pearce: [2009]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry in High Peak 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.

Jon Pearce: [\[2010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of dental practises are rated as good by the CQC in High Peak constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulates all health and social care services in England. The commission ensures quality and safety across the range of sectors that deliver health and care to people in England.

The CQC carries out assessments of primary dental services to determine if they are compliant with regulations, however they do not rate dental services in the same way they do for the other services they regulate. 11 out of the 18 active dental locations in the High Peak constituency have been assessed and are compliant with the regulations. The remaining seven locations have not yet been assessed.

Jon Pearce: [\[2011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of NHS dental provision in High Peak 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 website 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.

Jon Pearce: [\[2012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of dentists taking new NHS patients in High Peak constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

As of 10 July 2024, there were eight open dentistry practices in the High Peak constituency, three of which were showing as accepting new adult 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: Migrant Workers

Rachael Maskell: [102]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce training bonds for overseas dentists to work in the NHS for a fixed period.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government has no plans to enforce or incentivise overseas dentists specifically to work in the National Health Service.

The General Dental Council (GDC) has opened tendering for provision of Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) Part 1 and Part 2 for the next five years, looking to improve flexibility and availability to the ORE for overseas-dentists. The GDC expanded ORE capacity by 1300 places in 2023-2024.

On 23 May a consultation for a 'tie-in' to NHS dentistry for graduate dentists was published. The consultation closed on 18 July. We will consider responses to the consultation and will set out the Government's position on the proposal in due course.

This Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access NHS 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.

■ Dental Services: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon: [949]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with the Northern Ireland Health Minister on the provision of NHS dental care in Northern Ireland.

Stephen Kinnock:

Whilst the provision of National Health Service dental care is devolved, My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care intends to engage fully with Ministers from all four nations on matters crucial to the future of our health and social care system. My Rt hon. Friend will keep me updated on these discussions.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Equality

Sir John Hayes: [1461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost to the public purse was of staff diversity networks in his Department in each of the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

Department diversity and inclusion staff networks spent a total of £814.40 from 2020/21 to 2023/24, as listed below:

- No spend identified in 2020/21;
- £198.00 spent in 2021/22;
- £500.00 spent in 2022/23; and
- £116.40 spent in 2023/24.

The spend was in relation to events and seminars, relating to significant dates for diversity and inclusion networks. No information on network spend is available for the year 2019/20 due to a change in our financial and human resources reporting system, where some of the detail was not transferred. Requests for expenditure are managed through the central human resources team where a robust process is applied to ensure impartiality, value, and increasing staff development.

Diabetes**Rachael Maskell:**[\[1953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the prevalence of type 2 diabetes.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department is taking steps to reduce the prevalence of type 2 diabetes by identifying people at risk of developing it, through programmes such as the NHS Health Check, and by referring people into the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (DPP) or Weight Management services. These services address the main risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes, namely overweight and obesity, and physical inactivity. The NHS Type 2 Diabetes Path to Remission Programme is also available for people who have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and who are overweight or obese.

Disability: Norfolk**Clive Lewis:**[\[1958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of service provision for (a) deaf and (b) blind people in Norfolk.

Stephen Kinnock:

Under the Equality Act 2010, health and social care organisations are required to make changes in their approach or provision to ensure that services are accessible to disabled people, as well as to everybody else. These changes are called reasonable adjustments.

NHS England has issued guidance for National Health Service commissioners with respect to the Reasonable Adjustments Digital Flag, also known as the Flag. The

Flag has been developed to enable health and care workers to record, share, and view details of reasonable adjustments required by an individual across the NHS, wherever the person is treated.

In addition, NHS 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, including patients with sight or hearing loss. NHS England has completed its review of the AIS and aims to publish the revised AIS soon.

■ **Drugs: Misuse**

Jim Shannon: [1272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been admitted to hospital following a drug overdose in the last 12 months.

Karin Smyth:

Information on hospital admissions is not available in the format requested. NHS England publishes data on the number of admissions due to accidental and intentional poisoning by substance type. This information is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-admitted-patient-care-activity/2022-23>

Rachael Maskell: [1946]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on a harm reduction approach to substance misuse.

Andrew Gwynne:

No discussions have taken place between my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Home Office on a harm reduction approach to substance misuse. The Department recognises that harm reduction is a core component in addressing substance misuse, and is committed to working with the Home Office on this issue.

Rachael Maskell: [1948]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to reduce the number of illicit drug deaths.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department is actively working to reduce the number of drug-related deaths, investing over £300 million into drug and alcohol treatment this year, which will help prevent drug-related harm and save lives. This includes funding over 50,000 additional treatment places, which we know protects against drug deaths.

We are working to expand access to naloxone, a life-saving medicine that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. The Government laid legislation on 29 July 2024,

which, subject to passage through Parliament, will enable more services and organisations to provide take-home supplies of naloxone without a prescription. These changes will mean naloxone can be given to a family member or friend of a person who is known to be using opiates, and to professionals working with people who use these drugs, to save lives in the event of an overdose.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has an action plan to prevent a greater number of drug and alcohol-related deaths. The plan has five priorities around improving: treatment practice; local systems; toxicology and surveillance; stigma; and poly-drug and alcohol use. Some specific elements include improving the integration of treatment services with mental and physical healthcare, expanded specialist inpatient detoxification, and guidance on drug and alcohol death review processes.

The Office for Life Sciences is also running a £5 million fund to tackle fatal drug deaths across the United Kingdom, which is investing in research projects that are developing technologies aimed at improving detection, response, or intervention in potential drug-related deaths. Further information on this fund is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/5-million-fund-to-tackle-fatal-drug-deaths-across-the-uk>

■ **Emergency Calls: Mental Health**

Rachael Maskell: [1693]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of Right Care, Right Person on ambulance services.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: The Department has not made an assessment of the impact of Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) on ambulance services. The resourcing required to implement RCRP will vary depending on local agreements between multi-agency partners. As part of the preparations for implementation, the Department asked all integrated care boards to estimate the resource requirements it would take for them to deliver RCRP earlier in the year. NHS England guidance also asked all local areas to conduct an Impact Assessment with partner organisations when implementing RCRP.

■ **Fentanyl and Nitazenes: Health Hazards**

Rachael Maskell: [1947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to educate the drug using community on the risks of (a) nitazine and (b) fentanyl.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department is monitoring the threat that the synthetic opioids nitazenes and fentanyls pose, and is working with partners across Government to respond to this threat. Educating the drug using community of the risks these drugs pose is vital. In

2018, the Department issued Guidance for local areas on planning to deal with potent synthetic opioids, which was updated in 2023, and explains how local commissioners and service providers can prepare for and respond to incidents involving potent synthetic opioids, as well as how local areas can communicate this threat to drug users. The guidance includes specific messaging for people who use drugs, and was developed with people who use drugs. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fentanyl-preparing-for-a-future-threat/guidance-for-local-areas-on-planning-to-deal-with-fentanyl-or-another-potent-opioid>

The Government has a drug information and advice service called Talk to FRANK, which aims to reduce drug misuse and its harms by providing awareness to young people and to parents. Information on synthetic opioids and the danger of their misuse is available at the following link:

<https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/synthetic-opioids>

■ Food: Nutrition

Rachael Maskell:

[1939]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve access to healthy food for families on low household incomes.

Andrew Gwynne:

Through our Health Mission, the Government has set a bold new ambition to raise the healthiest generation of children in our history. Tackling the childhood obesity crisis is central to that commitment, and the King's Speech set out the immediate steps we will take in the first parliamentary session to ban the advertising of junk food to children. We are also considering ways in which the planning system can do more to support better access to healthy food for families, for instance through more consistent approaches to controlling hot food takeaways near schools.

For families on low household incomes, Healthy Start, introduced in 2006, supports pregnant women and children up to four years old with the cost of healthy foods, as well as providing access to free Healthy Start vitamins. The NHS Business Services Authority is responsible for promoting uptake of the scheme.

In addition, the Government is committed to making quick progress to deliver on its commitment to offer breakfast clubs in every primary school. Breakfast clubs will remove barriers to opportunity by ensuring every child, no matter their circumstances, is well prepared for school and set-up to achieve, by providing a supportive start to the day.

Approximately 2.1 million disadvantaged school-age pupils are eligible for, and claiming, a free school meal, on the basis of low income. This has increased by almost 1 million since 2015/16. Transitional protections are currently in place, ensuring pupils retain this entitlement even if their family's household income

increases. An additional 1.3 million infants enjoy a free lunchtime meal under universal infant provision, with approximately 87% taking this up. We encourage all schools to promote healthy eating and provide healthy, tasty, and nutritious food and drink. Compliance with the School Food Standards is mandatory for all maintained schools, academies, and free schools.

■ **General Practitioners: Halifax**

Kate Dearden:

[\[491\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

Data provided by NHS England Digital shows that in May 2014, the earliest year from which data is available, there were 14 open general practices (GPs) in the Halifax constituency, and as of May 2024 there are nine open GPs in the constituency. The data only includes main practices, and does not include branch practices.

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

■ **General Practitioners: Hertsmere**

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[\[1932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of GP provision in Hertsmere.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP) and we are committed to fixing the the crisis in the National Health Service, to ensure that patients receive the care they deserve, and to secure the long-term sustainability of the NHS.

We will increase the proportion of funding for GPs and shift the focus of the NHS out of hospitals, and into the community. We have committed to end the 8:00am scramble for GP appointments by introducing a modern booking system. Additionally, the Government will train thousands more GPs across the country to increase capacity, secure the future pipeline of GPs, and take the pressure off those currently working in the system.

We will introduce and trial new Neighbourhood Health Centres to bring vital health and care services together under one roof, ensuring healthcare is closer to home and that patients receive the integrated, patient centered services we all want to see.

Hertsmere sits within the NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board, where the percentage of appointments delivered within two weeks of booking is 5.6% lower than the national average.

We are pleased to announce that newly qualified GPs will be included in the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) as part of an initiative to address GP unemployment with additional funding over 2024/25. This is a step on the journey while the Government works with the profession to identify longer term solutions to GP unemployment and general practice sustainability.

■ General Practitioners: Hitchin

Alistair Strathern: [\[1854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide (a) support and (b) resources to help GP surgeries clear (i) patient backlogs and (ii) increasing workloads in Hitchin constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: The Government intends to fix the front door to the National Health Service, and increase the proportion of funding for primary care. We understand that this will require both investment and reform. We will also make sure the future of general practice (GP) is sustainable by training thousands more GPs across the country, to take the pressure off those currently working within the system, ensure increased capacity across the NHS, and to secure a future pipeline of GPs. Additionally, NHS England has made a number of recruitment and retention schemes available to GPs.

The Government will bring back the family doctor, incentivising continuity of care so patients can see the same doctor at each appointment, which is key in reducing duplication of work, so patients with ongoing or complex conditions get the best care possible.

Alistair Strathern: [\[1855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of face-to-face GP appointments in Hitchin constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: The Government knows that patients are finding it harder than ever to access general practice (GP) appointments. Patients can't get through the front door of the National Health Service, so they aren't getting the timely care they need.

We have pledged to guarantee a face-to-face appointment for all those who want one. We will make sure the future of the NHS is sustainable by training thousands more GPs, ensuring increased capacity to deliver this commitment, and securing a future pipeline of GPs.

■ General Practitioners: North Cornwall

Ben Maguire: [\[1152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce waiting times for GP appointments in North Cornwall constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government knows that patients are finding it harder than ever to access general practices (GPs) and is committed to fixing the crisis in GPs to secure the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service. North Cornwall sits within the NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Board, where the percentage of appointments delivered within two weeks of booking is 9% lower than the national average.

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.

■ General Practitioners: Recruitment

Mike Amesbury: [\[1030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will he make an assessment of the adequacy of NHS employment opportunities for newly qualified GPs.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England has made a number of recruitment and retention schemes available to boost the general practice (GP) workforce. While many newly qualified practitioners will subsequently take roles in GPs, others will contribute to the National Health Service in different ways or may choose to work elsewhere.

The Government recently announced changes to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme which allows primary care networks to recruit GPs through the scheme for 2024/25. This is an emergency measure for 2024/25 whilst the Government works with the profession to identify a longer term solution.

■ Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [\[1952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a Major Conditions Strategy.

Andrew Gwynne:

As of July 2024, work on the Major Conditions Strategy has been paused. As we develop our plans to rebuild the National Health Service, we will consider how we incorporate the findings from the Major Conditions Strategy into our plans.

■ Health Services: Children and Young People

John McDonnell: [1905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for children and young people's access to (a) community paediatric services, (b) occupational therapy and (c) speech and language therapy.

Stephen Kinnock:

Addressing waiting times is a priority for the Government and the National Health Service. NHS planning guidance asked local systems to develop a comprehensive plan to reduce the overall waiting times for community services, including reducing waits over 52 weeks for children's community services. NHS England continues to monitor community services waiting lists to assess the number of people on them, and the length of time they wait for services. Data is published monthly, and is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/community-services-statistics-for-children-young-people-and-adults>

■ Health Services: Dudley

Sonia Kumar: [R] [431]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve the (a) availability and (b) quality of physical rehabilitation services in Dudley.

Stephen Kinnock:

We recognise that the National Health Service and social care face many challenges, including in the area of physical rehabilitation services. We need to have effective rehabilitation services available when people need them to help them recover and return to their day-to-day activities and regain their quality of life. Physical rehabilitation services are a key element of Dudley's Better Care Fund (BCF) plan developed by the Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. The ICB and the council have jointly commissioned a new Short-Term Assessment and Reablement Service (STARS) designed to support timely discharge from hospital. In addition, health and social care partners in Dudley are developing a comprehensive plan for rehabilitation, reablement and recovery following discharge from hospital.

■ Health Services: Greater London

Rebecca Paul: [2023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to improve the Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust Estate; and whether he plans to build a new Specialist and Emergency Care hospital in Sutton.

Karin Smyth:

We recognise the need for investment in National Health Service estates across the country, including at Epsom and St. Helier. We will provide the investment and reform needed to get patients the care they deserve.

As my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced, and as subsequently confirmed in my Rt hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement on 29 July 2024, we will be undertaking a full and comprehensive review of the New Hospital Programme to provide a realistic and costed timetable for delivery.

Health Services: Hemel Hempstead**David Taylor:**[\[1454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of secondary care for residents in Hemel Hempstead constituency.

Karin Smyth:

No specific assessment has been made. The appropriate provision and configuration of local services to best meet the needs of the local population and patients is a matter for National Health Service commissioners to consider.

The Government has been clear that NHS services are currently not meeting the high standards that patients should expect, and is committed to supporting the NHS to return to the standards set out in the NHS Constitution.

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

Health Services: Hertfordshire**Sir Oliver Dowden:**[\[1933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he (a) has reviewed and (b) plans to review the (i) provision and (ii) location of (A) inpatient and (B) outpatient health services in South Hertfordshire.

Karin Smyth:

There are currently no plans to review the provision and location of inpatient and outpatient health services in South Hertfordshire. Integrated care boards are responsible for ensuring that the provision and location of both inpatient and outpatient health services meets the demand of their local population.

■ Health Services: Leighton Buzzard**Alex Mayer:** [2021]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will hold discussions with the Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board on funding options for a health hub in Leighton Buzzard and Linslade.

Karin Smyth:

The Government recognises the pressure on primary care infrastructure in Leighton Buzzard and Linslade, and across the wider National Health Service estate. We acknowledge that, nationally, change is desperately needed to bring healthcare closer to home, to provide patients with the care they deserve.

Unfortunately, the Minister cannot commit to meeting with the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (ICB) at this time. However, we would encourage the ICB and indeed staff and patients to contribute to our forthcoming consultation on the 10-year plan for Health which, among other things, will consider this Government's ambition to move healthcare from acute settings to the community. We would welcome contributions for those who recognise the need to invest in our primary care estate to make this ambition a reality.

■ Health Services: Migrants**Claire Hanna:** [1582]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to review the immigration health surcharge.

Karin Smyth:

The Government has not announced any plans to review the policy.

■ Health Services: Standards**Jon Pearce:** [2014]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people waiting for (a) four, (b) eight and (c) 12 or more weeks for a non-urgent appointment.

Karin Smyth:

Data on waiting times from consultant-led referral to treatment is published on a monthly basis, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/rtt-waiting-times/>

The latest published data from May 2024 showed there were:

- 6,284,066 incomplete pathways over four weeks;
- 5,118,954 incomplete pathways over eight weeks; and
- 4,259,438 incomplete pathways over 12 weeks.

Waiting times for consultant-led treatments are measured in pathways, rather than people or patients. Patients may be on more than one incomplete pathway.

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission. We will start by delivering an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, as the first step in our commitment to ensuring patients can expect to be treated within 18 weeks.

■ Health: North East

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[1796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help tackle health inequalities in the North East of England.

Andrew Gwynne:

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

Local authorities in the North East received a total of £238 million in Public Health Grant funding for 2024/25, with Durham County Council having received £53.9 million for 2024/25. This provides services such as stop smoking, drug and alcohol treatment, school health visits and nursing, and sexual health, among others, all of which contribute to addressing health inequalities. Additionally, Directors of Public Health from each local authority are working in partnership with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board to support action to address inequalities in access, experience, and outcomes associated with health care.

Durham County Council is one of 75 local authorities with high levels of deprivation, receiving funding to improve outcomes for families with babies as part of the £300 million Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme. This programme is creating a network of family hubs with services to support families from conception to the age of two years old.

The North East Mayoral Combined Authority was formed on 7 May 2024, and has also committed to creating a fairer North East, reducing inequalities, and improving health. Its priorities include work to address the causes of health inequalities, such as bringing investment into the region to boost economic growth, and improving available housing, education, inclusion, and skills. The Tees Valley Combined Authority also works to secure investment, create jobs, and grow the economy, helping to create the conditions in which health inequalities can be reduced.

■ Health: Southampton Itchen

Darren Paffey:

[\[1847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of health inequalities in Southampton Itchen constituency; and what steps he plans to take to tackle those inequalities.

Andrew Gwynne:

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

Southampton has 19 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within the 10% of the most deprived in England. Of the 317 local authorities in England, Southampton is ranked 55th most deprived, based on the average rank of the LSOAs, and 61st most deprived based on the average score of the LSOAs. There has been very little change in relative deprivation levels in Southampton, compared to other local authorities in England, since the last Index of Multiple Deprivation published in 2015. Of the five most deprived neighbourhoods in Southampton, four are within the Southampton Itchen constituency.

Local authorities, both upper tier and unitary, are responsible for commissioning drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services as part of their public health responsibilities, for which Southampton has been allocated £2,069,974 for 2024/25. For those who are also homeless, just over £800,000 has been made available to provide wraparound support and treatment.

Southampton Itchen is one of 75 local authorities with high levels of deprivation receiving funding to improve outcomes for families with babies, as part of the £300 million Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Southampton includes an ambition to significantly improve health and wellbeing outcomes, and reduce citywide health inequalities by 2025. It recognises the importance of addressing the wider determinants of health, the conditions into which people are born, live, work, and age. Southampton is also a key member of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Partnership, working collectively to tackle inequalities in outcomes, experience, and access for the local population.

■ Healthy Start Scheme: Payments**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[1676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average weekly payment to beneficiaries on the Healthy Start scheme was in June 2024.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: The average weekly payment to beneficiaries on the Healthy Start scheme in June 2024 was £5.68.

■ Heart Diseases: Health Services**Jim Shannon:**[\[1269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to publish an action plan to help tackle heart disease.

Andrew Gwynne:

The NHS Long Term Plan set an aim to prevent up to 150,000 heart attacks, strokes, and dementia cases by 2029, and activity is underway. However, we know there is more to do to tackle cardiovascular disease, including heart disease. That is why in our Health Mission to Build an NHS Fit for the Future, we have committed to reducing deaths from heart disease and strokes by a quarter within 10 years. The Department and NHS England are working together on this ambitious mission, and we will share more in due course.

Jim Shannon:[\[1493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help increase the (a) survival rate for out-of-hospital cardiac arrests and (b) availability of defibrillators in public and community settings.

Andrew Gwynne:

As of July 2024, there are 93,113 automated external defibrillators registered in the United Kingdom on the National Defibrillator Network, also known as The Circuit, including 73,682 in England. Going forward, the Department has asked Professor Lord Darzi to investigate the state of the National Health Service, and will then set out its 10 year plan for the NHS.

■ Hospices: Children**Laurence Turner:**[\[764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to (a) reinstate the Children's Hospice Grant for 2025-26 and (b) up-rate that funding in line with inflation.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 23 July 2024]: In 2024/25, NHS England provided £25 million in funding for children and young people's hospices. This was distributed via integrated care boards, in line with National Health Service devolution. We are currently considering the future of this important funding stream beyond 2024/25.

■ Hospitals**Rachael Maskell:**[\[1306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to support NHS trusts which are seeking a new hospital in the next 10 to 15 years.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is concerned by the condition of hospital infrastructure across the National Health Service estate and acknowledges there was significant interest among NHS trusts to join the New Hospital Programme (NHP). We recognise that change is desperately needed to deliver an NHS fit for the future and provide patients across the country with the care they need.

Strategic, value for money investments in capital projects are critical to achieving these missions. This may be in new hospitals, significant upgrades, or other targeted capital investments. The Department is currently reviewing capital requirements in line with the Government's missions and as part of our internal Spending Review preparations.

Any support for NHS trusts seeking new hospital infrastructure beyond 2030 will follow the Government setting out its priorities and funding at the Spending Review in Autumn 2024.

■ Hospitals: Concrete

Phil Brickell: [1603]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of levels of prevalence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in the NHS estate.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service in England has been surveying sites and undertaking Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) mitigation work since 2019. Once the presence of RAAC is confirmed at a hospital site, it joins NHS England's national RAAC programme, which is backed by £954 million. This programme has delivered mitigation, safety, and eradication works across all NHS sites in England with confirmed RAAC, to keep facilities safe and open and, over time, remove RAAC fully from the NHS estate. The Department has published a full list of hospitals with confirmed RAAC, which will be updated periodically and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-in-hospitals-management-information>

As of 29 February 2024, there were 54 NHS hospital sites with confirmed RAAC, and RAAC had been eradicated at four sites. Further eradication work has taken place since this date.

■ Hospitals: Construction

Victoria Atkins: [1505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for the review of the New Hospitals Programme.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: As my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced, and as subsequently confirmed in the Chancellor's statement on 29 July 2024, we will be undertaking a full and comprehensive review of the New Hospital Programme to provide a realistic and costed timetable for delivery.

The Secretary of State will update Parliament on the outcome of the review reporting back to patients, clinicians, and local communities on the next steps for the New Hospital Programme.

James Wild: [1569]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the reference design for Hospital 2.0.

Karin Smyth:

The Secretary of State has asked for an urgent review on the New Hospital Programme, including on the degree to which the New Hospital Programme is funded and a realistic timetable for delivery.

The New Hospital Programme is continuing to develop its standardised design approach for future hospitals, known as Hospital 2.0. Design products for Hospital 2.0 are being developed and refined and are being shared with trusts as soon as possible and on an ongoing basis.

■ Hospitals: Hampshire

Damian Hinds: [1914]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for completion of the new Basingstoke and North Hampshire hospital.

Karin Smyth:

We recognise the need for investment in National Health Service estates across the country, including in Hampshire. We will provide the investment and reform needed to get patients the care they deserve.

As my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced, and as subsequently confirmed in my Rt hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement on 29 July 2024, we will be undertaking a full and comprehensive review of the New Hospital Programme to provide a realistic and costed timetable for delivery.

■ Infant Mortality

David Davis: [879]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the infant mortality rate was in intensive neonatal care units in each year between 2010 and 2023; and if he will hold discussions with his counterpart in the Welsh Government on providing comparative data for Wales.

Karin Smyth:

Reporting of neonatal mortality in neonatal care units is conducted through audit programmes. Data is published by the National Neonatal Audit Programme (NNAP), with the figures for January 2017 to June 2024 available at the following link:

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/nnap-data-dashboard#view-the-dashboard>

In addition, Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK (MBRRACE-UK) also report neonatal mortality in neonatal care units, with the figures for 2017 to 2022 available at the following link:

<https://timms.le.ac.uk/mbrpace-uk-perinatal-mortality/surveillance/>

The NNAP covers England, Wales, and in more recent years, Scotland, and reports the proportion of very preterm babies, those born at 24 to 31 weeks completed gestation, who are admitted to a neonatal unit and die before discharge home, or 44 weeks post-menstrual age, whichever occurs sooner. It does not, therefore, report on babies born before 24 weeks or after 31 weeks, or babies not admitted to a neonatal unit.

The MBRRACE report covers the United Kingdom and captures mortality rates up to 28 days after birth, broken down by the level of neonatal care provided by the trust or health board where the birth occurred.

These data sources only give a partial view of infant mortality in England. All infant deaths, both neonatal and post-neonatal, in England and Wales are reported by the Office for National Statistics, and are available at the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/childhoodinfantandperinatalmortalityinenglandandwales/latest>

Department officials meet with Welsh authorities on a regular basis to discuss a range of maternity and neonatal-related issues.

■ Infectious Diseases: Disease Control

Mary Kelly Foy:

[1801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of preparedness for future pandemics.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department is embedding lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic within its approach to pandemic preparedness. This includes amending the approach to cover all five routes of communicable disease transmission, rather than focusing on planning for specific threats. We are working with partners in the health and social care system, including the UK Health Security Agency and NHS England, to maintain a flexible and scalable set of response capabilities that can be adapted to any future novel disease. The approach to pandemic preparedness also recognises that the underlying resilience of the health and social care system is crucial to the ability to respond to a novel disease threat.

The UK COVID-19 Inquiry published its first report on 18 July 2024, which focuses on resilience and preparedness for a pandemic, and the Department will consider the inquiry's recommendations in full.

■ Insulin: Somerset**Anna Sabine:**[\[1883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of insulin stocks in pharmacies in Somerset.

Karin Smyth:

The Department monitors and manages medicine supply at a national level so that stocks remain available to meet regional and local demand. No assessment has been made, as information on stock levels within individual pharmacies is not held centrally. Local demand is managed by individual pharmacies.

We are aware of supply issues with Tresiba FlexTouch 100 units per millilitre pre-filled pens and Fiasp FlexTouch 100 units per millilitre pre-filled pens. The Department continues to work with the respective manufacturers to help resolve the supply issues. We have issued communications to National Health Service healthcare professionals, providing comprehensive management guidance, advice, and information, to allow them to support their patients. These supply issues do not only affect the United Kingdom, and we have a range of well-established processes to manage them when they do occur.

■ IVF**Jim Shannon:**[\[799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that people who are eligible for IVF treatment receive three cycles of NHS-funded treatment.

Karin Smyth:

Funding decisions for health services in England are made by integrated care boards (ICBs), and are based on the clinical needs of their local population. Organisations are expected to commission fertility services in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines, which are based on the clinical evidence of the most effective treatment. The Department will be working with NHS England to support ICBs in improving the current National Health Service offer for patients.

■ Leighton Hospital**Aphra Brandreth:**[\[1886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to rebuild Leighton Hospital by 2030.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: The programme this government inherited was severely delayed and did not have funding required to deliver it.

The Secretary of State has asked for an urgent report on the degree to which the New Hospital Programme (NHP) is funded and a realistic timetable for delivery. This will take into the account the urgent need to rebuild Leighton Hospital, which was built

using Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), to protect staff and patient safety.

Once the review into the New Hospital Programme is concluded the Secretary of State will update parliament and set out the next steps for the Programme.

■ Liver Diseases: Screening

Sir John Hayes: [\[873\]](#)

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

Sir John Hayes: [\[874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps with NHS England to help improve testing facilities for suspected liver disease in (a) rural and (b) deprived areas.

Andrew Gwynne:

Early detection of liver disease, including in rural and deprived areas, is vital to enable interventions and encourage behavioural change that can potentially lead to recovery. Liver disease is also one of the primary risk factors for liver cancer.

NHS England is ensuring that National Health Service laboratories across the country receive the upgrades to laboratory digital capabilities required to offer Intelligent Liver Function Tests, which are effective at quickly identifying patients at high risk of liver disease and cirrhosis. We will work with the NHS to further support investment into pathology laboratories and the development of national early diagnosis pathways.

The Community Liver Health Check programme is delivering Fibroscans and lifestyle advice in the community, from mobile units across many local areas, to identify people at high risk of liver cancer, targeting drug and alcohol service users, homeless people, and people with type 2 diabetes, among others. As of the end of June 2024, the programme has delivered over 61,000 Fibroscans and referred over 4,500 people into liver ultrasound surveillance every six months.

The primary care case finding programme, which uses primary care records to identify patients at high risk of cirrhosis and offer them blood tests and Fibroscans, began in 12 primary care networks in January 2024. As of the end of June 2024, the pilot had tested over 8,900 patients, and referred 142 into liver ultrasound surveillance every six months.

People from deprived backgrounds are more at risk of liver disease and liver cancer, and these programmes specifically target those with the highest risk, to identify the most in need patients first.

■ Maternity Services at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust Independent Review

Helen Morgan:

[332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that all actions recommended in the Ockenden Report to improve maternal and neonatal services at Shropshire and Telford Hospital are successfully implemented.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 22 July 2024]: NHS England continues to support the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust in implementing all local actions outlined in the final Ockenden report, to improve maternity and neonatal services. The trust remains on the Maternity Safety Support Programme, which provides hands-on intensive support to trusts from a dedicated advisor.

The trust continues to provide bi-monthly updates on their progress in implementing local action via their board of directors' meetings. The trust published an action plan on the progress to address the local actions from the first and final Ockenden report, the most recent version of which is available at the following link:

<https://www.sath.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/04-111.24-Appendix-1-Ockenden-Report-Action-Plan.pdf>

■ Maternity Services: Nurses

Mark Pritchard:

[1910]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of neonatal nurses in (a) England and (b) Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin integrated care system.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England is establishing over 550 new neonatal nurse posts across England, including in the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS), since publishing Implementing the Recommendations of the Neonatal Critical Care Transformation Review, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/implementing-the-recommendations-of-the-neonatal-critical-care-transformation-review/>

NHS England is working with trusts and regions to support their workforce growth plans. There were 53 neonatal nurses working in the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICS as of April 2024, which is nine more than in April 2023.

The Government recognises that there are serious issues within maternity and neonatal services, and is committed to learning from the findings of recent inquiries and investigations, such as those carried out at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, and the emerging lessons from the ongoing inquiry at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust.

■ Mental Health Services

Steve Race:

[1879]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to NHS mental health services.

Stephen Kinnock:

Over a million people with mental health issues are not getting the support they need. The Government will fix our broken National Health Service, in part by recruiting 8,500 mental health workers, introducing specialist mental health professionals in every school, and rolling out Young Futures hubs in every community. In addition, as announced in the King's Speech, we are bringing forward legislation to modernise the Mental Health Act.

Rachael Maskell:

[623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of levels of capacity in secure and forensic mental health facilities; and whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Justice on the potential merits of increasing the number of prisoners moved into such facilities.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 23 July 2024]: No such recent assessment has been made. However, NHS England has advised that work is currently underway with the 15 Adult Secure Provider Collaboratives across England to speed up the safe and timely transfer of appropriately assessed people from prison. This includes identifying existing capacity, including workforce estates and location, that can be reconfigured at pace; identifying where additional capacity, including workforce and estates, may be required; and, scoping at pace, the creation of alternative clinically safe service models.

Decisions about transferring people with severe mental health needs from prison to secure hospital are made on the basis of a robust clinical assessment to ensure that people in prison get the care they need in the right setting.

Ministers have not yet had any such discussions. My colleague, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Women's Health and Mental Health, will be meeting with her Ministerial counterparts in the Ministry of Justice in due course to discuss matters relating to offender health and how our departments can work together.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Laurence Turner:

[760]

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 Birmingham in each of the last five years.

Laurence Turner:

[\[761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been waiting over six months to access CAMHS support in Birmingham.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows the number of referrals to Birmingham mental health services for those aged 17 years old and under, those referrals who received first contact, and those referrals who received first contact within six months of the referral date, over each of the last five years:

YEAR	REFERRALS	REFERRALS WHO RECEIVED FIRST CONTACT	REFERRALS WHO RECEIVED FIRST CONTACT WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF THE SAME YEAR
2019/20	22,265	8,946	1,607
2020/21	19,936	7,880	1,444
2021/22	27,435	10,594	1,681
2022/23	25,252	7,831	1,403
2023/24	34,879	7,500	385

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

Notes:

1. in some instances, it may not be expected that a first contact would be recorded, for example those received by triage teams may be closed without a contact, with a new referral being opened once triaged instead; and
2. a cyber incident between August 2022 and March 2023 impacted several providers submitting Mental Health Services data, therefore some individual providers may not be able to submit complete data.

Finally, as of March 2024 the number of referrals still waiting for first contact, having waited at least six months and regardless of when the referral started, is 15,181.

■ Mental Health Services: Cornwall

Ben Maguire:

[\[1150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people waited over six months to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services support in Cornwall in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Ben Maguire:

[\[1151\]](#)

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 Cornwall in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows the number of referrals for those aged 17 years old and under at the time of referral to mental health services in the Cornwall local authority, for each of the last five years:

REPORTING PERIOD	NUMBER OF NEW REFERRALS	NUMBER OF NEW REFERRALS THAT RECEIVED A FIRST CONTACT (CONTACT CAN OCCUR AT ANY POINT WITHIN THE REFERRAL)	NUMBER OF REFERRALS STARTING IN THE YEAR THAT SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED A FIRST CONTACT OVER 6 MONTHS FROM THE REFERRAL REQUEST DATE
2019/20	6,301	3,414	378
2020/21	6,592	3,691	292
2021/22	8,294	4,806	533
2022/23	10,497	4,851	224
2023/24	13,646	6,330	50

Source: Mental Health Services Dataset

■ Mental Health Services: Finance

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[1576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding the NHS allocated to mental health services in (a) cash terms and (b) adjusted for inflation in the (i) 2009-10 and (ii) 2023-24 financial year.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: The information requested is not available for 2009/10, as National Health Service expenditure on mental health services was not separately identified prior to 2015/16. The total planned spend on mental health for 2023/24, including learning disabilities and dementia, was £16,814,000,000. The final figures for 2023/24 are not yet available, and will be published through the NHS mental health dashboard, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard/>

■ Mental Health Services: Hitchin**Alistair Strathern:**[\[1852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to mental health services in Hitchin constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: People with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they deserve, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure that mental health is given the same attention and focus as physical health, so that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it. We will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, which will also help ease pressure on hospitals. By cutting mental health waiting lists and intervening earlier with more timely mental health support, we can get this country, including in the Hitchin constituency, back to health.

■ Mental Health Services: Somerset**Anna Sabine:**[\[1885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) average and (b) longest waiting time was to access children and adolescent mental health services in Somerset in each of the last ten years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The information regarding what the average and longest waiting times were to access children and adolescent mental health services in Somerset is shown in the attached table.

This report provides data on the number of referrals for children and young people waiting and entering treatment for mental health services along with median and 90th percentile waits.

The data provided covers the reporting period 1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024 and has been grouped at national level and at integrated care board (ICB) level for ICBs which cover Somerset. The data at ICB level has been rounded and suppressed in accordance with Mental Health Services Dataset suppression rules. NHS England have no published data for a comparable date prior to 2023/24.

Attachments:

1. [Table for PQ1885](#) [FORMATTED TABLE FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE PQ1885.xlsx]

■ Mental Health Services: Surrey**Dr Al Pinkerton:**[\[280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve child and adolescent mental health services in (a) Surrey Heath constituency and (b) Surrey.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is unacceptable that many children and young people are not receiving mental health care and support when they need it, and we know that waiting times for mental health services are far too long. The Government is determined to change that.

At a national level, the Government will recruit 8,500 additional staff across children and adult mental health services, and will introduce a specialist mental health professional in every school. The Government will roll out open access Young Futures hubs for children and young people in every community, including in Surrey Heath constituency and Surrey.

Responsibility for onward commissioning of mental health services sits with integrated care boards (ICB). It is the role of local ICB decision-makers to consider the implications of mental health services, specific to each geography and including from the perspectives of healthcare professionals, patient advocacy groups, and local authorities.

■ Midland Metropolitan University Hospital: Construction**Saqib Bhatti:**[\[1578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to build Midland Metropolitan University Hospital by 2030.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: The new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital is currently in construction and is expected to open to patients in the next year.

As my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced, and as subsequently confirmed in the Chancellor's statement on 29 July 2024, we will be undertaking a full and comprehensive review of the New Hospital Programme to provide a realistic and costed timetable for delivery.

The Secretary of State will consider the findings and update Parliament on the outcome of the review reporting back to patients, clinicians, and local communities on the next steps for the New Hospital Programme. We will provide a clear and realistic timetable for delivery of the Programme and agree the investment needed to get patients the care they deserve.

■ Mother and Baby Units: Healthcare Assistants**Dr Simon Opher:**[\[356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to increase the ratio of healthcare assistants to midwives in stand-alone midwife-led units maternity units.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 22 July 2024]: No assessment has been made regarding a policy to increase the ratio of healthcare assistants to midwives in stand-alone midwife-led maternity units.

NHS England have committed to ensuring that the right numbers of the right staff are available to provide the best care for women and babies through regular local workforce planning.

The Government recognises that there are serious issues within maternity services and we will learn from the findings from recent inquiries and investigations such as that carried out at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust and from the emerging lessons from the ongoing inquiry at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust. The Government's policy is that the National Health Service as a whole is in crisis, and my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has commissioned an investigation into the NHS, led by Professor Lord Darzi, which will focus on assessing patient access to healthcare, the quality of healthcare being provided and the overall performance of the health system.

■ **NHS: Sick Leave**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to reduce staff sickness in (a) emergency departments, (b) the ambulance service and (c) the NHS generally.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: Sickness absence is managed at organisational level across the National Health Service. NHS organisations have their own policies and procedures in place to manage and reduce sickness absence, including any reasonable adjustments to allow people to return to work and/or prevent future absence. Nationally, we recognise that staff across the NHS have been under considerable pressure. We are committed to tackling staff shortages and want to improve organisational culture and working conditions so that we can keep staff healthy, motivated and retain vital skills and experience in the NHS.

■ **NHS: Staff**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to accelerate the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan targets to recruit more NHS staff.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: Domestic training places have not kept pace with increases in demand for workforce and bringing in the staff we need will take time. We have committed to delivering the Long Term Workforce Plan to ensure that the National Health Service has the staff it needs to be there for all of us when we need it. We also recognise the importance of having a robust and well-supported healthcare workforce, and will ensure that the NHS can attract and retain the necessary staff across all roles.

■ Niche Health and Social Care Consulting

Tim Farron: [\[798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England spent on (a) fees and (b) any other costs with Niche Health and Social Care Consulting in the financial year (i) 2022-23, (ii) 2023-24 and (iii) 2024-25 to date.

Karin Smyth:

The following table shows expenditure by NHS England on fees and other costs with Niche Health and Social Care Consulting, each financial year from 2022/23 to 2024/25:

YEAR	INVOICED AMOUNT
2022/23	£1,894,931.49
2023/24	£1,691,549.24
2024/25	£503,306.92
Total	£4,089,787.65

Tim Farron: [\[882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England has spent on (a) fees and (b) any other costs with Niche Health and Social Care Consulting for urology services at the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust in the financial year (i) 2022-23, (ii) 2023-24 and (iii) 2024-25 to date.

Karin Smyth:

The following table shows the expenditure by NHS England on fees and other costs from Niche Health and Social Care Consulting for urology services at the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, each year since 2022/23, including VAT:

YEAR	INVOICE AMOUNT
2022/23	£225,584.58
2023/24	£0
2024/25	£0

■ Pancreatic Cancer: Health Services

Mark Pritchard: [\[1908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the early (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment of pancreatic cancer.

Sonia Kumar:

[\[2022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to tackle pancreatic cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England is delivering a range of interventions that are expected to improve early diagnosis and treatment for patients with suspected and diagnosed pancreatic cancer. For early diagnosis, this includes providing a route into pancreatic cancer surveillance for those patients at inherited high-risk, to identify lesions before they develop into cancer, and diagnose cancers sooner. New pathways are being created to support faster referral routes for people with non-specific symptoms that could be linked to a range of cancer types. General practice direct access to diagnostic tests is also being increased.

To improve the consistency of access to treatments, NHS England is funding an audit into pancreatic cancer which aims to stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes. The Royal College of Surgeons began work on this audit in October 2022, and the first report is expected in October 2024.

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

■ Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy

Mark Pritchard:

[\[1909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate supplies of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy medication.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT), including Creon, used in the treatment of cystic fibrosis and certain cancers, including pancreatic cancer. The supply issues are impacting countries throughout Europe, and have been caused by the limited availability of raw ingredients and manufacturing capacity constraints in producing the volumes needed to meet demand. The Department is continuing to work with all suppliers of PERT to help resolve the supply issues in the short and longer term. This includes asking that they expedite deliveries, source stock from other markets, and increase production.

We have issued comprehensive guidance to healthcare professionals about these supply issues, which provides advice on how to manage patients whilst there is disruption to supply. This guidance is being kept under review, and updates will be made as necessary. Serious Shortage Protocols are in place for Creon 10,000 and

25,000 capsules to limit prescriptions to one month's supply, to allow demand management.

We understand how frustrating and distressing medicine supply issues can be. While we can't always prevent supply issues from occurring, the Department has a range of well-established processes and tools to manage them when they arise, and to help mitigate risks to patients.

■ Pancreatin

Peter Swallow:

[\[1890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the availability of Creon to treat Type 2 diabetes.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT), including Creon, used by patients with conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cystic fibrosis, and certain cancers, including pancreatic cancer. The supply issues are impacting countries throughout Europe and have been caused by the limited availability of raw ingredients and manufacturing capacity constraints. The Department is continuing to work with all suppliers of PERT to help resolve the supply issues in the short and longer term. This includes asking that they expedite deliveries, source stock from other markets, and increase production.

We have issued comprehensive guidance to healthcare professionals about these supply issues, which provide advice on how to manage patients whilst there is disruption to supply. This guidance is being kept under review, and updates will be made as necessary. Serious Shortage Protocols are in place for Creon 10,000 and 25,000 capsules to limit prescriptions to one month's supply, to allow demand management.

We understand how distressing medicine supply issues can be. While we can't always prevent supply issues from occurring, the Department has a range of well-established processes and tools to manage them when they arise, and help mitigate risks to patients.

■ Pathology

Dan Carden:

[\[1550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with NHS England on the workload of pathology services staff.

Karin Smyth:

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has had no recent discussions with NHS England on this subject. However, the Department will continue to engage with NHS England on a variety of issues, including staff workload.

We recognise that staff across the National Health Service have been under considerable pressure. We are committed to tackling staff shortages, and want to improve organisational culture and working conditions so that we can keep staff healthy and motivated, and retain vital skills and experience in the NHS.

■ Pharmacy: Exeter

Steve Race: [\[1894\]](#)

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

Steve Race: [\[1895\]](#)

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

Steve Race: [\[1896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of pharmacies needed for residents in England.

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.

On 30 June 2024 there were 13 pharmacies in the Exeter constituency. Nine out of 10 people in Exeter live within a mile or a 20-minute walk of a pharmacy. The Department does not hold data on how many pharmacies there were in the Exeter constituency in 2010.

The need for pharmaceutical services is best decided at a local level, which is why Local Authority Health and Wellbeing Boards are required to publish Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments every three years. In certain rural areas people may also be able to access Dispensing Doctors, and everyone can access Distance Selling Pharmacies, who provide services nationally, and must send medicines to a patient's home free-of-charge.

■ Pilgrim Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments

Victoria Atkins: [\[1504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on the the construction of the new A&E unit at Pilgrim Hospital in Boston; and when he expects the construction to be completed.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 29 July 2024]: The new build and refurbishment of the Emergency Department and Urgent Treatment Centre at the Pilgrim Hospital is taking place in

two phases. The first phase, which is a new build, is on track to be completed by February 2025, with the subsequent refurbishment of existing buildings due to be completed by January 2026.

■ Poverty: North East

Ian Lavery: [\[1501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children are being treated for poverty related illness in (a) Blyth and Ashington constituency and (b) the North East.

Andrew Gwynne:

The data requested is not held by NHS England, as poverty is not a metric used for the classification of illness. Although poverty is not a direct cause of specific health conditions, it can be a risk factor for physical and mental ill health. The Government is committed to raising the healthiest generation of children in history. This will include delivery of an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty, tackle the root causes, and give every child the best start at life.

■ Processed Food

Rachael Maskell: [\[1943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will stake steps to work with food producers to reduce (a) fat, (b) sugar and (c) salt in processed foods.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to tackling obesity and creating the healthiest generation of children in our history, as a core part of our Health Mission. This means taking action to ensure healthy choices are the easy choice, reducing the consumption of the least healthy foods, making everyday food healthier, and promoting healthier eating.

As suppliers of what we eat and drink, the food industry has a key role to play in supporting the health of the nation. Some action has already been taken under the voluntary reduction and reformulation programme which requires businesses in all sectors, including retailers, manufacturers, and the eating out of home sector, to reduce the level of salt, sugar, and calories in the everyday foods we buy. The broad remit of the programme ensures that many of the processed foods we eat are in scope, including cakes, biscuits, confectionary, pizzas, crisps, sandwiches, and ready meals.

Reports that demonstrate the progress made by businesses are published on GOV.UK website. These reports show that salt reductions of up to 20% have been made in some products, and that levels of sugar have gone down in all products included in the programme, with the largest reductions of approximately 15% and 13% seen in breakfast cereals, and yogurts and fromage frais, respectively. For calorie reduction, the first progress report showed generally little change in calorie levels across all sectors and categories. It is clear that more needs to be done, and

further action to tackle childhood obesity under the Government's Health Mission will be set out in due course.

Jim Shannon:

[952]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps with the food industry to help reduce the calorie content of processed foods.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government recognises that prevention will always be better, and cheaper, than a cure, and we will take preventative public health measures to tackle the biggest killers and to support people in living longer, healthier lives.

As suppliers of what we eat and drink, the food industry has a key role to play in supporting the health of the nation. The voluntary calorie reduction programme requires businesses in all sectors to reduce the level of calories in the everyday food we buy for consumption, in or out of the home. This delivers change that will enable consumers to eat more healthily, without having to change their usual diets. Processed foods in scope of the programme include pizzas, crisps, sandwiches, and ready meals.

Retailers and manufacturers are required to reduce calorie levels by 10%, and out of home businesses, including takeaway and delivery, are required to reduce calorie levels by 20%, against a 2017 baseline. Up to 25% of all adult energy intake is consumed out of the home, and foods and dishes served in the out of home sector generally contain double the levels of calories seen in similar products purchased in supermarkets, which is why they have a higher target.

The first progress report on the voluntary programme showed generally little change in calorie levels across all sectors and categories between 2017 and 2021, so it is clear that more needs to be done. The Government recognises that we face an obesity crisis and need to act. As set out in the King's Speech, the Government will bring forward the necessary secondary legislation to ban junk food advertising to children, and to stop the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to under-16-year-olds.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Jim Shannon:

[1497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) increase public awareness and (b) reduce stigma in men about early screening for prostate cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department actively supports campaigns to increase public awareness of the symptoms of prostate cancer. NHS England is running the Help Us Help You campaigns to raise awareness of cancer symptoms, including symptoms of prostate cancer, and to encourage people to come forward to see their general practitioner (GP). The Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme provides GPs with

information to counsel asymptomatic men aged 50 years old and over about Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) testing for prostate cancer.

NHS England has also partnered with Cancer Alliances, charities, and local representatives to reach people through projects in the heart of their communities. Cancer Alliances have been undertaking action to alert at-risk groups about prostate cancer at a local level, where needed.

There is no current screening programme for prostate cancer in the United Kingdom. This is because of the inaccuracy of the current best test, a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test. A PSA-based screening programme could harm men, as some of them would be diagnosed with a cancer that would not have caused them problems during their life. This would lead to additional tests and treatments, which can also have harmful side effects. However, we are backing groundbreaking trials to improve diagnostic processes and save thousands more lives. This includes a £42 million UK-wide TRANSFORM trial, aimed at helping find the best way of screening for prostate cancer, to which the Department is providing £16 million.

■ Sepsis: Ambulance Services

Alberto Costa:

[\[1925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the criteria for ambulance dispatch to ensure that suspected sepsis cases are prioritised; and if he will take steps to ensure that the NHS guidelines on (a) calling 999 and (b) going to A&E are strictly adhered to.

Karin Smyth:

Calls to 999 are triaged to ensure the sickest patients get the fastest response. Suspected sepsis is generally allocated a Category 2 response. This category of response is for emergency incidents that require urgent assessment and rapid transportation.

The Government has committed to returning ambulance response time performance to the standards set out in the NHS Constitution. As a first step the Health Secretary has commissioned Lord Darzi to lead an independent investigation of National Health Service performance, which is due to report in September 2024. We will continue to support the public in accessing the NHS treatment and advice that best meets their needs.

■ Social Services

Ellie Chowns:

[\[1618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the social care system on the performance of the NHS; and if he will hold discussions with his opposition counterparts on measures to improve the funding and delivery of social care.

Stephen Kinnock:

The health and social care systems are facing significant challenges. The Government is committed to tackling the multiple factors contributing to delayed discharges. These include processes within hospitals and between hospitals and other health and care services, and the availability of appropriate care packages. These care packages are commissioned by both the National Health Service and by adult social care partners.

By developing local working partnerships between the Government, the NHS, and social care, we will ensure that people are not stuck in hospital beds when they are well enough to go home.

■ Social Services: Hitchin**Alistair Strathern:**[\[1856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of social care capacity in Hitchin constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: Local authorities are best placed to understand and plan for the needs of their population, which is why, under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are tasked with the duty to shape their care market to meet the diverse needs of all local people. In performing that duty, a local authority must have regard to the need to ensure that it is aware of current and likely future demand for such services and to consider how providers might meet that demand.

The Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF), includes grant conditions which require each local authority to submit an adult social care capacity plan. These were submitted to the department in June 2024. The member's local authority, Hertfordshire, submitted their 2024/25 capacity plan which is currently undergoing processing and quality assurance.

■ Social Services: Royal Commissions**Rachael Maskell:**[\[1302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to establish a royal commission on social care.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is determined to tackle the challenges facing adult social care. We want everyone to live an independent, dignified life, which is why we are committed to reform and will take steps to create a National Care Service.

We will be setting out more detail of our priorities for adult social care in due course.

■ Soft Drinks: Prices

Mark Pritchard:

[1646]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with (a) manufacturers and (b) importers on the public health benefits of making non-alcoholic (i) beer, (ii) lager, (iii) spirits and (iv) wine products lower cost than the alcoholic alternatives.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government has set out its ambition to create a National Health Service fit for the future, which includes prioritising preventative public health measures to support people to live longer, healthier lives. The Government will continue to consider how best to address and reduce alcohol-related harms.

■ Surgery: Hitchin

Alistair Strathern:

[1853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for elective surgeries in Hitchin constituency.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: Cutting waiting lists is a key priority for the Government, and we have a mandate for our first step in achieving this, by providing an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, which includes greater clinical availability during evenings and weekends.

Dedicated and protected surgical hubs can help reduce waiting times by focusing on high volume low complexity surgeries, as recommended by the Royal College of Surgeons of England, transforming the way the National Health Service provides elective care. There is one surgical hub within the East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust, the Lister Hospital Treatment Centre Elective Surgical Hub. This ring-fenced hub opened in July 2005 and consists of five theatres focusing on multiple specialties, including trauma and orthopaedics, spinal, ophthalmology, ear, nose and throat, gynaecology, urology, and general surgery. Patients from the Hitchin constituency can be referred to this surgical hub for elective surgeries.

■ Trastuzumab Deruxtecan

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[1334]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made representations to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence on the availability of Enhertu for patients with HER2-low breast cancer.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) makes recommendations on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service in England independently on the basis of the

available evidence of costs and benefits and through engagement with the NHS, manufacturers, patient groups and other interested parties.

The Department regularly meets with colleagues in NICE to discuss a range of issues, including Enhertu for patients with HER2-low breast cancer. However, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Constitution and Functions) and the Health and Social Care Information Centre (Functions) Regulations 2013 provide that Ministers must not direct NICE as to the substance of its recommendations. These are very difficult decisions to make. NICE recognises that its decisions have important implications for patients and their families and only publishes final guidance on the use of a drug after a very careful consideration of the evidence and extensive engagement with interested parties including patients and clinicians. Therefore, it would not be appropriate for Ministers to intervene.

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[1335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in (a) Scotland, (b) Wales and (c) Northern Ireland on access to Enhertu for patients with HER2-low breast cancer.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, spoke with his counterparts in Scotland and Wales on his first full day in office and will continue to engage with them on a regular basis. However decisions on the availability of individual treatments to National Health Service patients in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are for the devolved administrations so he has therefore had no discussions about the availability of Enhertu for HER2-low breast cancer with his counterparts.

HOME OFFICE

■ Abortion: Demonstrations

Munira Wilson:

[\[1804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Section 9 of the Public Order Act 2023, what her expected timeline is for implementing safe access zones.

Munira Wilson:

[\[1805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Section 9 of the Public Order Act 2023, what progress her Department has made on the implementation of safe access zones around abortion clinics.

Jess Phillips:

It is unacceptable that anyone should be subjected to harassment or intimidation for exercising their legal right to have access to abortion services. We will quickly review where these arrangements have got to and commence safe access zones around abortion clinics imminently.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Minimum Unit Prices

Rachael Maskell: [\[1949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of minimum pricing for alcohol.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Any new plans to reduce alcohol harm will be announced in Parliament in the normal way. There are no such plans at present.

■ Animal Experiments: Cosmetics

Alex Mayer: [\[1135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Written Statement of 17 May 2023 on Regulation Update, HCWS779, if she will make it her Department's policy to reinstate a full ban on the testing of cosmetic products on animals covering chemicals used (a) exclusively and (b) predominantly as cosmetic product ingredients.

Dan Jarvis:

Animal testing of cosmetics for consumer safety has been banned in the UK since 1998 and this remains in force.

Additionally, the Government does not issue licences for animal testing of chemicals that are used exclusively as cosmetics ingredients, carried out under chemicals (REACH) regulations for the purpose of worker and environmental safety.

No animal testing is being conducted, nor will any testing be authorised, of chemicals that are exclusively intended to be used as ingredients in cosmetics products.

■ Asylum: Applications

Neil O'Brien: [\[1554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for asylum were (a) granted and (b) refused by (i) year of age, (ii) sex and (iii) country of origin in the last 12 months.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on asylum applications by age, sex, and nationality are published in table Asy_D01 of the '[Asylum Applications, Decisions and Resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data is up to March 2024.

■ Asylum: Bibby Stockholm

Andrew Rosindell: [\[1470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, where asylum seekers resident on the Bibby Stockholm barge will be relocated to.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The contract to use the Bibby Stockholm ends in January 2025 and it will remain operational until that time.

Decisions on alternative accommodation for asylum seekers will be made on a case-by-case basis, working closely with local authorities and in compliance with published policy.

■ Asylum: Housing**David Taylor:**[\[1833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on reducing the use of Official Development Assistance on asylum accommodation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Government will update the House in due course on the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending, including ODA-eligible spending to support asylum seekers and refugees within the UK.

■ Asylum: Rwanda**Sir John Hayes:**[\[1462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with her Rwandan counterpart since 5 July.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Yes, the Home Secretary and the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Olivier Nduhungirehe, have spoken since 5 July. They discussed how they will work together on the process of bringing an end to the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda.

■ Crime: Rural Areas**Stuart Anderson:**[\[1561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle (a) the theft of high value agricultural machinery and (b) other rural crime.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government recognises the importance of tackling rural crime. We are committed to safeguarding rural communities, with tougher measures to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, strengthened neighbourhood policing, and stronger laws to prevent farm theft and fly-tippers.

We are also committed to implementing the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023, which aims to prevent the theft and re-sale of high-value equipment, particularly for use in an agricultural setting.

The National Police Chiefs' Council Wildlife and Rural Crime Strategy 2022-2025 provides a framework through which policing, and its partners can work together to tackle the most prevalent threats and emerging issues which predominantly affect rural communities.

The National Rural Crime Unit, which the Home Office funded the establishment of, takes the lead on improving co-ordination and partnership working, which provides police forces with specialist operational support in their responses to rural crime, such as the theft of farming or construction machinery, livestock theft, fly tipping, fuel theft and equine crime, as well as through sharing best practice and encouraging regional and national approaches.

The Home Office also directly funds the National Wildlife Crime Unit to provide intelligence, analysis and investigative assistance to forces and other law enforcement agencies across the UK to support them in investigating wildlife crime, which can affect rural areas.

■ Dangerous Driving

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[1471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to tackle dangerous driving in (a) Romford constituency and (b) England.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Any form of dangerous driving behaviour is a serious road safety issue. The maximum sentence for dangerous driving is an unlimited fine, disqualification and up to 14 years in prison.

How the police enforce road traffic legislation and investigate road traffic offences is an operational matter for the local chief officer, in conjunction with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

■ Economic Crime: British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies

Lloyd Hatton:

[\[1170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many times have exchange of notes arrangements been used in investigations relating to economic crime to share beneficial ownership information between the UK, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories in the last 12 months.

Dan Jarvis:

In 2016 the UK, the three Crown Dependencies and six participating British Overseas Territories committed to share company beneficial ownership information on a bilateral basis between their participating law enforcement agencies.

A statutory review was undertaken in 2019 to review the effectiveness of the first operational 18 months of the Exchange of Notes arrangements, covering the period from 1 July 2017 to 31 December 2018. The review found that in this period, 296 requests were made. Nearly all of these were originated by UK law enforcement

agencies and 118 asked for multiple pieces of information in a single request. This equates on average to nearly four requests per week. The full findings of the 2019 statutory review are available here: [Statutory review of the implementation of the exchange of notes on beneficial ownership between the United Kingdom, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414222/Statutory_review_of_the_implementation_of_the_exchange_of_notes_on_beneficial_ownership_between_the_United_Kingdom_Crown_Dependencies_and_Overseas_Territories_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf).

The performance of the Exchange of Notes Arrangements remains subject to annual internal review, with the last 12 months from 2023-24 due for internal review in 2025. UK Law Enforcement Agencies have reported that the arrangements continue to add value by supporting complex investigations into the financial affairs of individuals believed to be involved in serious and organised crime.

■ Electronic Surveillance

Colum Eastwood:

[1819]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department (a) received and (b) granted requests to provide communications data on (i) lawyers, (ii) journalists and (iii) Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly in each of the last five years.

Dan Jarvis:

The Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office is the independent oversight body responsible for communications data authorisations. The most recent information on the authorisation of investigatory powers, including the use of powers and number of authorisations obtained in relation to sensitive professions, is available in the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office Annual Report 2022 [Annual Report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner 2022 \(ipco-wpmedia-prod-s3.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.ipco-wpmedia-prod-s3.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com)

The use of covert investigatory powers is subject to strong safeguards and robust independent oversight by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, and authorisations must be consistent with the law. The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 outlines specific additional protections in respect of journalistic material and sources, as well as items subject to legal privilege.

The government is unable to confirm nor deny the existence of any specific authorisations granted under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA) or the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

Prior to March 2024 the Office for Communications Data Authorisations, headed by the Investigatory Power's Commissioner, considered requests for communications data from law enforcement and public authorities. However, since March 2024, the Office for Communications Data Authorisations has become part of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office.

■ Emergency Calls: South West

Anna Sabine:

[\[1456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many emergency calls in (a) Frome and East Somerset constituency, (b) Somerset and (c) the Avon and Somerset police force area went unconnected as a result of the network failure on 25 June 2023.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Post-Incident Review into Disruption of the Public Emergency Call Service on Sunday, 25 June 2023, published on 21 March 2024, sets out that during the incident (spanning 06:24 to 16:56), a total of 9,641 unique callers were unable to access the emergency services via 999/112 and many more were delayed or disrupted.

The Home Office does not hold a breakdown of this data by constituency, local authority or police force area.

■ Exploitation: Children

Steve Race:

[\[1877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the criminal exploitation of children.

Jess Phillips:

The Government is committed to preventing young people being lured into crime, drugs and criminal gangs. We will deliver on our Manifesto commitment and have already committed to bring forward new legislation to strengthen the law to tackle child criminal exploitation.

■ Fire and Rescue Services

Dan Carden:

[\[1793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the proposals in the document entitled, The Firefighters' Manifesto - Our Service, Our Future, published on 1 November 2023 by the Fire Brigades Union.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government values the role of the Fire Brigades Union and is determined to bring about meaningful improvement to fire and rescue services across the country.

We will formally work with all sector stakeholders to inform policy and establish national standards.

■ Forced Labour

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[1458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department issues on whether products that have been made (a) entirely and (b) partially with forced labour should be sold in the UK.

Jess Phillips:

The Home Office does not provide guidance on whether specific products have been made entirely or partially with forced labour.

The Government encourages businesses to monitor their supply chains with rigour, to uncover and remedy any instances of modern slavery they may find. Under Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, commercial businesses who operate in the UK and have a turnover of £36m or more must report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains by publishing an annual modern slavery statement. The purpose of these 'transparency in supply chains' provisions is to allow scrutiny by consumers, investors, and civil society.

Businesses must ensure their statement has been approved by the Board, signed by a director and is available on the homepage of their website. They must publish the statement within 6 months of their financial year end. The Home Office has published [statutory guidance](#) for businesses to support them in drafting these statements. This guidance also provides information and further resources to support businesses identify and mitigate modern slavery risks in their supply chains.

To further enhance transparency, the modern slavery statement registry was launched in March 2021 to bring modern slavery statements together on a single platform.

■ Gender Based Violence: Staffordshire**Adam Jogee:****[1396]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the police response to violence against women and girls in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) Staffordshire.

Jess Phillips:

The scale of violence against women and girls in our country is intolerable and this government will treat it as the national emergency that it is. The police are a crucial partner to deliver our ambition to halve VAWG in the next decade.

We must drastically improve the police and wider criminal justice response, in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire and across the country.

We expect to see sustained work across policing to drive up standards and to ensure there is always a swift and specialist response to these appalling crimes. We know that these crimes are underreported, and we will take action to ensure victims coming forward get the response they deserve.

The most recent statistics show that in the year ending March 2024:

In Newcastle under Lyme, police recorded:

- 452 stalking offences, up 9% from 413 in 2022/23
- 847 harassment offences, up 9% from 778 in 2022/23
- 396 sexual offences, down 8% from 431 in 2022/23.

Staffordshire Police recorded:

- 4,362 stalking offences, up 6% from 4,113 in 2022/23
- 8,623 harassment offences, up 36% from 6,344 in 2022/23
- 3392 sexual offences, down 12% from 3836 in 2022/23.

In the year ending March 2023 there were 23,697 domestic-abuse related crimes recorded by the police in Staffordshire, a 33% increase from the year ending March 2022 (17,870).

Data on DA flagged offences are not published for Newcastle-under-Lyme specifically.

■ **Haslar Immigration Removal Centre**

Dame Caroline Dinéage: [\[1204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's plans are for Haslar Immigration Removal Centre.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Plans for the Haslar IRC will be set out in due course.

■ **Hinduism: Safety**

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure the safety of Hindu communities.

Dame Diana Johnson:

We are committed to protecting the right of individuals to freely practise their religion and we will not tolerate anti-Hindu hatred in any form. Government and police regularly review potential threats to ensure that measures are taken to protect communities from terrorism and hate crime.

Additionally, Hindu communities can apply to the Places of Worship Protective Security Scheme. The scheme provides physical protective security measures (such as CCTV, intruder alarms and secure perimeter fencing) to places of worship and associated faith community centres that are particularly vulnerable to religiously or racially motivated hate crime in England and Wales.

■ **Jews: Safety**

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure the safety of Jewish communities.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Jewish Community Protective Security (JCPS) Grant provides protective security measures (such as security personnel services, CCTV and alarm systems) at

synagogues, Jewish educational establishments and community sites. The JCPS Grant is managed on behalf of the Home Office by the Community Security Trust.

The Community Security Trust will receive funding of £18 million per year through the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant from 2024/25 to 2027/28.

We continue to work closely with CST on how best to respond to live incidents that affect the Jewish communities in the UK.

■ Offences against Children: Boarding Schools

Helen Hayes:

[1719]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to exemptions under Section 21 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of police powers to investigate criminal abuse at Ofsted regulated residential schools.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Ensuring that all children are effectively safeguarded is a key priority for this Government including those who are looked after, and in whatever type of placement they may be.

The Children's Wellbeing Bill will put children and their wellbeing at the centre of the education and social care systems, and make changes so they are safe, healthy, happy and treated fairly.

The police have a range of powers to investigate allegations of criminal offences. This includes the power to apply for search warrants to search and seize relevant evidence and to enter properties without a warrant to arrest suspects for indictable offences.

■ Police Stations: South Norfolk

Ben Goldsborough:

[1443]

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

Ben Goldsborough:

[1444]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of active police officers in the South Norfolk 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 information on police stations and never has done.

■ Police: Misconduct

Ben Goldsborough: [\[1433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to increase the number of people approved to sit on the Appeal Tribunal Chair list for police misconduct trials.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Police Appeal Tribunals (PATs) play a crucial role in ensuring that we have a fair and robust police discipline system.

There was a recruitment exercise earlier this year to significantly increase numbers of PAT chairs, and decisions on appointments will be taken in due course.

■ Prostitution: Gower

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[1971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 548 on Prostitution: Gower, what steps she is taking to raise awareness of the harms of paying for sex among men.

Jess Phillips:

Protecting those involved in prostitution from harm is part of our wider work to halve the level of violence against woman and girls.

This government will use every lever available to us to prevent the harms that prostituted women often experience.

We will work with law enforcement and charity organisations to deliver this.

■ Shoplifting: Bedfordshire

Alex Mayer: [\[1607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the number of police hours spent on investigating shoplifting crimes in Bedfordshire in which the value of the goods taken was less than £200, in the latest period for which data is available.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The latest Police Recorded Crime figures showed 443,995 shoplifting offences for the year ending March 2024, an increase by 30% compared to the previous 12 months.

Although the volume of charges for shoplifting rose by 47% in the year ending March 2024 (to 74,221 charges), shoplifting continues to increase at an unacceptable level, with more and more offenders using violence and abuse against shopworkers when committing these thefts. The Government will not stand for this.

We welcome the National Police Chiefs Council Retail Crime Action Plan [Fighting retail crime: more action - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) which includes a commitment to prioritise police attendance at the scene where violence has been used towards shop staff, where an offender has been detained by store security, and where evidence needs to be secured and can only be done by police personnel.

We do not hold the data for the number of police hours spent on investigating shoplifting crimes in which the value of goods taken was less than £200. However, through the Crime and Policing Bill, the Government will end the effective immunity, introduced by the previous government, granted to low level shoplifting of goods under £200. We will also introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores.

■ **Visas: Skilled Workers**

Claire Hanna:

[1389]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to (a) reverse changes made to the eligibility criteria for the Skilled Worker visa announced on 4 December 2023 and (b) bring forward revised eligibility criteria for the minimum salary for that visa.

Seema Malhotra:

I refer the honourable member to the Written Ministerial Statement made by the Home Secretary on 30 July [[Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)].

■ **Wildlife: Crime**

Dan Norris:

[1631]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to make all wildlife crimes notifiable.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government recognises the importance of tackling wildlife crime, which is why, along with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Home Office directly funds the National Wildlife Crime Unit to help tackle these crimes.

There are no plans currently to make all wildlife crimes notifiable. Any non-notifiable wildlife crime reported to police can be investigated as Chief Constables have operational independence to tackle the crimes that matter most to their communities.

■ Windrush Compensation Scheme

Kate Osamor:

[\[1720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applicants for compensation under the Windrush Compensation Scheme have died while waiting for a decision on their application.

Seema Malhotra:

As at the end of June 2024, in line with the latest published Transparency data, out of the 8,607 claims received by the Windrush Compensation Scheme, we are aware of 56 claimants* who have unfortunately passed away after having submitted a claim.

The Windrush Compensation Scheme staff are working hard to ensure claims are prioritised for claimants with critical or life-limiting illnesses and would encourage any claimants in this situation who have not been in recent contact with our casework teams to do so. We recognise the significant impact difficult circumstances such as these can have on individuals, and their families, and we remain committed to continually improving our support and services.

In the difficult circumstances where a claimant has passed away after submitting a compensation claim, before the claim is fully resolved, the team is committed to working closely with the representative of the estate, usually a member of the family, to ensure the compensation payment is made as quickly as possible to the representative.

Our priority is to ensure people receive the maximum compensation as quickly as possible. We have reduced the time to allocate a claim for a substantive casework consideration, from 18 months to under 4 months, with the aim to allocate quicker where possible. This period includes all essential eligibility checks, together with a Preliminary Assessment to make an initial payment of £10k wherever possible.

*Please note that this data is manually recorded and is reliant on the person receiving the information on a claimant's death, notifying the Windrush Compensation Scheme to record this information.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Absent Voting: Older People

David Mundell:

[\[1198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to (a) review and (b) amend the requirement for people over the age of 66 with a postal vote to reapply for their postal vote every three years.

Alex Norris:

The Electoral Commission will publish a report on the administration of the General Election held on 4 July later this year, and the Government will give careful

consideration to any findings or recommendations made in the report in relation to the current arrangements for postal voting.

■ Affordable Housing: Construction

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to require minimum quotas of affordable housing in her Department's proposed new towns.

Matthew Pennycook:

Large-scale new communities created as part of the Government's programme of new towns will help meet housing need by targeting rates of 40% affordable housing, with a focus on genuinely affordable social rented homes. We will provide further details in due course.

■ Antisemitism

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-Semitism.

Jim McMahon:

Antisemitism has absolutely no place in our society, and tackling antisemitism in all its forms is a top priority for this Government. This Government recently reappointed Lord John Mann as its Independent Adviser on Antisemitism to provide independent advice to the Secretary of State and ensure that the Jewish community's concerns about antisemitism are heard and acted upon. This Government also continues to fund the Community Security Trust, supporting their vital work in protecting Jewish communities. This includes providing additional security at Jewish schools, synagogues, and other sites.

Antisemitism is a deplorable form of hate crime, and this Government is committed to ensuring that everyone is able to worship freely, wear religious clothing and go about their lives in safety and security – irrespective of their background, faith or other characteristic. Tackling hate crime will be a key part of this Government's work to overcome divisions and create connections between all communities, and we are exploring a more integrated and cohesive approach to achieve this.

■ Building Regulations

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to make (a) regulatory and (b) deregulatory changes to building regulations.

Alex Norris:

We will keep the Building Regulations under review to ensure that they are supporting our ambition of delivering high quality, safe and sustainable buildings

whilst also enabling the construction sector to innovate and deliver the additional homes that we need.

■ Community Assets

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[1327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to pages 23 to 24 of the policy paper entitled, King's Speech 2024: background briefing notes, published by the Prime Minister's Office on 17 July 2024, on the proposed English Devolution Bill, what plans she has for the operation of the proposed right to buy for community assets.

Jim McMahon:

The Government recognises the vital role of high streets and community spaces, and we want to see them thriving again. Community Right to Buy will empower local people to bring community spaces back into community ownership and end the blight of empty premises on our high streets, and stem the loss of important community assets we have witnessed over the past decade.

Community Right to Buy will help local people acquire valued community spaces if they come up for sale, keeping these assets in the hands of the community working together in co-operation. We will provide more detail on the planned measures in due course.

■ Community Ownership Fund

David Mundell:

[\[1480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her plans are for Round 4 Window (a) 1 and (b) 2 of the Community Ownership Fund.

Alex Norris:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [1308](#) on 26 July 2024.

■ Council Tax

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[1522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to set a council tax referendum threshold for 2025-26.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[1524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to review council tax (a) discounts, (b) exemptions and (c) disregards.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[1751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to cap council tax rises.

Jim McMahon:

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged.

■ **Derelict Land**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's planning definition is of the grey belt; and whether the grey belt includes (a) greenfield land and (b) residential gardens within the green belt.

Dr Neil Hudson: [\[1820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to consult local communities on (a) definition of the green belt and (b) planning reforms.

Matthew Pennycook:

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

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to protect the Green Belt in (a) England and (b) Hertsmere.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many homes her Department plans to build on Green Belt land.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department will take steps to ensure brownfield development is incentivised by planning policy instead of development on greenfield sites.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many homes her Department plans to build on grey belt land in 2024.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much grey belt land there is in (a) England and (b) Hertsmere constituency.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how she plans to permit the fast-tracking of brownfield land.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the projected size of the greenbelt by the end of this Parliament.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government set out details of proposed reforms relating to brownfield, grey belt and the Green Belt in the consultation on our approach to revising the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system that began on Tuesday 30 July and closes on Tuesday 24 September.

■ Elections

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has to consult the Electoral Commission's parliamentary parties panel on proposed changes to electoral law.

Alex Norris:

The Government is committed to strengthening our democracy, upholding the integrity of elections and encouraging wide participation in the democratic process.

We will tackle the unacceptable participation gap in our democracy by taking action to improve rates of electoral registration, and encourage engagement by young people by legislating to give 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in all elections in due course.

The Government also recognises the threat posed by malign actors who seek to interfere in UK elections by hiding the true source of funding behind political donations. We will therefore act to strengthen protections against foreign interference in our political finance framework.

The Government will work with the electoral sector, devolved and local government, and other stakeholders (including the Parliamentary Parties Panel) to raise participation and make the electoral system more effective. Any changes to electoral law will require careful consideration and consultation, including a review of the General Election by the Electoral Commission.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to introduce secondary legislation to recognise the Veterans Card as a form of identification in polling stations across (a) Great Britain and (b) Northern Ireland.

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 we wish to make in order to achieve this and will bring forward proposals in due course.

Electoral policy for Northern Ireland is a matter for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and a separate regime for voter identification exists there. Any legislation to allow the Veteran's Card use in Northern Ireland would be provided for in separate legislation.

■ **Empty Property: Retail Trade**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[1560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help reduce the number of empty retail units on high streets in (a) Ludlow and Bridgnorth and (b) other rural areas.

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.

Ludlow and Bridgnorth have access to a portion of Shropshire Council's Core UKSPF allocation totalling £10,845,217 and, under the UKSPF delegated delivery model, may choose to invest in rejuvenating high streets through a number of interventions under the 'communities and place' investment priority. As such, £95,000 of this funding has been allocated to support a community facility to support local artisan makers and producers on Bridgnorth high street which had previously stood empty.

■ **Energy Performance Certificates: High Peak**

Jon Pearce:

[\[2016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of houses in High Peak constituency that have an energy performance certificate rating of (a) A, (b) B, (c) C, (d) D and (e) E.

Matthew Pennycook:

This information is publicly available on the [Open Data Service](#).

■ **First Time Buyers**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[1752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has to support home ownership for first-time buyers.

Matthew Pennycook:

The affordability challenges facing prospective first-time buyers mean that too many people are now locked out of homeownership.

In addition to increasing the supply of homes of all tenures, the Government has committed to introducing a permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme and to giving first-time buyers the first chance to buy homes.

High Rise Flats: Insulation**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[1759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to help those impacted by high insurance premiums in properties affected by (a) cladding and (b) remediation issues.

Matthew Pennycook:

We will review how to better protect leaseholders from costs and take steps to accelerate the pace of remediation across the country. We will put a renewed focus on ensuring those responsible for the building safety crisis pay to put it right.

Homelessness: Departmental Coordination**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[1754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the report by the National Audit Office entitled The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness, published on 23 July 2024, HC 119, if she will accept the recommendation of that report to establish a cross-government strategy on homelessness.

Alex Norris:

Homelessness levels are far too high. We will take the action needed to tackle this issue and develop a long-term, cross-government strategy working with Mayors and Councils to put us back on track to ending homelessness for good. We welcome the NAO's report which shines a light on this important issue and will consider their recommendations as we develop our strategy.

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. I refer the Rt Hon Member to the written statement made on 30 July 2024 ([HCWS48](#)), setting out our first steps on how we achieve this.

Housing: Carbon Emissions**Ellie Chowns:**[\[1615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to publish her Department's response to the consultation entitled The Future Homes and Buildings Standards, published on 13 November 2023.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Future Homes and Buildings Standards consultation was published in December 2023 and closed in March 2024, and a Government response has not yet been issued. We fully support the need for low carbon homes, fit for a net zero future. We are reviewing proposals and feedback from the Future Homes and Buildings Standards consultation and will publish the Government response in due course.

■ **Housing: Construction**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1011\]](#)

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 the Government's house building target will include houses that began construction in the previous Parliament.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of regulatory changes resulting from the UK's departure from the EU on her Department's ability to meet its housing targets.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [586](#) on 22 July 2024.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether local authorities will remain subject to the environmental and land supply framework set out in the previous National Planning Policy Framework under proposed mandatory housing targets.

Matthew Pennycook:

Protections for safeguarded land will remain, in accordance with the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her target is for increasing net housing supply in (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [586](#) on 22 July 2024.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to amend nutrient neutrality rules.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [556](#) on 26 July 2024.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many submitted planning permission applications are unable to progress due to nutrient neutrality rules.

Matthew Pennycook:

The department does not hold data on the specific number of planning permissions that are unable to progress due to nutrient neutrality rules. 7.9% of new addresses created in England from 2015/16 to 2018/19 were created in areas affected by nutrient neutrality. This represents an expected additional housing supply of 16,500 dwellings per year.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to introduce legislation to allow housebuilding delayed by nutrient neutrality rules derived from European Union case law.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for introducing measures on nutrient neutrality.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [556](#) on 26 July 2024. We will provide further updates on timing in due course.

■ Housing: Gardens

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether residential gardens within the curtilage of a domestic property will continue to be classified as brownfield land under proposed planning reforms.

Matthew Pennycook:

The definition of previously developed land is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The definition excludes residential gardens in built up areas and we are not proposing to change this.

■ Housing: Greater London

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to implement the conclusions of the London Plan review, published on 15 January 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to working in partnership with the Mayor on how housing delivery and affordable housing provision can be increased in London. We

will work with the Mayor and his team to ensure that the London Plan is ambitious but also deliverable.

A consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, including in relation to brownfield development, began on Tuesday 30 July and closes on Tuesday 24 September.

■ Housing: Refugees

Rachael Maskell: [\[980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to support local authorities to find additional accommodation for refugees that have been granted leave to remain.

Jim McMahon:

The department is committed to working in partnership with local authorities to understand the impact of recently granted refugees and their housing needs.

We also continue to work with the Home Office to see how we can improve working co-operation with local authorities to make sure that they receive enough notice and the right information to support people following an asylum decision.

All individuals who have received a positive decision on their asylum claim can remain in the accommodation provided by the Home Office for at least 28 days from when their decision is served to allow them to make onward arrangements.

■ Internal Drainage Boards: Finance

Sir John Hayes: [\[1186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to support local authorities with the funding of internal drainage boards.

Jim McMahon:

The Government recognises the sustained increases in IDB levies that some local authorities have experienced over the last two years and is continuing to assess the impact of this year's increase in levies on local authorities, as well as continuing to explore potential long-term approaches.

■ Leasehold

Rachael Maskell: [\[1697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to end ground rent.

Rachael Maskell: [\[1698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is her policy to bring forward legislative proposals to convert existing leasehold properties to commonhold.

Rachael Maskell: [\[1699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will consult on issues facing leaseholders prior to bringing forward legislation.

Rachael Maskell: [\[1700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to cap (a) management and (b) service costs to leaseholders.

Rachael Maskell: [\[1701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to create statutory standards for management agencies of leasehold properties.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government will act quickly to provide homeowners with greater rights. This includes driving up the transparency of service charges and reducing barriers for leaseholders to challenge their landlord. Over the course of this Parliament the Government will go further by enacting remaining Law Commission recommendations and tackling unregulated and unaffordable ground rent charges.

The Government will take steps to bring the feudal leasehold system to an end and reinvigorate commonhold by modernising the legal framework. We will also ban the sale of new leasehold flats. The Government will consult on the best way to achieve this, so that generations to come will benefit from absolute homeownership.

Our planned reforms to empower leaseholders and provide new and existing homeowners with greater security will help ensure landlords and managing agents are better held to account for management failures. It will also make it easier for leaseholders to take on management of their buildings themselves so they can directly appoint or replace agents.

The Government intends to bring forward draft legislation so that it may be subject to broad consultation and additional scrutiny by Parliament. It is only right that the Government takes its time when dealing with such a complex subject to make sure that any future legislation gets it right.

■ Local Government Finance

Andrew Rosindell: [\[1472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her Department's policy to restructure the local government funding formula.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[1474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she has taken to reduce the likelihood of local authority bankruptcies in (a) Romford and (b) England.

Jim McMahon:

This Government is committed to reducing the financial uncertainty that councils face, and to improve the local government finance landscape in this Parliament. We will do this by providing multi-year funding settlements, ending competitive bidding and reforming the local audit system.

Immediate 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.

This Government recognises the vital work that local councils do for their communities, and we stand ready to speak to any council that is experiencing financial difficulties.

Local Government Finance: East Riding**Graham Stuart:**[\[1644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has to fund the Hull and East Riding Mayoral Combined Authority.

Jim McMahon:

We want to see devolution extended to every corner of England, and have invited local areas without a devolution agreement to come forward with proposals on a sensible geography.

We recognise that in some parts of the country, such as Hull and East Yorkshire, local authorities had already worked with the previous government to develop devolution deals, which were put on hold over the general election.

We will work with local leaders, members of parliament and stakeholders, including those in Hull and East Yorkshire over the coming months, to ensure that our ambition for deeper and impactful devolution is expanded across the country.

Local Government Services: Standards**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[1473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her Department's policy to amend local authorities' statutory service obligations.

Jim McMahon:

Local authorities play a crucial role in the delivery of this Government's missions, from driving growth, to delivering opportunities for all. We are fully focussed on resetting the relationship between national and local government, working together in a trusting and productive partnership so local people get the support and services they need and deserve.

■ Local Government: Devolution

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[1326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to pages 23 to 24 of the policy paper entitled, King's Speech 2024: background briefing notes, published by the Prime Minister's Office on 17 July 2024, on the proposed English Devolution Bill, whether she plans to enable local leaders to request additional powers to levy new local (a) taxes and (b) other charges.

Jim McMahon:

We will ensure that local leaders have access to the right levers to deliver economic growth in their areas and are reviewing existing arrangements to ensure they support our growth agenda and manifesto commitments. As the Bill will primarily focus on devolution of powers from Whitehall to our mayors and combined authorities, and other matters, no presumption should be made on the application of new taxes or changes at such an early stage. Stakeholders and MPs will be fully engaged during the Bill process.

■ Local Government: Remote Meetings

Daisy Cooper:

[\[1562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward proposals to permit virtual meetings of (a) local authorities, (b) parish councils and (c) other public bodies on a permanent basis.

Jim McMahon:

Government wants to ensure that local government is modern, efficient, flexible and diverse, and we are keen to break down barriers that prevent people from seeking to serve their communities. Allowing hybrid meetings could be a helpful step in doing that and we are keen to work with the sector to have an evidence based discussion about its merits.

■ Local Plans

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[1325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to pages 23 to 25 of the policy paper entitled, King's Speech 2024: background briefing notes, published by the Prime Minister's Office on 17 July 2024, on the proposed English Devolution Bill, what role she plans for (a) district councils and (b) county councils in drafting local growth plans; and how she expects such plans to interact with the local plans of (i) mayoral combined and (ii) local planning authorities.

Jim McMahon:

Every town and city has a vital contribution to make to growing our economy. The Government has set out its intention to work with places to develop ambitious, long-term Local Growth Plans. Local Growth Plans will be delivered through partnership,

and MHCLG will write to places shortly to provide further detail on the approach to developing these Plans.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local authorities do not have up-to-date local plans.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local authorities she expects to have up-to-date local plans on (a) 4 July 2025, (b) 4 July 2026, (c) 4 July 2027, (d) 4 July 2028 and (e) at the end of this Parliament.

Matthew Pennycook:

This Government has inherited a planning system in which only 31% of local planning authorities have up-to-date local plans.

We are determined to drive local plans to adoption as quickly as possible, to progress towards our ambition of achieving universal plan coverage and ensure plans contribute positively to our ambition of delivering 1.5 million homes.

Further details are set out in the consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Cost Effectiveness**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has for new efficiency savings in (a) her Department and (b) each of its arms length bodies.

Jim McMahon:

The government is taking action to make efficiency savings across back-office functions and communications and stopping non-essential spending on consultants. Further details are set out in Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Marketing**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much her Department (a) has spent on departmental rebranding since 4 July 2024 and (b) plans to spend on such rebranding in the next 12 months.

Alex Norris:

Changing the name of the department will not attract a significant cost as we are returning to a department name which has been previously used. The majority of the work will be completed internally. Details of expenditure over £250 are published on gov.uk.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Expenditure**Andrew George:** [\[1633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of (a) small business rate relief since 2012, (b) Restart Grants in 2021 and (c) the Recovery Loan Scheme and (d) Covid Grants to eligible properties that are classified as Holiday Lets in the Non-Domestic Rating List in 2021 and 2022 for holiday home owners per local authority area.

Jim McMahon:

The Department does not hold data on the amount of small business rates relief that has been granted to businesses that operate as holiday lets.

The Department for Business and Trade leads on Restart Grants, the Recovery Loan Scheme and Covid Grants.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what underspends there are within (a) her Department and (b) each of her Department's arms length bodies in this (a) financial year and (b) spending review period.

Jim McMahon:

As the Chancellor set out in her statement on July 29, the government's spending audit has identified a forecast Resource DEL overspend of £21.9 billion against the plans set out for departments at Spring Budget 2024. This already factors in the Treasury's assessment of a £7.1 billion fallaway over the course of the year, as set out in Table 1 of Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25.

The government has announced £5.5 billion of savings in 2024-25, bringing the in-year pressures down to £16.4 billion. The department continually reviews its in year spending against budgets and will report in the usual way.

■ Muslim Council of Britain**John Glen:** [\[1669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether Government ministers plan to meet with the Muslim Council of Britain.

Alex Norris:

The Government recognises the importance of engaging meaningfully with faith and belief groups. There has been no change to HMG policy and there are no plans for Ministers to meet with the Muslim Council of Britain.

■ Office for Local Government: Public Appointments**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[1760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to appoint a chair of Oflog.

Jim McMahon:

The Government is clear that local government is key to delivering our five national missions and it will work in partnership with the sector.

The Government is considering how best to work with local government to provide assurance and ensure accountability to the public, through the department and its agencies.

■ Park Homes: Sales

Sir John Whittingdale: [\[1176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to reduce the proportion of the selling price of a park home that is legally required to be paid to the site owner.

Sir John Whittingdale: [\[1177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to undertake a review of the regulation of residential park home sites.

Matthew Pennycook:

The park homes sector is an important part of the housing market. We recognise that there are longstanding concerns about the regulation of park home sites and the requirement to pay site owners a commission upon sale of a park home. We will set out the Government's position on these matters in due course.

David Mundell: [\[1199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to review the commission charge on Park Home sales.

Matthew Pennycook:

The park homes sector is an important part of the housing market. We recognise that there are longstanding concerns about the requirement to pay site owners a commission upon sale of a park home. We will set out the Government's position on this matter in due course.

■ Planning

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's planned timetable is for publication of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which stakeholders her Department has consulted on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Planning and Infrastructure Bill will ensure local people are consulted on planning applications.

Matthew Pennycook:

Work on the Bill is underway and we will provide more details in due course.

■ Planning Authorities

David Simmonds: [\[1984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposed planning changes on the capacity of local planning authorities; and whether she will provide additional funding to those authorities.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Department has a dedicated Planning Capability and Capacity programme to support planning reform.

We are currently reviewing how best to deploy additional support made available as a result of our plans to increase the rate of the stamp duty surcharge paid by non-UK residents.

In the recently launched consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system, the Government set out proposed changes to planning application fees and also sought views on the localisation of such fees.

The Government is committed to achieving full local plan coverage as part of wider planning reforms. Funding will be made available to support those authorities who will be required to undertake additional work to take account of the updated NPPF once this is published in the Autumn.

■ Planning Authorities: Staff

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what methodology she plans to use to allocate the proposed 300 new planning officers; what the (a) average salary and (b) local government grade of those planning officers will be; and what estimate she has made of the number of full-time equivalent planning staff employed by local planning authorities on 23 July 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [1007](#) on 25 July 2024.

■ Planning Permission

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, for which other sectors spatial plans will be developed.

Matthew Pennycook:

Preparations are being made to develop the energy spatial plan and announcements on expanding this spatial plan to other infrastructure sectors will be made in due course.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Planning and Infrastructure Bill will include measures to reform the judicial review process to speed up planning decisions.

Matthew Pennycook:

Work on the Bill is underway and we will provide more details in due course.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to modernise planning committees.

Matthew Pennycook:

The King's Speech announced that the Government would introduce a Planning and Infrastructure Bill to accelerate housebuilding and infrastructure delivery. This will include measures to modernise planning committees in order to improve decision making. Work on the Bill is underway and we will provide more details in due course.

■ Planning: Reform

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans her Department has to reform the National Planning Policy Framework.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of retaining the National Planning Policy Framework in its current form.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which stakeholders her Department have consulted on the National Planning Policy Framework.

Sir Oliver Dowden: [\[1682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on top-down housing targets in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Matthew Pennycook:

A consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, including in relation to brownfield development, began on Tuesday 30 July and closes on Tuesday 24 September.

We will consider the responses to that consultation carefully.

Private Rented Housing: Rents**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[1330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has for (a) restrictions on rent increases and (b) other rent controls in the domestic private rented sector.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government does not support the introduction of rent controls. We have made clear that we intend to use the Renters' Rights Bill to provide tenants with greater protections against unreasonable within-tenancy rent increases.

Property Management Companies**Dr Simon Opher:**[\[1873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to (a) define the minimum quality of service provided by estates management companies and (b) control the level of charges they can impose on residents.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to bringing the injustice of 'fleecehold' private estates and unfair costs to an end. We will consult on the best way to achieve this and implement new protections for homeowners on private estates in the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024.

Public Service: Harassment**John Glen:**[\[1220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which Department is responsible for tackling intimidation in public life.

Alex Norris:

Intimidation and abuse of those participating in public life has no place in our society and cannot be tolerated. As this is a broad issue that spans across a wide range of organisations and aspects of society, there is not one department with sole responsibility.

Many Government departments are working collaboratively to tackle this issue. For example, Ministers in the Home Office are responsible for the protective security of election candidates, and Ministers in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) are responsible for elections, including the conduct of

campaigning. The Deputy Prime Minister and Home Secretary have already hosted a roundtable to discuss political intimidation and abuse which took place during the recent General Election.

To bring together work on this and other issues, the Government has created the Joint Election Security and Preparedness Unit (JESP) as a permanent unit, dedicated to protecting UK elections. JESP sits between the Cabinet Office and MHCLG as a strategic centre, bringing together government departments, the police, the intelligence agencies, the devolved governments, and external partners to respond to issues, including intimidation in elections.

■ Renewable Energy: Planning Permission

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1000\]](#)

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 methodology she plans to use to prioritise energy projects.

Matthew Pennycook:

As the Chancellor set out on 8 July, the Government will give priority to energy projects in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime to ensure that they make swift progress. This is one of a number of changes the Government intends to make to build the infrastructure that we need. We will set out more details in due course.

■ Right to Buy Scheme

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to support the right to buy; and what her policy is on uprating right to buy discounts with inflation.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the written statement made by my Rt Hon Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne on 30 July 2024 ([HCWS48](#)).

■ Sleeping Rough

Mr Richard Holden: [\[1437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people are sleeping rough.

Alex Norris:

According to the official Rough Sleeping Snapshot statistics, 3,898 people were estimated to be sleeping rough on a single night in England in autumn 2023. This was 27% higher than the previous year and represented an annual increase for the second year in a row.

The Government is committed to taking action to address all forms of homelessness and will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country to get us on back on track to ending homelessness once and for all.

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. I refer the Hon Member to the written statement made on 30 July 2024 ([HCWS48](#)), setting out our first steps on how we achieve this.

■ Social Rented Housing

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[1758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for publishing a response to her Department's consultation on reforms to social housing allocations, published on 30 January 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government does not intend to enact the policy proposals set out in the consultation in question. A formal response will be issued in due course.

■ Solar Power: Land Use

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[1328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on the building of solar farms on land categorised as best and most versatile agricultural land.

Matthew Pennycook:

We place great importance upon our agriculture and food production, and this is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework is clear that local planning authorities should recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is shown to be necessary, including ground mounted solar, the planning authority should seek to use poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[\[1687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's policy is on planning applications for solar plants on agricultural land.

Matthew Pennycook:

We place great importance upon our agriculture and food production, and this is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework is clear that local planning authorities should recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is shown to be necessary, including ground mounted solar, the

planning authority should seek to use poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether funds allocated through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be delivered.

Alex Norris:

£1.9 billion has already been delivered, of an available £2.2 billion, to local authorities, with the remainder of allocations available to lead local authorities (LLAs) based on their actual spend at the end of the programme. We are working closely with LLAs to ensure we are able to maximise the benefits of UKSPF. Each local authority has an agreed plan to deliver locally important projects by March 2025 when the current funding period ends.

■ Urban Areas: Finance

Sir John Hayes: [\[1187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to maintain the agreed funding for towns selected in the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme.

Alex Norris:

This Government is committed to delivering growth in every corner of the country, by empowering communities to find local solutions to national priorities.

The department will set out further details on funding, next steps, and confirmation of the revised timelines in due course.

■ Wind Power: Birds

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Policy statement on onshore wind, published on 8 July 2024, whether her Department has made an estimate of trends in the number of bird deaths caused by changes in the number of onshore wind farms; and what discussions she had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs before the publication of that statement.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government recognises that poorly sited wind farms can pose a threat to some wildlife, such as birds. That is why we retain important checks and balances in the planning system that require extensive up-front environmental surveying, and for decision makers to ensure statutory environmental and habitats impact assessments are conducted as part of the planning determination. Should significant adverse

impacts on species or habitats be predicted, developers must put in place measures to avoid, reduce, mitigate or compensate for these impacts.

■ Wind Power: Planning Permission

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[1517]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish the environmental principles assessment for the Policy statement on onshore wind, published on 8 July 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

Environmental Principles assessments are not published routinely, but the potential environmental effects of changes to planning policy are considered in line with the requirements of the Environment Act 2021.

JUSTICE

■ Assaults on Police and Prison Officers: Sentencing

Neil O'Brien:

[1350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people received a (a) custodial and (b) non-custodial sentence for assault on a (i) police and (ii) prison officer in each year since 2007; and what the average custodial sentence for those offences was in each of those years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of offenders sentenced for offences relating to assaults on police officers and prison officers, from 2010 to 2023, in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2023](#), using the following HO offence codes:

- 10423 - Assault on a constable
- 10504 - Assaulting a prisoner custody officer or custody officer
- 00873 - Assault or assault by beating of an emergency worker

The number of offenders sentenced for offences relating to assaults on police officers and prison officers, from 2007 to 2009, is provided in Table 1.

The assault of a police officer can be prosecuted under both 'Assault on a constable' and 'Assault or assault by beating of an emergency worker' offences since the enactment of Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018.

The assault of a prison officer can be prosecuted under both 'Assaulting a prisoner custody officer or custody officer' and 'Assault or assault by beating of an emergency worker' offences since the enactment of Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018.

However, whether the offences under the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 relate to assaults specifically on police officers or prison officers

is not held centrally in the Court Proceedings database. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would incur disproportionate costs.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1350 table.xlsx]

■ Community Orders

Neil O'Brien: **[1348]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the highest number of previous community orders issued to an offender sentenced to immediate custody was in each year since 2007.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Information on the highest number of previous community sentences received by an offender sentenced to immediate custody, covering the period 2007 – 2023, can be viewed in the attached table.

It is worth noting that the same individuals may appear in more than one year. This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1348 table.xlsx]

■ Offences against Children: Victim Support Schemes

Rachael Maskell: **[1691]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will update the Victim's Code so that children who have experienced sexual exploitation are able to access immediate professional psychological help.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Victims' Code sets out the services and support that victims and survivors of crime are entitled to receive from the criminal justice system in England and Wales.

Currently, under the Code, all victims and survivors, including children, are entitled to be given information and be referred to support services by the police to help them cope and recover from the impact of a crime. This is regardless of whether anyone has been charged or convicted of a criminal offence or when the crime itself occurred. If they choose not to report the crime, they can also access support services directly.

We will be carefully considering the implementation of measures under the Victims and Prisoners Act, including the measure to publicly consult on and issue a new Victims' Code, and the requirement to consider whether different provision for child victims and survivors is needed in the Code to meet their distinct needs.

We recognise the importance of supporting child victims and survivors through access to various forms of support, including psychological help. The Department provides Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) with annual grant funding to commission local practical, emotional and therapeutic support services to victims and survivors of all crime, including children and young people. PCCs commission local providers at their discretion based on their assessment of local need in relation to and not exclusively for child sexual exploitation. We also provide direct grant funding to over 60 specialist organisations through the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund. These services offer tailored support programmes to victims and survivors of all ages, including children, to help them cope with their experiences and move forward.

■ Offenders: Employment

Ben Goldsborough:

[1841]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisoners found work within six months of their release in each year since 2010.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We know that finding employment in the year after release makes offenders less likely to reoffend, by up to nine percentage points. Getting ex-offenders into work is critical to the Government's work to break the cycle of reoffending. That is why in our manifesto, this Government committed to improve access to purposeful activity, including learning, and to support prisons to link with employers and the voluntary sector to support ex-offenders into work.

Information on the number and proportion of prison leavers employed at 6 months post release is available from April 2020. The most recent figures were published on 25 July 2024 in the Offender Employment Outcomes Update to March 2024 at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-employment-outcomes-update-to-march-2024>.

The proportion of prison leavers in jobs within six months of their release more than doubled across the past three performance years, from 14% in 2020/21 to 31% in 2023/24.

■ Offenders: Training

Ben Goldsborough:

[1839]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders have taken part in the Future Skills programme; and in which sectors they were trained.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Future Skills Programme is live in 23 prisons, with training being delivered across a range of sectors including construction, warehousing, hospitality, and third

sector case work. The programme will run until March 2025 and is being monitored and evaluated. The requested information will be published as part of the evaluation which is anticipated to be available on GOV.UK by summer 2025.

■ Prison Sentences

Neil O'Brien: **[1345]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average sentence length in months was for people who received an immediate custodial sentence and had (a) zero, (b) between one and four, (c) between five and nine, (d) between 10 and 15, (e) between 16 and 25, (f) between 26 and 50, (g) between 51 and 75, (h) between 76 and 100 and (i) 101 or more previous convictions in each year since 2007.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the table attached with this answer. These tables include data covering 2007 to 2023, on the average custodial sentence length of offenders with a specified number of previous convictions who were sentenced to immediate custody.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1345 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien: **[1346]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people who were given an immediate custodial sentence of a year or less had (a) no, (b) one, (c) two, (d) three, (e) four, (f) five, (g) six, (h) seven, (i) eight, (j) nine, (k) 10 to 19, (l) 20 to 29, (m) 30 to 39 and (n) 40 or more previous convictions and cautions in each year since 2007.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the table attached with this answer. This table includes data, covering the period 2007 – 2023, on the number of offenders with a specified number of previous cautions and convictions who were sentenced to immediate custody for a year or less.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1346 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien:

[1349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of offenders sentenced to immediate custody had (a) zero, (b) between one and four, (c) between five and nine, (d) between 10 and 15, (e) between 16 and 25, (f) between 26 and 50 and (g) more than 50 previous (i) community orders and (ii) suspended sentences in each year since 2007.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the table attached with this answer. The table includes data covering the period 2007 – 2023, on:

- The number of offenders with a specified number of previous community sentences who were sentenced to immediate custody.
- The proportion of offenders with a specified number of previous community sentences who were sentenced to immediate custody.
- The number of offenders with a specified number of suspended sentences who were sentenced to immediate custody.
- The proportion of offenders with a specified number of suspended sentences who were sentenced to immediate custody.

It is worth noting that an offender may have had previous custodial sentences as well as previous community or suspended sentences. This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1349 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien:

[1351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people sentenced to an immediate custodial sentence for (a) possession of a blade or point, (b) possession of an offensive weapon, (c) common assault, (d) assaulting a police officer, (e) sexual assault, (f) a public order offence, (g) theft, (h) robbery, (i) burglary, (j) a drug-related offence, (k) criminal damage, (l) breach of an anti-social behaviour order, (m) fraud and (n) vehicle taking in each year since 2007 had (i) no and (ii) between (A) one and four, (B) five and nine, (C) 10 and 15, (D) 16 and 25, (E) 26 and 50, (F) 51 and 75, (G) 76 and 100 and (H) 101 or more convictions and cautions for an offence.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the table attached with this answer. This table includes data, covering the period 2007 – 2023, on the number of offenders with a specified number of previous cautions and convictions who were sentenced to immediate custody for a specified offence.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1351 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien:

[1353]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people sentenced to an immediate custodial sentence for the first time for (a) possession of a blade or point, (b) possession of an offensive weapon, (c) common assault, (d) assaulting a police officer, (e) sexual assault, (f) a public order offence, (g) theft, (h) robbery, (i) burglary, (j) a drug-related offence, (k) criminal damage, (l) breach of an anti-social behaviour order, (m) fraud and (n) vehicle taking in each year since 2007 had (i) no, (ii) between one and four, (iii) between five and nine, (iv) between 10 and 15, (v) between 16 and 25, (vi) between 26 and 50, (vii) between 51 and 75, (viii) between 76 and 100 and (ix) 101 or more convictions and cautions for previous offences of any type.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the table attached with this answer. The table includes data covering the period 2007 – 2023, on the number of people sentenced to an immediate custodial sentence for the first time for a specified offence and an indication (by band) of their previous cautions and convictions for previous offences of any type. That is to say, in this data set, the offender received their first sentence of immediate custody for that particular offence. Nothing in this data set indicates that the offender has not received a sentence of immediate custody before, for another offence.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1353 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien:

[1356]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the highest number of previous offences was that a convicted person committed for that same offence before receiving a sentence other than an immediate non-custodial sentence for offences relating to (a) possession of a blade or point, (b) possession of an offensive weapon, (c) common assault, (d) assaulting a police officer, (e) sexual assault, (f) public order, (g) theft, (h) robbery, (i) burglary, (j) drugs, (k) criminal damage, (l) breach of anti social behaviour order, (m) fraud and (n) vehicle taking in each of the last three years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Information on the highest number of previous cautions and convictions an offender had for a specified offence type before receiving a custodial sentence, covering the period 2021 to 2023, can be viewed in the attached table.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1356 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien:**[1357]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people convicted of violent offences who previously had (a) none, (b) one to four, (c) five to nine, (d) 10-15, (e) 16-25, (f) 26-50, (g) 51-75, (h) 76-100 and (i) 101 or more convictions received (i) an immediate custodial sentence, (ii) a suspended sentence and (iii) a community sentence in each year since 2007.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the tables attached with this answer. These table include data covering the period 2007 – 2023, on:

- The number of occasions on which an offender was convicted of a violence against the person offence with a specified number of previous convictions and received a specified sentence.
- The percentage of occasions on which an offender was convicted of a violence against the person offence with a specified number of previous convictions and received a specified sentence.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1357 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien:**[1358]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average sentence length was in months for people who received an immediate custodial sentence and who had (a) no and (b) between (i) one and four, (ii) five and nine, (iii) 10 and 15, (iv) 16 and 25, (v) 26 and 50, (vi) 51 and 75, (vii) 76 and 100 and (viii) 101 or more previous convictions, and who were convicted of (A) violence against the person, (B) theft, (C) drug offences, (D) robbery, (E) common assault and battery, (F) burglary in a dwelling, (G) production,

supply and possession with intent to supply a controlled drug - Class A, (H) possession of article with blade or point and (I) assaulting, resisting or obstructing a constable or designated officer in execution of duty in the last 10 years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the table attached with this answer. The table includes data covering the period 2014 – 2023, on the average sentence length in months for people who received an immediate custodial sentence who were convicted of specified offences and an indication (by band) of their previous convictions.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1358 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien:

[1359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people who were convicted in each year since 2007 who previously had (a) no and (b) between (i) one and four, (ii) five and nine, (iii) 10 and 15, (iv) 16 and 25, (v) 26 and 50, (vi) 51 and 75, (vii) 76 and 100 and (viii) 101 or more convictions received (A) an immediate custodial, (B) a suspended and (C) a community sentence.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the table attached with this answer. The table includes data covering the period 2007 to 2023 on the proportion of offenders with a specified number of previous convictions by specified sentence type.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1359 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien:

[1360]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people who previously had (a) no and (b) between (i) one and four, (ii) five and nine, (iii) 10 and 15, (iv) 16 and 25, (v) 26 and 50, (vi) 51 and 75, (vii) 76 and 100 and (viii) 101 or more convictions were convicted and did not receive an immediate custodial sentence in each year since 2007.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the table attached with this answer. The table includes data covering the period 2007 to 2023, on the number of offenders convicted but did not receive an immediate custodial sentence by number of previous convictions. That is not to say that the offender did not receive a sentence of immediate custody at any point, but rather that their latest offence was not one of immediate custody.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1360 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien:**[1361]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders in each police force area who were convicted but not sentenced to an immediate custodial sentence in each year since 2007 had (a) 26 to 50, (b) 51 to 75, (c) 76 to 100 and (d) over 100 previous convictions or cautions.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the tables attached with this answer. These tables include data covering the period 2007 – 2023, on the number of offenders in each Police Force area with a specified number of previous convictions and cautions who were convicted but not sentenced to immediate custody for their latest offence in each of the given years. That is not to say that the offender has not received a sentence for immediate custody for any of the prior convictions.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1361 table.xlsx]

Neil O'Brien:**[1362]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people who were convicted of a violent offence and did not receive a custodial sentence had (a) zero, (b) between one and four, (c) between five and nine, (d) between 10 and 15, (e) between 16 and 25, (f) between 26 and 50, (g) between 51 and 75, (h) between 76 and 100 and (i) 101 or more (A) convictions and (B) cautions for previous offences of any type in each year since 2007.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the tables attached with this answer. These tables include data, covering the period 2007 – 2023, on the number of offenders convicted of a ‘violence against the person’ crime but did not receive a custodial sentence, by a) number of previous convictions and b) number of previous cautions.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1362 table.xlsx]

■ Prisoners: Neurodiversity**Ben Goldsborough:****[1838]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisons have neurodiversity support managers.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

All public prisons have successfully recruited a Neurodiversity Support Manager. All private prisons have also recruited Neurodiversity Support Managers, unless they already held equivalent neurodiversity specialisms and expertise.

Due to natural role attrition, as of 29 July 2024, there are 116 Neurodiversity Support Managers in post across the 124 prisons in England and Wales.

■ Prisons: Education**Ben Goldsborough:****[1836]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Prison Education Service for (a) increasing literacy, (b) reducing reoffending and (c) increasing employment opportunities for ex-offenders.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

There is good evidence relating to the positive impact of prison education and we continue to carry out evaluation and work to link data to better understand outcomes for prison learners.

Literacy provision is a significant element of the current education offer, with all prisons offering functional skills qualifications in Literacy from Entry Level to Level 2.

From 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, the number of prison learners participating in a functional skills course (English and maths) increased by 71%, from 16,866 to 28,832. Prisoners achieving a full or partial grade increased by 80% from 10,755 to 19,329.

There is good evidence that participation in any form of in-prison education reduces reoffending by up to 9 percentage points. Research from 2018 also showed that learners were significantly more likely to be in P45 employment one year from release, than non-learners (by 1.8 percentage points).

We are continuing to evaluate education initiatives such as the recent Literacy Innovation Fund and Future Skills Projects to add to our knowledge of what works. To further build understanding, the Better Outcomes through Linked Data programme is developing the quantitative evidence base with the aim of understanding the role of different types of prison education in contributing to positive employment outcomes.

■ Prisons: Razors

Edward Argar:

[\[1920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the written ministerial statement of 21 May 2024 entitled Prisons safety update: wet-shave razors, HCWS493, whether she plans to implement the phased removal of wet-shave razors from an initial 30 prisons in the adult male closed estate.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

I can confirm that we are continuing the plans for a phased removal of wet-shave razors and that this will be implemented in up to 30 prisons in the adult male estate in 2024/25.

■ Prosecutions

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[1393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing single justice procedure hearings to be observable by accredited journalists.

Heidi Alexander:

Single Justice Procedure (SJP) cases are decided by a single magistrate, with support of a legal adviser, in private rather than in a hearing in open court. This means that cases can be dealt with by courts anywhere in the country and are therefore not scheduled in the same way as conventional cases in court proceedings. As a result of this, these cases can be decided quickly and are often used to fill gaps between in person hearings and so enable efficient use of magistrates' court capacity and time. Magistrates have the ability to refer cases to open court if they feel it would be appropriate.

Although journalists cannot observe magistrates deciding individual SJP cases, there is already more information published on SJP cases than cases heard in open court. This allows scrutiny from journalists, who can request additional information on cases under the Criminal Procedure Rules. Under a protocol agreed between HMCTS and media organisations, magistrates' courts must provide lists of both pending cases and copies of the court register to local media. This includes SJP cases. The protocol also outlines what documents relating to SJP cases can be provided to the media –

unlike any other case type, this includes a copy of the prosecution statement of facts or, if there is no statement of facts, the witness statement(s) and any defence representations in mitigation. We will keep the procedure under review.

Ben Goldsborough:

[1394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much her Department has spent on training relating to the single justice procedure for (a) magistrates and (b) legal advisers in each of the last five years.

Heidi Alexander:

The Ministry of Justice is not responsible for judicial training, which is the responsibility of the Judicial College.

■ **Reoffenders**

Neil O'Brien:

[1352]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average number of previous (a) cautions and (b) convictions was for offenders who were sentenced to an immediate custodial sentence for (i) possession of a blade or point, (ii) possession of an offensive weapon, (iii) common assault, (iv) assaulting a police officer, (v) sexual assault, (vi) a public order offence, (vii) theft, (viii) robbery, (ix) burglary, (x) a drug-related offence, (xi) criminal damage, (xii) breach of an anti-social behaviour order, (xiii) fraud and (xiv) vehicle taking in each year since 2007.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is provided in the table attached with this answer. The table includes data covering the period 2007 – 2023, on the average number of a) previous convictions and b) previous cautions of offenders who were given an immediate custodial sentence when convicted for a specified offence. That is not to say that the offender was not sentenced to immediate custody for another offence prior to this conviction.

This data is not regularly published or held in an easily accessible format. The information supplied has been sourced from a complicated retrieval from the Police National Computer database.

It should be noted that sentencing decisions in individual cases are for the independent judiciary.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-07-31 PQ 1352 table.xlsx]

■ **Truancy: Prosecutions**

Ben Goldsborough:

[1391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many single justice procedure notices issued by local authorities for truancy relating to a child (a) with and (b) without special educational needs have been prosecuted in each of the last five years.

Heidi Alexander:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of prosecutions for truancy offences, however, information held centrally does not include whether the prosecution was processed through the Single Justice Procedure, or if the offence related to a child with or without special educational needs. This information may be held on court records, but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Victims' Payments Scheme: Northern Ireland****Alex Burghart:****[1970]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will have discussions with the Victims Payments Board in Northern Ireland on the eligibility deadline for the backdated lump sum payment of the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme.

Hilary Benn:

In view of concerns raised by stakeholders that some potential applicants could lose out on backdated payments, I have decided to extend the date for which backdated payments can be made from the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme by two years, from 31 August 2024 to 31 August 2026.

This extension will allow anyone deemed eligible in the five-year lifespan of the scheme, which makes acknowledgement payments to individuals who have been permanently injured during the Troubles, to avail of a payment backdated to 2014.

This will assist both those who have suffered and are applying to the scheme, and those who are supporting applicants.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Artificial Intelligence****Mr Luke Charters:****[1869]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what plans he has for the National AI Strategy; and whether he plans to update the 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.

Mr Luke Charters:[\[1870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on artificial intelligence planning.

Feryal Clark:

As the centre for digital government, DSIT works closely with other departments to ensure Artificial Intelligence (AI) is driving economic growth, transforming how we deliver public services, and boosting living standards.

Last week, we launched AI Opportunities Action Plan, which will set out how the UK can reap the benefits of AI. We know this will require a whole-of-government approach, so we are working across departments to ensure the Government's missions and priorities benefit from this transformative technology.

We have also committed to introducing regulation, are collaborating with departments on the details of these proposals, before legislation is brought forward.

■ Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council**Stuart Anderson:**[\[1558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking with the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council to help increase agricultural productivity.

Feryal Clark:

Through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)'s Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), we fund and support interdisciplinary research linking agriculture, nutrition and health to food security, environmental sustainability, and biodiversity.

In 2023-24, BBSRC funded around £140 million on research to improve crop and livestock health and enhance food safety and nutrition, whilst reducing food loss and waste. BBSRC's wider investments to increase agricultural productivity include the Roslin Institute's research programmes which have contributed to an estimated ~£18.9bn GVA in 2019-20 through global productivity improvements in agriculture and aquaculture.

■ Broadband: High Peak**Jon Pearce:**[\[2004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what estimate his Department has made of the increase of availability of super-fast broadband in High Peak constituency in the last five years.

Chris Bryant:

According to Ofcom's Connected Nations report, in 2019, 86% of premises in the High Peak constituency could access a superfast (≥ 30 mbps) broadband connection. By 2024, that figure had risen to 95%.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Public Appointments

Andrew Griffith: [\[1988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the new Director General: Digital Centre Design was appointed through open competition.

Feryal Clark:

The role of Director General Digital Centre Design went through approvals appropriate to a fixed term appointment, including Civil Service Commission under exception 1. Permanent roles will be advertised under fair and open competition in line with usual processes.

Andrew Griffith: [\[1989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of announcing the appointment of the new Director General: Digital Centre Design on Gov.UK.

Feryal Clark:

The role of Director General Digital Centre Design went through approvals appropriate to a fixed term appointment, including Civil Service Commission under exception 1. Permanent roles will be advertised under fair and open competition in line with usual processes.

Andrew Griffith: [\[1990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the (a) First Civil Service Commissioner and (b) Civil Service Commission agreed to the appointment of the new Director General for digital centre design.

Feryal Clark:

The role of Director General Digital Centre Design went through approvals appropriate to a fixed term appointment, including Civil Service Commission under exception 1. Permanent roles will be advertised under fair and open competition in line with usual processes.

Andrew Griffith: [\[1991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether approval was sought from the Cabinet Office's Senior Leadership Committee for the appointment of the new Director General for digital centre design.

Feryal Clark:

The role of Director General Digital Centre Design went through approvals appropriate to a fixed term appointment, including Civil Service Commission under exception 1. Permanent roles will be advertised under fair and open competition in line with usual processes.

Andrew Griffith: [\[1992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will publish the (a) Job Evaluation for the appointment of the new Director General Digital Centre

Design, (b) membership of the Job Evaluation Panel for the creation of the post and (c) scores the Panel members gave the position.

Feryal Clark:

The role of Director General Digital Centre Design went through approvals appropriate to a fixed term appointment, including Civil Service Commission under exception 1. Permanent roles will be advertised under fair and open competition in line with usual processes.

■ **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Public Expenditure**

Andrew Griffith: [\[1826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will provide a list of the expected underspends in (a) his Department and (b) each of his arms-length bodies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) across the Spending Review period.

Feryal Clark:

As the Chancellor set out in her statement on July 29, the government's spending audit has identified a forecast Resource DEL overspend of £21.9 billion against the plans set out for departments at Spring Budget 2024. This already factors in the Treasury's assessment of a £7.1bn fallaway over the course of the year, as set out in Table 1 of Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25.

The government has announced £5.5 billion of savings in 2024-25, bringing the in-year pressures down to £16.4 billion.

■ **ICT: Outages**

Mr Luke Charters: [\[1864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to (a) prepare for and (b) mitigate future global IT outages.

Feryal Clark:

As we live in a world that is dependent on interconnected systems, it is essential to be prepared for global IT outages. The Government will work with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to review the lessons learned from the recent outage. The Central Digital and Data Office will work to implement any improvements to the existing response plans to cover technical and cyber resilience failures. The Cyber Security and Resilience Bill, announced in the King's Speech, will also strengthen our defences and ensure that more digital services than ever before are protected.

■ **Life Sciences Council**

Andrew Griffith: [\[1823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his Department's policy is on the future of the Life Sciences Council.

Feryal Clark:

The Life Sciences Council is a crucial forum for convening the sector and advancing UK Life Sciences. We will bolster the Council and have it report directly to the Industrial Strategy Council. It will meet again in due course.

Mathematics: Education**Andrew Griffith:**[\[1822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his Department's policy is on the future of the National Academy for Mathematical Sciences.

Feryal Clark:

The General Election was called during the open competition period for an incipient National Academy focused on mathematical sciences. My Department recognises the value that the mathematical sciences community brings to innovation, science and growth and will confirm the outcome of the competition in due course.

Mobile Broadband: Houghton Regis**Alex Mayer:**[\[1605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if his Department will take steps to help improve the quality of mobile phone signal in (a) Houghton Regis and (b) Bidwell West.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is committed to improving mobile coverage across the UK. Ofcom's most recent coverage data for the former constituency of South West Bedfordshire shows 98% 4G geographic coverage from all four mobile network operators and that 5G is available from at least one mobile network operator outside 93% of premises.

I am aware that Ofcom's coverage data does not always reflect consumers' experience of mobile networks at a local level. I understand that Ofcom has an ongoing programme of work to improve the accuracy of its reporting on mobile coverage and I am taking a close interest in the outcome of this work.

Alongside this, the Government intends to reform the planning system in a way that - amongst other things - will make it easier to build digital infrastructure.

Telecommunications: Infrastructure**Graham Stuart:**[\[1641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make it his policy to require fixed line operators to share infrastructure to help tackle the proliferation of telegraph poles.

Chris Bryant:

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

Telegraph poles can play an important role in delivering affordable connectivity to communities, and competition can offer consumers greater choice and cheaper rates. However, it is vital that operators share infrastructure wherever possible, as the last thing anyone wants is for our towns and villages to be littered with countless unnecessary competing telegraph poles.

Existing regulations require operators to share infrastructure where practicable, and the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022 made it easier to upgrade and share existing apparatus.

In addition, the Communications (Access to Infrastructure) Regulations 2016 are designed to facilitate sharing for physical infrastructure.

SCOTLAND

■ Scotland Office: Cost Effectiveness

John Lamont:

[1783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he plans to (a) implement and (b) cancel efficiency savings budgeted for by the previous Government for (i) his Department and (ii) departmental arm's length bodies; and what plans he has for further such efficiency savings.

Ian Murray:

Decisions regarding budgets for this year were set in the last spending review and for future years will be a matter for the upcoming comprehensive spending review which my department is engaging in. The uncovering of £22bn of in-year hidden pressures has added to the strain on departmental budgets as set out by the Chancellor to parliament on 30 July.

■ Scotland Office: Public Expenditure

John Lamont:

[1782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will provide a breakdown of underspend in (a) his Department and (b) departmental arm's length bodies in this (i) financial year and (ii) spending review.

Ian Murray:

A breakdown of the Department and its arm's length bodies underspend in the current financial year and over the spending review are disclosed in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scotland-office-and-oag-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-2023>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scotland-office-and-oag-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-2024>

TRANSPORT■ **A36: Wiltshire**

Anna Sabine: [\[1619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had recent discussions with National Highways on minimising disruption to local residents and businesses during the closure of the A36 at Limpley Stoke.

Lilian Greenwood:

The scheme is to repair a geotechnical fault and stabilise the embankment by the A36 and as such is a business as usual safety related scheme led by National Highways. National Highways has engaged with local businesses, residents residing within the limits of the closure, Bath and North-East Somerset Council, Wiltshire Council and is currently speaking with Parish Councils.

The scheme will produce a stable road with reduced risk of a more extended closure for a future failure. Work will commence from 12th August 2024 and last until Spring 2025. Extensive signage will be erected from Bath and the south advising of the closure and diversion routes.

■ **A5**

Dr Luke Evans: [\[1371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of proposed upgrades to the A5 between Hinckley and Tamworth on the regional economy.

Lilian Greenwood:

Improvements to the A5 between Hinckley and Tamworth have been considered extensively by National Highways as part of the pipeline of possible future enhancements to the strategic road network. The business case has been developed and considered the local and wider economic impacts in line with the Department for Transport's Transport Analysis Guidance.

■ **Aviation: Disability**

Claire Hanna: [\[1815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to help improve accessibility on flights for disabled passengers.

Mike Kane:

Accessible air travel is a key priority, and everyone should be able to fly with ease and dignity. Government is committed to working closely with industry and stakeholders to make progress in improving aviation accessibility.

■ Bus Services: East of England**Ben Goldsborough:**[\[1450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to support the use of buses in (a) South Norfolk constituency and (b) East Anglia.

Simon Lightwood:

Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities, and the government is committed to delivering better bus services and growing passenger numbers. Since the de-regulation of buses in England, passenger numbers have declined, and the government is determined to fix this.

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 to the communities who rely on them and encourage passengers back onto buses, including in South Norfolk, East Anglia and right across England. The Department will work closely with local leaders and bus operators to deliver on these ambitions.

■ Bus Services: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:**[\[1188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to help improve the (a) reliability and (b) frequency of bus services in (i) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (ii) Lincolnshire.

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 to the communities who rely on them, including in South Holland and the Deepings, and across Lincolnshire.

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

■ Department for Transport: Cost Effectiveness**Helen Whately:**[\[1965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to (a) implement and (b) cancel efficiency savings budgeted for by the previous Government for (i) her Department and (ii) departmental arm's length bodies; and what plans she has for further such efficiency savings.

Mike Kane:

The Chancellor has recently set out plans for departmental efficiencies such as taking actions to stop all non-essential government consultancy spend in 2024-25 and halve government spending on consultancy in future years, reducing communications and marketing budgets and continuing to dispose of surplus public sector estates. Future year efficiencies will be set during the upcoming Spending Review. Further information can be found here: [Fixing the foundations – Public spending audit 2024-25 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/124444/Fixing_the_foundations_-_Public_spending_audit_2024-25.pdf).

Department for Transport: Equality

Sir John Hayes: [1637]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the cost to the public purse was of staff diversity networks in her Department in each of the last five years.

Mike Kane:

The Cabinet Office published the Civil Service equality, diversity and inclusion Expenditure Guidance on 14th May. Further guidance on diversity staff networks is being developed.

Department for Transport: Public Expenditure

Helen Whately: [1964]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will list the underspends within (a) her Department and (b) each of its arms length bodies in (i) this financial year and (ii) across the Spending Review period.

Mike Kane:

In each financial year, the Government seeks authority from Parliament for its spending each year. The Main Estimates start this process and are presented to Parliament by the Treasury. This sets out the departmental forecast spend for the year. Each year this is updated through the Supplementary Estimates, where any changes against the Main Estimates are published. These are available online at: [HMT Main Estimates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/124444/HMT_Main_Estimates_-_GOV.UK.pdf). These publications are accompanied by a Memorandum that provides further information on the key drivers for changes to spending and are also available online: [Transport Committee - Estimate memoranda - Committees - UK Parliament](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/all-committees/transport-committee/estimate-memoranda/). In addition, the Department's Annual Report and Accounts are published annually, which sets out the final consolidated position for the year: [DfT Annual Report and Accounts 2023-2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/124444/DfT_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2023-2024.pdf).

Midland Main Line: Electrification

Neil O'Brien: [1363]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Network Rail on options to avoid the closure of Spion Kop bridge on Blaby Road Wigston during the next phase of electrification work on the midland mainline.

Lilian Greenwood:

My Officials have been in discussion with Network Rail regarding the necessary works for Spion Kop bridge at Blaby Road.

The work is necessary to renew aging assets and enable the electrification of the railway. Network Rail are working with the local authority and are considering options for the works and are mindful of minimising the disruptive impacts of the works whilst also delivering the works efficiently.

Neil O'Brien:[\[1553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will have discussions with Network Rail on options to avoid the closure of Spion Kop Bridge in Wigston during the next phase of electrification work on the midland mainline.

Lilian Greenwood:

My officials have been in discussion with Network Rail and will continue to do so regarding the works for Spion Kop bridge at Blaby Road.

The work is necessary to renew aging assets and enable the electrification of the railway. Network Rail are working with the local authority and are considering options for the works. They are mindful of minimising disruptive impacts whilst also delivering them efficiently.

Motorways: Safety Measures**Sarah Champion:**[\[1918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average distance between refuges will be across the Smart Motorway network following the conclusion of the retrofitting of new emergency refuges.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways is adding over 150 Emergency Refuge Areas (ERAs) across the All Lane Running (ALR) network, to be completed by the end of March 2025. Some ERAs are still under construction, and sitings may be subject to final change due to topographical challenges. Once the rollout is completed, National Highways will be able to calculate the average spacing of places to stop in an emergency across the whole ALR network. We will share this information as soon as it becomes available.

Railways: Access**Julia Lopez:**[\[1549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her Department's planned timetable is for the completion of feasibility works for (a) platform six at Upminster station and (b) the other 50 projects granted Access for All accessibility funding on 24 May 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

Following the previous government's announcement on 24th May 2024, we are carefully considering the best approach to the Access for All programme. Given the short time since the general election, I regret I am not yet able to comment on next

steps regarding specific stations, including Upminster station. 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: East of England

Alice Macdonald:

[\[1419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department plans to take to increase rail capacity in the East of England.

Simon Lightwood:

Greater Anglia are in the final stages of the £1.4 billion fleet transformation programme with all services now operated by new trains which provide many more seats and greater capacity for customers across the region. In addition, the Government is funding the construction of new stations at Cambridge South and Beaulieu Park, both of which are due to open in 2025 and will create additional rail capacity for the East.

■ Railways: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[1463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much HS2 funding has been reallocated for rail upgrades in (a) South Holland and The Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Lilian Greenwood:

The previous Government made several funding commitments in the Network North Command Paper. These will be examined closely by the Government in the coming months.

■ Roads: Capital Investment

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[1563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress she has made on the RIS3 road improvement programme.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is considering the content and timing of the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) alongside all transport infrastructure spend.

■ Roads: East Riding

Graham Stuart:

[\[1643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much she plans to provide East Riding of Yorkshire Council from the Local Transport Fund.

Simon Lightwood:

The previous government made a number of funding commitments in the Network North Command Paper and these will be examined closely by the government in the coming months.

■ **Roads: Safety**

Edward Argar: [\[1922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria National Highways use when determining which junctions qualify for funding for safety improvements.

Lilian Greenwood:

Decisions on schemes are taken following the governance arrangements set out in National Highways' Licence and Framework and within the level of funding agreed at the start of each Road Period. National Highways improves safety of the network through various activities including operations, maintenance and renewals; major enhancements; designated funds (including a Safety & Congestion Designated Fund). Schemes that improve safety are designed according to the safety objectives of the given section of the road network. Scheme designs are appraised for value for money and how effective they are at achieving scheme objectives.

■ **Roads: Safety Measures**

Edward Argar: [\[1919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much contingency funding for urgent safety- critical projects National Highways has set aside in its 2024-2025 budget for in-year funding bids.

Lilian Greenwood:

Funding for safety critical repairs is drawn from National Highways' Maintenance and Renewals budget, the budget for 2024/25 is £230m for maintenance and £1.2bn for renewals.

■ **Transport: Dudley**

Sonia Kumar: [\[1834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department plans to take to improve (a) public transportation links, (b) road maintenance and (c) other transport infrastructure in Dudley constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Dudley constituency will benefit from a number of Department for Transport projects. These include the substantial projects of the new Dudley bus and Metro Interchange, and the first phase of the Wednesbury Metro tram extension to Dudley. These are both under construction.

In addition, Dudley Council is benefitting from Highways Maintenance funding for its local road maintenance and pothole programme.

■ Transport: Northern Ireland

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[1477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to improve transport links between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Simon Lightwood:

The UK Government intends to reset its relationships with all the devolved governments including the Northern Ireland Executive. The Secretary of State has already met with John O'Dowd MLA, Minister for Infrastructure, to discuss shared transport priorities. By working together, both governments can drive economic growth, deliver integrated transport networks, promote social mobility, and tackle regional inequalities by improving connectivity across the whole of the UK.

TREASURY

■ Air Passenger Duty

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[1476\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will abolish air passenger duty for domestic flights.

James Murray:

Air Passenger Duty (APD) applies to airlines and is the principal tax on aviation, since tickets are VAT-free and aviation fuel is untaxed.

In April 2023, reforms to APD took effect, which included halving the rate of duty charged on domestic flights. The domestic rate of APD applies to flights between airports in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, excluding private jets.

The Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events in the context of public finances.

■ Capital Gains Tax

Neil O'Brien:

[\[1556\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of people who paid capital gains tax were in work in the most recent year for which data is available.

James Murray:

In the 2021 to 2022 tax year, around 50% of customers liable to Capital Gains Tax (CGT) declared in their Self Assessment return that they were in employment or were self-employed.

This figure is based on data reported by taxpayers who have filed a Self Assessment tax return and excludes a small proportion of taxpayers who have reported CGT exclusively via other filing systems.

Neil O'Brien: [1557]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of people who paid capital gains tax also paid employee national insurance contributions in the most recent year for which data is available.

James Murray:

HMRC does not routinely produce estimates of the proportion of capital gains taxpayers who have paid employee national insurance contributions. A reliable estimate would only be available at disproportionate cost.

Annual statistics on Capital Gains Tax including number of taxpayers are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/capital-gains-tax-statistics> The statistics in this publication are for all customers liable to Capital Gains Tax including those who have and have not paid employee national insurance contributions.

■ **Coronavirus: Contracts**

Mr Luke Charters: [1863]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how the Covid Corruption Commissioner will (a) work and (b) liaise with other Departments across Government.

Darren Jones:

The Commissioner, once appointed, will work closely with other Departments, such as DHSC, and will draw on additional expertise in the Public Sector Fraud Authority, Government Debt Management Function and Government Commercial Function to undertake their role.

■ **Credit: Regulation**

Sorcha Eastwood: [1882]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to regulate buy-now-pay-later financial products.

Tulip Siddiq:

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

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

■ **Development Aid**

Rachael Maskell: [1702]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when she plans to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on Official Development Assistance.

Darren Jones:

This Government is committed to restoring ODA spending at the level of 0.7 per cent of GNI as soon as fiscal circumstances allow. The Government will set out its approach to the House in due course.

Energy: Taxation**Andrew Bowie:****[1539]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential economic impact of the Energy Profits Levy on the North East of Scotland.

James Murray:

The Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR) most recent forecast of tax revenues from the oil and gas sector was published at Spring Budget 2024 in the Economic and Fiscal Outlook (EFO) March 2024. It can be found at:

https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/E03057758_OBR_EFO-March-2024_Web-AccessibleFinal.pdf

Forecasts for investment in the sector are published alongside the EFO. All OBR oil and gas forecasts will take into account policy decisions impacting the production of oil and gas across the UK and UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) and do not provide a breakdown by region.

Motor Insurance: Insurance Premium Tax**Claire Hanna:****[1401]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to review Insurance Premium Tax for car insurance.

Tulip Siddiq:

IPT is a tax on general insurance premiums currently charged at two rates: a standard rate at 12%, including car insurance, and a higher rate at 20%.

The Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events.

North Sea Oil: Taxation**Stephen Flynn:****[1979]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department (a) has made and (b) plans to make of the potential impact of (i) increasing and (ii) extending the windfall tax on oil producers on businesses in the North East of Scotland; and what steps she plans to take to assist businesses affected by that tax.

James Murray:

The government is committed to maintaining a constructive dialogue with the oil and gas sector on the implementation of the changes to the Energy Profits Levy. We will continue to engage with the sector ahead of publishing further details of final policy and impacts at Budget.

■ Offshore Industry: Licensing

Andrew Bowie: [\[1537\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the projected revenue is to His Majesty's Treasury from oil and gas companies as a result of the policy to ban new oil and gas exploration licences.

James Murray:

The government does not intend to issue new licences to explore new oil and gas fields. We will share more details on our plans for oil and gas licensing in due course.

Forecasts for oil and gas tax revenues are published by the Office for Budget Responsibility. Future forecasts will take into account any changes to policy that may have an impact on production or revenues.

■ Offshore Industry: North Sea

Rachael Maskell: [\[1301\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her policy is on divesting North Sea oil and gas production.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government is strongly committed to the net zero transition, but it is clear that North Sea oil and gas production will be with us for decades to come. The Government will manage the North Sea in a way that manages existing fields for their lifespan and does not jeopardise jobs, even as we take steps to reduce our reliance.

Transforming the financial sector so that it is aligned with net zero can be supported by companies having a transition plan that is specific to them, detailing how their business will align with net zero. This will support an orderly transition.

■ Private Education: Fees and Charges

Damian Hinds: [\[1649\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the price elasticity of demand for independent-sector education following a one-off increase in price of 20% (a) in the immediate term and (b) over time for (i) individual phases of education and (ii) on average across all phases.

Damian Hinds: [\[1650\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of imposing 20% VAT on school fees on exports.

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.

The government will confirm the introduction of these tax changes at Budget. A Tax Information and Impact Note will be published alongside the Finance Bill once the independent Office for Budget Responsibility have scrutinised and certified the impacts of the final policy.

■ Private Education: VAT

Damian Hinds:

[\[1651\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether independent English Language schools will be exempt from VAT.

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.

The teaching of English as a foreign language will not be affected by these changes and will continue to be exempt from VAT.

■ Public Expenditure

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[1813\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total Government underspend is for this financial year; and what the underspend is for each Department.

Darren Jones:

As the Chancellor set out in her statement on July 29, there is a forecast Resource DEL overspend of £21.9 billion against the plans set out for departments at Spring Budget 2024. This already factors in the Treasury's assessment of a £7.1bn fallaway over the course of the year, as set out in Table 1 of Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25.

■ Stamp Duties: Foreign Nationals

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[1903\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when she plans to (a) increase stamp duty for non-UK residents and (b) recruit additional planning officers.

James Murray:

Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) changes are typically announced upon implementation at fiscal event.

The Government recognises the need to recruit more planning officers and has committed to recruit 300 more over the course of the next five years. We are currently reviewing options for delivering this in a way that best supports housing delivery and growth. Parliament will be updated in the usual way.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Conversion Therapy and Gender Recognition

Rebecca Paul: [\[1880\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what responsibilities she has for (a) potential reform of gender recognition laws and (b) banning of conversion practices.

Anneliese Dodds:

Alongside Bridget Phillipson as Secretary of State with responsibility for Women and Equalities, my department has responsibility for the Government's equality policy, including on LGBT+ issues.

Conversion practices are acts that aim to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity. Such practices are abuse. They have no place in society and must be stopped. Through the development of the Conversion Practices Bill, this Government will deliver our manifesto commitment to bring forward a full, trans-inclusive ban on these harmful practices.

We will also modernise, simplify, and reform the intrusive and outdated gender recognition law to a new process. We will remove indignities for trans people who deserve recognition and acceptance; whilst retaining the need for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria from a specialist doctor, enabling access to the healthcare pathway.

■ Equality and Human Rights Commission: Public Appointments

John Glen: [\[1664\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what her planned timetable is for the appointment of the next chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Anneliese Dodds:

All appointments, including to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, will be considered in the usual way, in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

■ Travellers: Equality

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[1365\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what account she plans to take of the inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities in the development of the draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill; and if her Department will consult with Gypsy and Traveller civil society in the development of that Bill.

Anneliese Dodds:

Our Equality (Race and Disability) Bill will include a range of measures to tackle racial inequality

We will engage with a wide range of stakeholders while developing the Bill, and will ensure that Gypsy, Traveller and Roma civil society have the opportunity to share their views.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Armed Forces: Compensation****Mark Pritchard:**[\[1911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will end the treatment of military compensation as income for the purpose of welfare benefit means tests.

Andrew Western:

I refer the honourable member to the answer to question UIN [500](#), given on the 25 July 2024.

■ **Employment: Dudley****Sonia Kumar:**[\[1430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that people in Dudley have access to improved employment prospects; and what steps she is taking to (a) reduce unemployment and (b) enhance skill development.

Alison McGovern:

Under new leadership the DWP will shift from being a department for welfare to being the 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 monitoring and managing benefits claims. For our employment support systems, the outcomes that will matter are higher engagement, higher employment and higher earnings.

Jobcentre teams in Dudley and across the Black Country are supporting people into work and helping those in work to progress to higher paid jobs. We are working with local and national employers to help fill vacancies quickly, delivering Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs), recruitment days, and job fairs.

We work closely with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to shape and deliver the skills offer to residents. The devolved adult education budget forms the basis for our partnership work with discussions around pre-employment training, SWAPs and English for Speakers of Other Languages provision, with input from local Colleges and providers on delivery and plans. The Department is also an integral stakeholder on the West Midlands Local Skills Improvement Plans Delivery Board.

Recent examples of collaboration include Path 2 Apprenticeships, aimed at 19 to 29-year-olds, with Apprenticeship placements in a variety of sectors such as Business Administration, Construction and Hospitality, and an upskilling and recruitment programme, due to be piloted in Coventry, where we are working with employers to address progression and recruitment needs.

We currently have SWAPs linked to vacancies with Midland Metro Ltd as well as jobs in the Social Care, education and HGV sectors.

A recent job fair hosted by Dudley Jobcentre was supported by 20 employers and training providers, including NHS, Betfred, The Army, Edgeview Homes, and Trinity Personnel, and was well attended by jobseekers. The team work closely with Dudley Metropolitan Council and the local NHS to promote their vacancies to residents. Customers with health barriers benefit from additional time with their Work Coach to explore provision available, including the Work and Health Programme and Thrive into Work, and those over 50 have access to a range of support, including the Mid-life MOT with a focus on work, health and pensions.

The Youth Hub in Merry Hill Shopping Centre works with Dudley council to offer bespoke training and support to young people, including Movement to Work. We also offer an outreach service at the Dudley Archives and Local History Centre and the Black Country Skills Shop, working closely with the National Careers Service. This includes partnership work with Dudley Children's Services to identify care leavers across the borough, offering training and employment opportunities. Our Supporting Families Employer Advisors also work alongside key partners in Dudley to offer a tailored service for families and individuals as a route back into work.

We are working with The Salvation Army to raise awareness of their UK Shared Prosperity Fund provision, which includes employment and volunteering opportunities. Our Schools Advisers work with over 15 secondary schools and colleges across the Dudley area, supporting students to transition into work, training, or further study. The team provide advice on the labour market, traineeships and apprenticeships, and insight into what local employers are looking for.

■ Food Banks

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she is taking steps to work with foodbanks to help ensure that healthy options are available for people from low income households.

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.

■ Housing Benefit

Sarah Olney: [\[1966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she has made on the transition from housing benefit to Universal Credit; and what steps she is taking to reduce (a) hardship, (b) debt and (c) eviction risks for households using housing benefit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The DWP started sending Migration Notices to Housing Benefit only customers from 17 July 2024 and is committed to ensuring that the transition to Universal Credit works as smoothly as possible for all individuals.

DWP has processes in place within Universal Credit to help reduce hardship, debt and risk of eviction. For example, people who receive Housing Benefit and then claim Universal Credit will receive a two-week run on of their housing payment while they transition to Universal Credit Housing Payment. Universal Credit customers who require support to adapt to Universal Credit can also have their housing costs paid directly to landlords through an Alternative Payment Arrangement.

■ Means-tested Benefits: Armed Forces

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[1802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of not including military compensation as an income on means-tested benefit applications.

Andrew Western:

There are already special rules in place for how War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) awards interact with State Pensions and benefits. These payments are already fully ignored in the State Pension and in Universal Credit.

The first £10 per week of a War Pension or AFCS award is disregarded in: income-related Employment and Support allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; and Income Support. Armed Forces Independence Payments are fully disregarded in these benefits and can also allow the recipient to qualify for an additional disability amount. Furthermore, these are legacy benefits, in the process of being replaced by Universal Credit, in which War Pensions and AFCS are ignored.

By default, the first £10 per week of a War Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme is disregarded in Housing Benefit. Furthermore, a discretionary scheme allows local authorities to fully disregard them.

In relation to Pension Credit, the first £10 of any War Pension payments or AFCS award made due to injury or disablement is disregarded. Four additions to the War Disablement Pension are completely disregarded: Constant Attendance Allowance; Mobility Supplement; Severe Disablement Occupational Allowance; and dependency increases for anyone other than the applicant or her/his partner. War Pensions and AFCS awards are a qualifying income for the Savings Credit element of Pension

Credit, which is available to those who reached State Pension age before April 2016. Armed Forces Independence Payments are fully disregarded in Pension Credit and can also allow the recipient to qualify for an additional disability amount.

■ Pension Credit: High Peak

Jon Pearce: [\[2003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of people eligible for but not claiming pension credit in High Peak constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

The latest available Pension Credit take-up statistics cover the financial year 2021 to 2022 and are available at: [Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). However, these statistics are only available at Great Britain level and cannot be broken down to smaller geographical areas.

■ Poverty: Birth Rate

Ian Lavery: [\[1502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of poverty levels on birth rates.

Alison McGovern:

It is not possible to make a robust assessment of the impact of poverty levels on birth rates. This is because poverty levels are potentially one of a very wide range and complex interaction of social, economic and personal factors which might affect birth rates. It is not possible to isolate the potential impact of poverty levels from the vast range of other possible factors.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[1797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential mental health impact of benefit sanctions.

Alison McGovern:

Under the previous administration, no assessment was made of the mental health impacts of benefits sanctions. The new government will reform labour market policy and operations with the aim of increasing employment and integrating work and health support.

Sanctions are not applied to those with a severe medical health condition or disability where they have been found to have Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity following their Work Capability Assessment (WCA), or where they have a specified condition or are undergoing certain treatments ahead of their WCA.

Those subject to work-related requirements will only be sanctioned if they fail to meet the labour market requirements that they've agreed to with their work coach without demonstrating good reason for doing so. To ensure these requirements are realistic and achievable, they are discussed and agreed with the claimant and based on their individual capabilities and household circumstances, including any health issues, caring responsibilities, earnings, and ongoing work or volunteering.

We acknowledge that there will be times when a claimant's circumstances are such that their ability to carry out their labour market requirements is disrupted due to their personal circumstances. In these cases, an easement can be applied to lift these requirements completely for an agreed period of time.

To support those who demonstrate that they cannot meet their most immediate and essential needs as a result of receiving a sanction, we have a system of recoverable hardship payments. These needs can include heating, food, and hygiene.

■ **Social Security Benefits: High Peak**

Jon Pearce:

[2000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of people claiming in-work benefits in High Peak constituency.

Sir Stephen Timms:

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 [general guidance](#) on how to extract the information required, with more detailed guidance available in the [Universal Credit Official Statistics: Stat-Xplore user guide](#).

Statistics on the number of people on Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance, who are in employment, are not readily available and to provide them would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Women**

Adam Jogee:

[1097]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to help support women affected by the rise in the State Pension age in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) Staffordshire.

Emma Reynolds:

DWP offers employment support for eligible customers of all ages, including those below State Pension age, through the network of Jobcentres across the UK, and through contracted employment programmes.

A dedicated offer for older workers seeks to provide tailored support for those affected by low confidence, menopause, health and disability or caring pressures,

and out of date skills or qualifications. This includes an online midlife review tool that supports people to assess their health, wealth and skills.

The government has set out ambitious plans to improve employment support by bringing together jobcentres and the national careers service.

Chris Hinchliff:

[\[1451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to help support women affected by the rise in the State Pension age in North East Hertfordshire constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 30 July 2024]: DWP offers employment support for eligible customers of all ages, including those below State Pension age, through the network of Jobcentres across the UK, and through contracted employment programmes.

A dedicated offer for older workers seeks to provide tailored support for those affected by low confidence, menopause, health and disability or caring pressures, and out of date skills or qualifications. This includes an online midlife review tool that supports people to assess their health, wealth and skills.

The government has set out ambitious plans to improve employment support by bringing together jobcentres and the national careers service.

Darren Paffey:

[\[1846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to help support women affected by the rise in the State Pension age in Southampton Itchen constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

DWP offers employment support for eligible customers of all ages, including those below State Pension age, through the network of Jobcentres across the UK, and through contracted employment programmes.

A dedicated offer for older workers seeks to provide tailored support for those affected by low confidence, menopause, health and disability or caring pressures, and out of date skills or qualifications. This includes an online midlife review tool that supports people to assess their health, wealth and skills.

The government has set out ambitious plans to improve employment support by bringing together jobcentres and the national careers service.

■ Universal Credit: Children

Chris Hinchliff:

[\[1447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential (a) financial cost and (b) impact on levels of child poverty of introducing a child element of Universal Credit of (i) £287.92, (ii) £191.95 and (iii) £143.96 for (A) third and (B) further children.

Alison McGovern:

We are committed to tackling child poverty and are introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school to ensure children are fed a nutritious breakfast and are ready to learn. The new Ministerial Taskforce will drive cross-government action on child poverty, starting with overseeing the development of our ambitious new strategy in line with the Opportunity Mission.

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

Work Capability Assessment

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[1798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to (a) reform or (b) replace the Work Capability Assessment.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The government is committed to reforming or replacing the Work Capability Assessment, alongside putting in place a proper plan to support disabled people into work.

We will also give disabled people the confidence to start working without fear of an immediate benefit reassessment if it does not work out. More disabled people and those with health conditions will be supported to enter and stay in work, by devolving more power to local areas so they can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer that suits the needs of the people they serve. These plans are central to our missions of kickstarting economic growth and breaking down barriers to opportunity.

This government is committed to championing the rights of disabled people and to the principle of working with them, so that their views and voices will be at the heart of all that we do.

Work Capability Assessment: High Peak

Jon Pearce: [\[2002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average waiting time was for a Work Capability Assessment in High Peak constituency in the latest period for which data is available.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The information requested is not available.

Workplace Pensions

Dr Simon Opher: [\[1598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of recommendation 22 of the Third Report of the

Work and Pensions Select Committee of Session 2023-24 on Defined benefit pension schemes, HC 144, published on 26 March 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

The Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiry report on Defined Benefit pension schemes, published in March 2024 helpfully outlines areas to be considered, including the lack of pre-April 97 indexation in the Pension Protection Fund and Financial Assistance Scheme. I recognise the importance of this issue for affected members. I will need to consider this issue in the coming weeks as I receive further briefing on Defined Benefit pensions.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Suicide

Andrew Bowie:

[\[1772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will fund further research relating to suicide amongst (a) serving personnel and (b) veterans.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 2 August 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Al Carns:

As the responsible Minister for leading the work on the mental health of all our serving and former Serving personnel, I take this matter extremely seriously.

The Ministry of Defence continues to monitor the long-term impact of operational deployments. A study mapping the mortality rates and causes of death, including suicide, of military personnel who served since 2001, including those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, is underway. The focus of this study is to understand the long-term impact of military service. It will compare findings with the general population.

The Defence Suicide Register has also been launched. This is an ongoing Defence-led project to provide an evidence-base specific to Serving personnel by better understanding circumstances surrounding individual deaths. It draws together information from multiple data sources across Defence, enabling internal analysis across organisational boundaries to inform evidence-based prevention, intervention, and postvention activity.

Research suggests that the risk of suicide in our veteran population as a whole is no higher than that in the general population. However, it suggests that certain younger cohorts of veterans may be at a higher risk. The Office for Veterans' Affairs is working across Government and with civil society to ensure veterans have access to the health support they need.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Health: Dudley

Sonia Kumar:

[\[427\]](#)

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 July 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Andrew Gwynne:

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

We are working closely with local Directors of Public Health to ensure the ring-fenced Public Health Grant funds evidence-based activity to improve health and tackle health inequalities. The grant allocated to the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council for 2024/25 was £23,251,698. In addition, £1,221,970 was allocated to invest in drug misuse services. **Dudley is one of 75 local authorities with high levels of deprivation receiving funding to improve outcomes for families with babies as part of the £300 million Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme.** ~~The council also receives funding, £1,533,953 from 2023/24 to 2024/25, for the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme. This programme is creating a network of family hubs with services that support families from conception to the age of two.~~

We are also working alongside NHS England Midlands and the Black Country Integrated Care System to support a range of local initiatives and to embed the Core20PLUS5 approach, focused on clinical areas with the most need of accelerated improvement in the poorest 20% of the population and other underserved population groups identified locally. Work also continues with the West Midlands Combined Authority to take forward a health in all policies approach across the wider determinants of health.

HOME OFFICE**■ Police: Public Opinion****John Slinger:****[900123]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to increase public trust and confidence in policing.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 29 July 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Jess Phillips Dame Diana Johnson:

~~For far too long, violence against women and girls has been treated as an inevitability rather than the national emergency that it is. Our mission is to halve violence against women and girls within a decade, using every tool at our disposal to protect victims and to get dangerous offenders off the streets.~~

~~That must start with drastically improving the policing and criminal justice response, ensuring that every force has the specialist capability to respond swiftly and robustly to these devastating crimes, and we will be bringing forward plans shortly to drive up standards across policing.~~

It is essential that the public can have confidence in the police; the government has committed to restoring confidence in policing to record levels, alongside halving violence against women and girls and halving knife crime over a decade. These are core aims of the government's mission to take back our streets.

The government is also committed to improving police standards by strengthening the police misconduct system and introducing mandatory national vetting standards.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HOME OFFICE

■ Legal Migration

Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper): [\[HCWS51\]](#)

Migration has always been an important part of the history of our nation. For generations, people have travelled here from all over the world to contribute to our economy, study in our universities, work in our public services and be part of our communities. And British citizens continue to travel across the world to make their homes abroad.

This Government recognises and values the contribution legal migration makes to our country and we believe the immigration system needs to be properly controlled and managed.

Under the previous government, net migration trebled in five years, heavily driven by a big increase in overseas recruitment. This Government is clear that net migration must come down. Whilst we will always benefit from international skills and talent, including to keep us globally competitive, immigration must not be used as an alternative to tackling skills shortages and labour market failures here in the UK. For that reason we are setting out a new approach.

The Office of National Statistics estimate that net migration in the year to December 2023 was 685,000, compared to 184,000 in the year to December 2019 before the pandemic. Non-EU long-term immigration for work-related reasons increased from 277,000 in the year to December 2022 to 423,000 in the year to December 2023, replacing study as the main reason for long-term migration.

The number of work visas issued (including dependants) in the 12 months to 31st March 2024 (605,264) was over three times that of 2019, prior to the pandemic and 24% higher than in the 12 months to 31st March 2023, (486,614).

That reflects a failure over many years to tackle skills shortages and other problems in the UK labour market, meaning too many sectors have remained reliant on international recruitment, instead of being able to source the skills they need here at home.

This is why we are setting out a different approach – one that links migration policy and visa controls to skills and labour market policies – so immigration is not used as an alternative to training or tackling workforce problems here at home. This approach will be important to enabling delivery of the Government's broader agenda.

As part of this, the Migration Advisory Committee will work with Skills England, the Industrial Strategy Council, and the Labour Market Advisory Board as part of a new framework to support a coherent approach to skills, migration and labour market policy. For us to deliver on the Government's Missions, we will need to tackle labour market challenges in all parts of the United Kingdom, and so these bodies will engage and work closely with the Devolved Governments.

The Education Secretary has announced the launch of Skills England which will bring together the fractured skills landscape, create a shared national ambition to boost the nation's skills, and lead the work on identifying sector skills gaps and plans.

The Chancellor has convened the first Growth Mission Board and the Work and Pensions Secretary has set out a plan to bring people back into the labour market supported by a new Labour Market Advisory Board to help drive change and get Britain working again. The King's Speech highlighted the intention to set up the Industrial Strategy Council, which will engage business and focus on key sectors to take advantage of new opportunities that can promote growth right across the UK.

Alongside the development of these plans and the establishment of the new framework, the Home Office will strengthen the Migration Advisory Committee so it can highlight key sectors where labour market failures mean there is over-reliance on international recruitment.

As a first step I am commissioning the MAC to review the reliance of key sectors on international recruitment. In particular I am asking the MAC to look at IT and engineering - occupations which have consistently, over a decade or more, been included on shortage occupation lists and relied on significant levels of international recruitment. The percentage of the workforce in these occupational groups made up by new foreign workers issued visas, are in the top 10 for all occupational groups in the UK.

We will also consider ways to strengthen the Migration Advisory Committee, including through the deployment of additional Home Office staff to its Secretariat ensuring it is able to work more strategically to forecast future trends, alongside continuing to review and provide independent, evidence-based recommendations on key areas of the immigration system.

A number of changes to the system were made earlier this year, including:

- o Restricting most overseas students from bringing family members to the UK.
- o Restricting the ability of care workers and senior care workers to bring dependants with them and requiring all care providers sponsoring migrants to register with the Care Quality Commission.
- o Increasing the general salary threshold for those arriving on Skilled Worker visas by 48% from £26,200 to £38,700.
- o Abolishing the 20% going rate discount so that employers can no longer pay migrants less than UK workers in shortage occupations.

This government supports these changes and will continue to implement them.

The Family Immigration Rules, including the Minimum Income Requirement, need to balance a respect for family life whilst also ensuring the economic wellbeing of the UK is maintained. To help ensure we reach the right balance and have a solid evidence base for any change, I will commission the MAC to review the financial requirements, in the Family Immigration Rules. The Minimum Income Requirement is currently set at £29,000 and there will be no further changes until the MAC review is complete.

On the 23 May the previous Government announced a series of measures, building on the recommendations of the Migration Advisory Committee, to reduce the potential for abuse on the student and Graduate visa routes. This Government strongly values the economic and academic contribution that international students make to this country, including those here on the Graduate visa, and that is why it is important to ensure that the system is effective and not open to abuse. Therefore, we will continue with the previously announced measures to ensure that international students themselves, the institutions they are coming to study at, and the immigration system as a whole is protected from those who wish to exploit it – working closely with DfE to ensure the measures are effective.