



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 5 September 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 05 September 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Conditions of Employment

**Antonia Bance:** [\[900190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when his Department plans to bring forward the Employment Rights Bill.

**Justin Madders:**

We are committed to delivering the Plan to Make Work Pay in full. Ministers are identifying the most appropriate delivery mechanisms for the commitments in the Plan, including an Employment Rights Bill. The Bill will be introduced to Parliament within 100 days of taking office.

#### ■ Developing Countries Trading Scheme

**Apsana Begum:** [\[2520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department takes steps to (a) monitor and (b) assess the extent to which countries participating in the Developing Countries Trading Scheme comply with their international (i) human rights, (ii) labour rights, (iii) gender rights and (iv) environmental obligations.

**Apsana Begum:** [\[2529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department (a) monitors and (b) assesses the extent to which countries participating in the Developing Countries Trading Scheme comply with international (i) human rights, (ii) labour rights, (iii) gender rights and (iv) environmental obligations.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Government is committed to working with international partners and businesses to ensure global supply chains are free from human and labour rights abuses. The UK monitors all countries on the Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) on an ongoing basis for serious and systemic violations of human rights (including gender rights), labour rights and environmental obligations based on international conventions.

The tools to monitor compliance may include reports from international convention bodies, reports produced by international organisations and reporting from the Government's diplomatic network. The criteria the Government may consider include the nature, scale, impact, frequency and pattern of violations.

## ■ Developing Countries Trading Scheme: Bangladesh

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[2521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the human rights situation in Bangladesh in respect of that country's participation in the Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The UK has been deeply saddened by the violence and loss of life in Bangladesh. The interim government has the UK's full support as it works to restore peace and order. The Secretary State for Business and Trade and the Foreign Secretary speak regularly on a range of issues. The UK monitors all countries on the Developing Countries Trading Scheme for serious and systemic violations of human rights, labour rights and environmental obligations. We are monitoring the situation in Bangladesh closely and raising matters regularly with the Government of Bangladesh in London and via our High Commission in Dhaka.

## ■ Products: Safety

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[2945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when he expects to bring forward the Product Safety and Metrology Bill.

**Justin Madders:**

The Product Regulation and Metrology Bill was introduced into the House of Lords on 4 September 2024.

## ■ UK Trade with EU

**Chris Vince:**

[\[900189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to remove barriers to trade with the EU.

**Matthew Patrick:**

[\[900193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to remove barriers to trade with the EU.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Department is working with the European Union and Members States to break down trade barriers. As part of this agenda, we need effective ongoing dialogue with both British businesses and the European Union. As part of this, later today, Minister Thomas and I are hosting a roundtable to gather views from businesses on how the UK-EU trading relationship can be improved. My officials are also engaging with businesses to understand the barriers they face and how this Government can support them to grow and export to the European Union.

**Valerie Vaz:** [900194]

What discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on removing barriers to trade.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Government is committed to improving the UK's trade and investment relationship with the European Union (EU). Only a few days ago I met the German Ambassador, and I recently has the pleasure of meeting with my Italian counterpart. The Secretary of State for Business and Trade has had a range of positive discussions with his counterparts, including the EU Executive Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis and other European ministers. As a Government, we are committed to restarting the UK-EU relationship, so from the Prime Minister down, we have established ongoing and productive engagement with the European Union and Member States.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ 10 Downing Street: Digital Technology

**Alex Burghart:** [3765]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) headcount and (b) budget is of the 10 Downing Street data science team.

**Georgia Gould:**

There were 21 FTE staff in post as of 31 July 2024, with a standing headcount of 25.

The budget for the 2024/25 year is £2.347m. This budget covers headcount, with funding for incidental expenditures coming from a flexible central pot.

### ■ Cabinet Office: Flags

**John Glen:** [2323]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what flags other than the Union flag he plans to fly on 70 Whitehall in the next 12 months.

**Georgia Gould:**

70 Whitehall is a UK government building. The Cabinet Office will therefore follow the flag-flying guidance for all UK government buildings. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/designated-days-for-union-flag-flying>.

### ■ Citizens' Assemblies

**John Glen:** [2320]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on the use of citizens assemblies.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

The government recognises the potential value of citizens' assemblies and other participatory methods as part of a broader toolkit for policy development and public



engagement. However, while citizens' assemblies can be a useful complement to our representative democracy, they are not intended to replace it. The Cabinet Office's Open Policy Making Toolkit, published under the previous Administration, includes guidance on participatory methods, and we continue to assess their effectiveness and impact in various contexts.

## ■ Government Departments: Buildings

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[2634\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 10 of HM Treasury's document entitled Fixing the foundations: Public spending audit 2024-25, published on 29 July 2024, whether he plans to sell the (a) leaseholds and (b) freeholds of (i) the Civil Service Club, (ii) Inn the Park and (iii) Marlborough House.

**Georgia Gould:**

These are not government-owned buildings, so therefore the Cabinet Office does not centrally hold information or data on the freeholds and leaseholds of these buildings.

## ■ King Charles III: Art Works

**John Glen:**

[\[2295\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Cabinet Office press release entitled More public institutions can apply for a portrait of The King, published on 12 May 2024, what the take-up rate of the free official portrait of the King is amongst (a) Church of England churches, (b) job centres, (c) NHS hospitals and (d) universities.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

As is usual practice following accession, an Official Portrait has been taken of His Majesty The King to mark the start of the new Reign, for use in public buildings and for other official purposes. His Majesty's Government is using this portrait for the Official Portrait Scheme, announced by the Deputy Prime Minister at the time in April last year.

His Majesty The King's Portrait Scheme is an ongoing government scheme. We intend to disclose the information requested into the public domain when the scheme is complete and we have the full picture on the volumes requested and delivered and the associated costs, rather than providing provisional data at this stage.

The scheme was open to new applications until 15th August and validation, portrait production and portrait delivery will complete in mid October.

## ■ Political Parties: Donors

**John Glen:**

[\[2872\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what meetings he has had with people who have donated to the Labour Party in the last 12 months since the general election.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

Details of ministers' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK. The most recent publication of transparency data took place on 29th August 2024.

**Politics and Government: Costs****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[2640\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 17 of HM Treasury's document entitled Fixing the foundations: Public spending audit 2024-25, published on 29 July 2024, in what other ways he intends to reduce the cost of politics.

**Georgia Gould:**

As the Chancellor announced on 29 July, the government will review the cost of the political system, which includes eligibility for ministerial severance payments. The Cabinet Office will conduct this review which will take place ahead of the Spending Review.

**CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****Olympic Games and Paralympic Games: Los Angeles and Paris****Mr Clive Betts:**[\[2744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what the budget to fund UK participants at the 2024 Paris (a) Olympic and (b) Paralympic games was from 2020; and what the proposed budget is for UK participants at the 2028 Los Angeles (a) Olympic and (b) Paralympic games.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

UK Sport has invested £385 million of Exchequer and Lottery funding to support our Olympic and Paralympic athletes over the Paris cycle. More detail of awards is set out here [www.uksport.gov.uk/our-work/investing-in-sport/current-funding-awards](http://www.uksport.gov.uk/our-work/investing-in-sport/current-funding-awards).

We are fully committed to multi-year funding for our elite sport system and enabling our athletes to excel on the world stage. This means supporting them financially to match and build on their success in Paris, helping them to deliver at LA 2028.

We will set out further details at the Spending Review.

**DEFENCE****Antiship Missiles****James Cartlidge:**[\[2100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of Sea Venom's certification forecast for 2026.

**Maria Eagle:**

Sea Venom remains on schedule to be delivered in 2026.

■ **Defence****Kevin Bonavia:**[\[2572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department plans to take to help support the defence sector in the (a) East of England and (b) UK.

**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 Government is committed to delivering a new Defence Industrial Strategy, working in partnership with our domestic defence industry across the UK, to support UK innovation and resilience.

■ **Defence: Expenditure****James Cartlidge:**[\[2109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his policy to inform Parliament of deferments to planned expenditures on major programmes within the financial year where they occur.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Government, across all Departments, is currently undertaking a Spending Review and will set out its approach to the House in due course.

**James Cartlidge:**[\[2110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 155 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on (a) infrastructure investment required to support and (b) other aspects of the Defence Nuclear Enterprise.

**James Cartlidge:**[\[2111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2024 to Question 120 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the morale of armed forces personnel.

**James Cartlidge:**[\[2112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 164 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching on the Astute Class submarine programme.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 143 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on AUKUS.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 168 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the Land Environment Tactical Communications and Information Systems programme.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 165 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the development of the Challenger 3 Main Battle Tank.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 163 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on upgrades to the existing fleet of Typhoon fighter jets.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 162 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the delivery of Shadow MK1 fleet.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 160 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the development of heavy uncrewed ground systems.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 159 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the delivery schedule for (a) Type 26 and (b) Type 31 Frigates.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 157 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the

potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the procurement of further tranches of F-35 Lightning jets.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 154 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the delivery of uncrewed systems for the armed forces.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 153 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the procurement of a new multi-role support ship.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 150 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the budget for (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 149 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the budget of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 148 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the Defence Drone Strategy.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 147 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the UK's ability to contribute to the Joint Expeditionary Force.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 146 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on plans for the Global Combat Air Programme's (a) un-crewed and autonomous

collaborative platform elements and (b) related systems-of-systems software and digital development.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 144 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on his Department's expenditure plans for the Global Combat Air Programme core platform.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 142 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on his Department's research and development budget.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 140 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on the procurement of directed energy weapons.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 139 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on the procurement of (a) new deep fires munitions and (b) associated enablers.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 138 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on the procurement of a new mobile fires platform.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 136 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of the Department's timetable for reaching 2.5% GDP of expenditure on the resources available to Defence Equipment and Support.

**James Cartlidge:** [\[2430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 135 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of his Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on economic growth.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[2431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 135 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of his Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on the (a) defence industry and (b) ability of the defence industry to achieve always-on production for (i) artillery shells, (ii) core munitions, (iii) ground-based air defence and (iv) missiles for air and naval use.

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[2432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 135 on Defence: Expenditure, whether the future fiscal event will cover the potential impact of his Department's timetable for reaching expenditure of 2.5% of GDP on defence on funding for enablers relating to replenishment of the munitions stockpile.

**Maria Eagle:**

The pathway to 2.5% will set the overall envelope for Defence spending. Funding for specific programmes is considered as part of the Department's annual budget setting process.

#### ■ **F-35 Aircraft**

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[3745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) industrial and (b) military participation in the F35 programme is not impacted by the decision to ban certain arms exports to Israel.

**Maria Eagle:**

Military and industrial participation in the F35 programme will not be affected by the decision to suspend some exports licenses to Israel.

This Government has an unwavering commitment to the security not just of this country but to our allies around the world. The global F35 programme has a broader strategic role in NATO, our support for Ukraine, and the capability of our allies.

In this context, with a view to ensuring international peace and security, the Government took the decision to exclude exports to the global F35 programme from the suspension decision, except where going direct to Israel.

#### ■ **Future Combat Air System**

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[2105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) Future Combat Air System and (b) Global Combat Air Programme in each financial year from its inception until 2023-24.

**Maria Eagle:**

Since its inception, the UK has invested over £2 billion already in the Future Combat Air System/Global Combat Air Programme and the associated Team Tempest R&D programme.

**James Cartlidge:**[\[2107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the (a) Future Combat Air System and (b) Global Combat Air Programme in the current financial year.

**Maria Eagle:**

The UK has invested around £223 million during this financial year in the Future Combat Air System/Global Combat Air Programme and the associated Team Tempest R&D programme.

**■ Military Aircraft: Helicopters****John Glen:**[\[1248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to renew the contract with the Rotary Wing Command Support Air Transport Helicopter Service.

**Maria Eagle:**

No. The current contract will end in December 2024. To ensure value for money for the taxpayer this contract will not be renewed, and a £40 million budget for the provision of a future contract will be returned to the Ministry of Defence core budget.

**■ Navy****Alex Easton:**[\[2209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to increase the size of the Royal Navy fleet.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Strategic Defence Review will determine the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence, including the Royal Navy, to meet the challenges, threats and opportunities of the twenty-first century, deliverable and affordable within the resources available to Defence within the trajectory to 2.5%. The review will report in the first half of 2025.

**EDUCATION****■ Childcare: High Peak****Jon Pearce:**[\[2171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help increase the availability of childcare in High Peak constituency.



**Stephen Morgan:**

Ensuring that parents are able to access affordable and high-quality childcare is a priority for this government. As an initial step, the department is progressing work to deliver 3,000 new nurseries through upgrading space in primary schools.

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing.

Where local authorities report sufficiency challenges, the department discusses what action the local authority is taking to address those issues and where needed, supports the local authority with any specific requirements through the department's childcare sufficiency support contract.

**■ Children: Mental Health Services****Rachael Maskell:****[2373]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make provision available for the (a) emotional and (b) mental health needs of children transferring from the independent to the state school sector before they transfer.

**Stephen Morgan:**

This government's goal is to achieve better outcomes for all children. Where parents decide to move their child to a new school, local authorities and schools already have processes in place to support new pupils. This government is committed to removing barriers to learning and is taking steps to provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every state school.

**■ Free School Meals: High Peak****Jon Pearce:****[2183]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) primary and (b) secondary school students receive free school meals in High Peak constituency.

**Stephen Morgan:**

As of January 2024, 26%, or 1,725 pupils, of state-funded primary school pupils and 24%, or 1,286 pupils, of state-funded secondary school pupils attending schools in High Peak constituency were eligible for and claiming free school meals. This compares with national rates of 24% of primary school pupils and 24% of secondary school pupils in the whole of England. These figures are from the school census and are published down to school level here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

**■ Private Education: Devon****Steve Darling:****[2579]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of (a) private school pupils in (i) Devon, (ii) Torbay and (iii) Plymouth who will transfer into the state sector in this and each of the next five years and (b) surplus places in state secondary schools in each of those areas in each of those years.

**Stephen Morgan:**

This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy. The impact of this policy is being fully considered. As part of this process, the department is sharing sector insights, including input from school leadership, student perspectives and input from parents and caregivers.

Following scrutiny by the Office for Budget Responsibility, further details of the government's assessment of the expected impact will be published at the Budget in the usual way.

The department will be monitoring demand and capacity using its normal processes and working with local authorities to meet any pressures.

Institute for Fiscal Studies research indicates that the number of pupils who may switch schools as a result of these changes is likely to represent a very small proportion of overall pupil numbers in the state sector. The government expects any displacement to take place over several years, reducing immediate pressures. This research can be found here: <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/how-should-we-interpret-parties-public-spending-pledges-election> and <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/tax-private-school-fees-and-state-school-spending>.

The department cannot be certain of the precise level, if any, of transfer from independent to state sectors additional to the movements between schools, and between the private and state sectors, which happen each year in all parts of the country.

**■ Pupil Exclusions****Jon Pearce:****[2182]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of trends in levels of school exclusions in (a) High Peak constituency, (b) Derbyshire and (c) England.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Every pupil deserves to learn in a safe, calm classroom and the department will always support teachers to make this happen.

Schools can use sanctions as a measure to improve behaviour and in the most serious cases, suspension and permanent exclusion may be necessary to ensure that pupils are protected from disruption and can benefit from the opportunities provided by education.

The statutory Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance is clear that, in all cases, school leaders should consider early intervention strategies to address the underlying causes or any contributing factors towards pupil's disruptive behaviour. This can include where a pupil has special educational needs and disabilities or other unmet needs.

The guidance also makes clear that schools, local authorities and local partners should work together to understand what lies behind local trends. Local leaders should use this to understand, to plan and put in place additional and targeted action based on their own local context. If they identify any gaps, they should act to ensure those who work with children have the training, services and support they need to address them.

The rising number of exclusions presented for the 2022/23 school year, including in Derbyshire, puts into sharp focus that too many pupils are being held back by their background and that the education system is failing to meet the needs of children.

The government is determined to get to grips with the causes of exclusions to ensure it can break down the barriers to opportunities. The department has already committed to providing access to specialist mental health professionals in every school, introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school and ensuring earlier intervention in mainstream schools for pupils with special needs.

#### ■ Schools: Non-teaching Staff

**Laurence Turner:**

[R] [\[3910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to section 8.1.1 of her Department's publication entitled School workforce census guide 2023: Guide for schools including academies within a Multi Academy Trust, published in July 2023, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of collecting information on school support staff vacancies through the school workforce census.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

School support staff play a vital role in children's education and development. The department values and recognises the professionalism of the entire school workforce and will address recruitment and retention challenges by reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB).

The SSSNB will be tasked with establishing a national terms and conditions handbook, training, career progression routes and fair pay rates for support staff. This reform will ensure that schools can recruit and retain the staff needed to deliver high quality, inclusive education.

The department will consider the merits of collecting information on school support staff vacancies through the school workforce census during the setup of the SSSNB.

**■ Social Workers: Medical Examinations**

**Helen Hayes:** [\[3735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate has she made of the current (a) average time and (b) maximum times for Social Work England to conclude fitness to practice cases.

**Helen Hayes:** [\[3736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps is she taking to reduce the average time for Social Work England to conclude fitness to practice cases.

**Helen Hayes:** [\[3737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate has she made of the number of social workers unable to practice whilst awaiting the conclusion of fitness to practice proceedings by Social Work England.

**Janet Daby:**

As set out in Social Work England's board report dated 19 July 2024, the current median time to conclude a fitness to practise case is 128 weeks and the maximum time is 319 weeks.

The department and Social Work England have taken several steps to reduce processing times including making changes to legislation in 2022 for operational efficiencies and providing additional funds of £7.1 million to clear the backlog of cases inherited from the previous regulator. Further activities being undertaken by Social Work England are set out in its annual business plan and in reports to Social Work England's board.

As at 31 August 2024, 113 Social workers are currently subject to an interim suspension order and unable to practise whilst awaiting the conclusion of their fitness to practise case.

**■ Special Educational Needs: Costs**

**Laurence Turner:** [\[3909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether local authorities are required to monitor the average cost of delivering Education, Health, and Care Plans within their area.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Local authorities are not required to monitor the average cost of delivering education, health, and care (EHC) plans within their area. Local authorities are required to submit data on education spending, including spending relating to special educational needs and disabilities, as part of their annual returns to the department. But these returns do not cover the average cost of EHC plans.

**ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Ian Lavery:**[\[900188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to compensate people affected by the surplus sharing agreement with the Mineworkers Pension Scheme.

**Sarah Jones:**

Our Manifesto committed to reviewing the surplus sharing arrangements and work is already underway to initiate that process. We are committed to transferring the Investment Reserve and ending the injustice of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme.

■ **District Heating****Tracy Gilbert:**[\[2198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help consumers of district heating schemes.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Department is taking action to improve outcomes for heat network consumers, so that they receive similar levels of protection as gas and electricity consumers. The Heat Network Market Framework will address issues faced by consumers, such as excessive pricing and poor standards. The regulations will:

- Save money for consumers through price regulation and improved network quality.
- Protect vulnerable consumers by setting out clear standards of conduct.
- Give more control to consumers by setting up clear complaint procedures.
- Increase transparency for consumers and investors through improved data collection.

Work is underway to lay initial regulations later this year and my officials are preparing to consult on additional policy proposals this winter to further support consumers.

■ **District Heating: Fuel Poverty****Melanie Onn:**[\[2364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of district heating schemes on levels of energy poverty.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

As the sector has never been regulated, the Department has not collected pricing data for consumers on communal or district heat networks. However, we are bringing in regulation to appoint Ofgem as the heat network regulator and giving them powers to monitor the market and intervene on high heat prices. The Department is also

exploring options to protect vulnerable consumers in the upcoming heat network consumer protection consultation. As heat networks can efficiently use waste sources of heat, they are well placed to cut bills, as well as to reduce emissions, and our reliance on imported fossil fuels. In urban areas, heat networks are often the lowest cost low carbon heating option for consumers.

## ■ Energy: Standing Charges

**Claire Coutinho:** [\[2534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to reduce the standing charge on household energy bills.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government has worked constructively with the regulator on the issue of standing charges, and we are committed to lowering the cost of them. Ofgem's recently published discussion paper sets out the options for how standing charges could be reduced, including by moving supplier operational costs off standing charges onto the unit rate, increasing the variety of tariffs available for consumer in the market, and in the longer term, reviewing how system costs are allocated. We will continue to support Ofgem in this work and ensure that standing charges are reduced.

## ■ Great British Energy

**Clive Lewis:** [\[2096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will publish all written representations made by the Crown Estate on proposals for Great British Energy.

**Michael Shanks:**

On 25<sup>th</sup> July Government published the Great British Energy Founding Statement, which outlined how the partnership between Great British Energy and The Crown Estate will bring forward and derisk new offshore wind developments, stimulate new technologies in new clean energy sectors and invest in ports and clean energy supply chains. We will set out further detail in due course, as the partnership develops.

## ■ Heat Batteries

**Alex Mayer:** [\[2620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using heat batteries for households who experience challenges in installing a heat pump.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

Heat batteries are one of the most promising alternative electric heating technologies, because they utilise time of use tariffs, do not require outside space and are cheaper to install than heat pumps in some circumstance. However, heat batteries are also less efficient than heat pumps and will therefore use more energy to meet the same

heating demand. This can add to the burden on the electricity network, as well as resulting in higher bills for property owners. The Government will continue to make further assessments of heat batteries as the supporting evidence base develops.

#### ■ **Hitachi: Wylfa Power Station**

**Llinos Medi:** [\[3866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, on what date the purchase of the Wylfa nuclear site from Hitachi was completed.

**Michael Shanks:**

The transaction for Great British Nuclear to purchase land at Wylfa in Ynys Mon/Anglesey from Hitachi was agreed in March 2024 and completed in June 2024.

**Llinos Medi:** [\[3867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much the UK Government paid Hitachi for the purchase of the Wylfa nuclear site.

**Michael Shanks:**

Great British Nuclear paid £160m excluding taxes for the Wylfa and Oldbury sites.

#### ■ **Hydrogen: Holyhead**

**Llinos Medi:** [\[3868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to provide £4.8 million to support the development of the Holyhead Hydrogen Hub.

**Sarah Jones:**

Funding for the Holyhead Hydrogen Hub was first announced in 2021 to allow the project to proceed subject to affordability and value for money. We have been working closely with the project consortium, alongside Welsh Government and Ambition North Wales, as the project has developed.

#### ■ **Refineries: North Sea**

**Joy Morrissey:** [\[3779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he consulted (a) Unite the Union, (b) GMB and (c) other trade unions on the potential closure of oil and gas refineries in the North Sea.

**Michael Shanks:**

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

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 business and trade unions.

**■ Wind Power****Jim Shannon:** [\[2077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to take steps to provide incentives to local communities for support for onshore wind projects in their areas.

**Michael Shanks:**

Communities should benefit from hosting local renewable energy infrastructure and the Government will shortly publish updated community benefits guidance for onshore wind in England. The devolved administrations have their own policies regarding community benefits.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Fish: Export Health Certificates****Steve Darling:** [\[3341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he is taking steps to reduce the cost of export health certificates for fish.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The cost of Export Health Certificates (EHCs) for fish are set at a commercial rate by private certifiers or, where appropriate by certifiers in local authorities who operate on a cost recovery basis. We will tackle barriers by seeking to negotiate a veterinary / Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement with the European Union to prevent unnecessary border checks and costs for traders.

**■ Flood Control: Shrewsbury****Julia Buckley:** [\[3495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to increase the flood resilience of the river Severn in the Shrewsbury area.

**Emma Hardy:**

Protecting communities around the country from flooding and coastal erosion is one of the new Secretary of State's five core priorities.

This Government will improve resilience and preparation across central government, local authorities, local communities and emergency services to better protect communities across the UK. We will launch a new Flood Resilience Taskforce to turbocharge the delivery of new flood defences, drainage systems and natural flood management schemes, which will ensure we're prepared for the future and help grow our economy.

We will review the current 6-year capital programme (2021-2027) to ensure flood risk management is fit for the challenges we face now and in the future.



The programme is currently forecast to invest over £150 million across the English Severn and Wye Catchment, with almost £30 million of this to be invested in Shropshire, better protecting almost 450 homes and businesses there.

The Environment Agency also maintains existing flood risk management assets in Shrewsbury which better protect 154 properties from flooding, and provides a free Flood Warning Service to residents in the constituency.

## ■ **Swimming: Coastal Areas**

**Steve Darling:**

[\[2583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help improve the quality of bathing water around Britain's shores.

**Emma Hardy:**

During the bathing water season, the Environment Agency (EA) will carry out a sampling programme at the 451 designated bathing water sites in England to provide robust monitoring of water quality. The EA will also have action plans with clear objectives for every designated bathing water that is classified 'poor' or is at risk of being so.

Targeted action and partnership working can have a significant positive impact on bathing water quality and the EA will work with partners, water companies and local communities to improve and protect water quality.

The Water (Special Measures) Bill also delivers on our manifesto commitment to put water companies under tough special measures by strengthening regulation and begin the work of cleaning up our rivers, lakes, bathing waters and seas.

## ■ **Water Companies: Sanctions**

**Jon Pearce:**

[\[2606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department are taking to sanction companies that pollute waterways with sewage.

**Emma Hardy:**

In the first week of Government, the Secretary of State met with water company bosses, 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 also refer the hon. Member to the Written Statement made by the Secretary of State on 18 July, [HCWS3](#).

## ■ Water: Standards

**Steve Darling:** [\[2585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure water quality monitoring data is published all year round.

**Emma Hardy:**

The Environment Act places monitoring duties on the water industry to improve transparency and reduce harm from sewage discharges. As outlined in Section 82, the Continuous Water Quality Monitoring programme will require water companies to continuously measure the quality of water upstream and downstream of their storm overflows and sewage disposal works.

In addition, the Government's Water (Special Measures) Bill will require independent event duration monitoring of all sewage outlets, to support greater scrutiny of water company activity.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Bangladesh: Demonstrations

**Apsana Begum:** [\[2514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will have discussions with his Bangladeshi counterpart on releasing information on student protests.

**Apsana Begum:** [\[2517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the (a) arrests and (b) detention of (i) student leaders and (ii) protest participants in Bangladesh.

**Apsana Begum:** [\[2526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Bangladeshi counterpart on releasing information on student protests.

**Apsana Begum:** [\[2527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the (a) arrests and (b) detention of (i) student leaders and (ii) protest participants in Bangladesh.

**Catherine West:**

The Foreign Secretary and I have raised concerns publicly and privately about the recent unprecedented levels of violence, and tragic loss of life in Bangladesh. In July, I spoke to the Bangladesh High Commissioner to reiterate our concerns about the events unfolding in Bangladesh. In our public statements, we urged for an end to the violence and a de-escalation of the situation to prevent further loss of life. We were clear that a full and independent UN-led investigation into recent events was important. The UK Government welcomed the appointment of the Interim Government in Bangladesh, and it has the UK's support as it works to restore peace and order as well as ensure accountability.

**■ Bangladesh: Developing Countries Trading Scheme****Apsana Begum:**[\[2519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the Developing Countries Trading Scheme and human rights in Bangladesh.

**Catherine West:**

The UK has been deeply saddened by the violence and loss of life in Bangladesh. The interim government has the UK's full support as it works to restore peace and order. The Foreign Secretary and the Secretary State for Business and Trade speak regularly on a range of issues. The UK monitors all countries on the Developing Countries Trading Scheme for serious and systemic violations of human rights, labour rights and environmental obligations. We are monitoring the situation in Bangladesh closely and raising matters regularly with the Government of Bangladesh in London and via our High Commission in Dhaka.

**■ Bangladesh: Development Aid****Apsana Begum:**[\[2515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK has provided training to the (a) Bangladeshi police, (b) Bangladeshi military and (c) Rapid Action Battalion.

**Catherine West:**

UK ministers expressed concern at the violence used by the police against largely peaceful protests in July 2024. The UK Government welcomed the appointment of the interim government in Bangladesh, led by Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus. The interim government has the UK's support as it works to restore peace and order. The UK has provided short term training to sections of the police in Bangladesh. The UK has provided professional military education to Bangladesh military officers as part of our defence relationship. The UK does not currently provide training to the Rapid Action Battalion.

**■ Bangladesh: Foreign Relations**

**Paula Barker:** [\[3199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the interim government in Bangladesh.

**Catherine West:**

The UK Government welcomes the appointment of the Interim Government in Bangladesh, led by Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus. The Interim Government in Bangladesh has the UK's full support as it works to restore peace and order including investigating alleged human rights violations and ensuring accountability. The British High Commissioner in Dhaka met with the Chief Adviser and Adviser for Foreign Affairs of the Interim Government in August. The British High Commission continue to engage with the Interim Government in Bangladesh on key priorities.

**■ Bangladesh: Human Rights**

**Apsana Begum:** [\[2513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department supports an (a) impartial, (b) independent and (c) transparent investigation into alleged human rights violations in Bangladesh.

**Apsana Begum:** [\[2516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Bangladeshi counterparts on the (a) student protests and (b) human rights situation in that country; and if he will make a statement.

**Apsana Begum:** [\[2518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Bangladeshi counterpart on reports of (a) violence towards protestors, (b) unlawful killings, (c) torture, (d) the shutting down of the internet and mobile services and (e) other forms of repression in that country.

**Catherine West:**

I spoke to the Bangladesh High Commissioner on 19 and 23 July to reiterate my concerns about the events unfolding in Bangladesh. In July and August, UK Government issued statements expressing concern about the situation in Bangladesh, calling for all sides to work together to end the violence and for internet access and communications services to be quickly restored. We were clear that a full and independent UN-led investigation into recent events was important. The Interim Government in Bangladesh has the UK's full support as it works to restore peace and order including investigating alleged human rights violations and ensuring accountability.

**■ Gaza: Israel****Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[2257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to support international partners with ceasefire discussions on Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign Secretary and I have stressed the need for an immediate ceasefire in our conversations with Israeli, Arab and regional leaders. The Foreign Secretary reiterated this message during visits to the region on 14-15 July and 31 July - 1 August and during his recent joint visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories with his French counterpart on 16 August. The Prime Minister has also joined international leaders in this call.

There has been a renewed push for a diplomatic solution and the Foreign Secretary has joined statements by the G7, and with the United States, France, Germany, and Italy, reinforcing the need for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the discussions to bring it about. Such a deal is absolutely critical. The UK welcomes the tireless mediation efforts of our partners in Qatar, Egypt and the United States, towards an agreement on a ceasefire and the release of hostages.

**■ Government Hospitality: Wines****John Glen:**[\[2067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Prime Minister plans to use the Government Wine Cellar for functions at 10 Downing Street.

**Catherine West:**

Decisions on the use of the Government Wine Cellar for official functions are made based on the requirements of each individual event.

**■ Israel: Palestinians****Mr Clive Betts:**[\[2742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart about recent Israeli military activity in the West Bank.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK is concerned by the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) ongoing military operation in the occupied West Bank. We recognise Israel's need to defend itself against security threats, but we are very worried by the methods Israel has employed and by reports of civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. We continue to call on Israeli authorities to exercise restraint, adhere to international law, and clamp down on the actions of those who seek to inflame tensions.

## ■ Israeli Settlements

**Andy Slaughter:** [\[2778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to update the guidance by his Department entitled Overseas Business Risk: Israel section, published on 16 June 2023, to include (a) reference to the publication and (b) an assessment of the implications of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice entitled Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, published on 19 July 2024.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The UK has received the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) Advisory Opinion on the 'Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem'. The UK is considering the Opinion carefully before responding. The UK respects the independence of the ICJ.

## ■ Myanmar: Christianity

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[2038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support persecuted Christians in Myanmar.

**Catherine West:**

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion of belief for all communities in Myanmar. We continue to support religious minorities, including Christians, and raise our concerns over discrimination against them in international fora. In April, we co-sponsored a UN Human Rights Council resolution on Myanmar which stressed the need to address the root causes of human rights violations and abuses against ethnic and religious minority groups. We are providing support to the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar and established the Myanmar Witness programme to collect evidence of human rights violations, including identity-based violence.

## ■ Myanmar: Health Services

**Dr Beccy Cooper:** [\[2669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of attacks against health (a) workers and (b) facilities in Myanmar.

**Catherine West:**

The UK has repeatedly condemned the Myanmar military's attacks against health workers and health facilities in public statements and at multilateral fora, including the UN Security Council. We are promoting accountability by providing funding to the UN's Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar and to the Myanmar Witness project, which documents human rights abuses, including attacks on health workers and facilities, for use in future prosecution. We have also integrated digital

approaches into our healthcare programming, such as providing over 70,000 tele-medicine consultations, to enable conflict-affected communities access to qualified health workers.

## ■ UNRWA

**Neil Coyle:** [\[2915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with UNWRA since the publication of the Final Report of the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, published on 20 April 2024 on their vetting procedures.

**Neil Coyle:** [\[2916\]](#)

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 discussions he has had with representatives of UNRWA on the management reforms recommended in the Final Report of the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, published on 20 April 2024, that will be supported by UK funding.

**Neil Coyle:** [\[2917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his international counterparts in countries that provide donations to UNRWA on the reforms recommended in the Final Report of the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, published on 20 April 2024.

**Neil Coyle:** [\[2918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with representatives of UNRWA on the management reforms it has implemented as a result of the Final Report of the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, published on 20 April 2024.

### **Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign Secretary and Minister Dodds spoke to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Commissioner General, Philippe Lazzarini, in July. They discussed UNRWA's progress in implementing the recommendations from the Final Report of the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality led by Catherine Colonna. The FCDO speaks regularly to UNRWA and other international donors on UNRWA management reforms, including at their bi-annual Advisory Commission meeting that met in June.

Catherine Colonna's report found the existing UNRWA neutrality framework "robust", but neutrality issues persisted. UNRWA committed to implementing all the review's

recommendations. The Foreign Secretary was subsequently reassured that UNRWA is committed to the highest standards of neutrality. £1 million of the UK's £21 million support to UNRWA this financial year will support implementation of these reforms.

#### ■ USA: Cuba

**Paula Barker:** [\[2151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the US economic embargo on Cuba on (a) the economy of Cuba and (b) trade between the UK and Cuba.

**Catherine West:**

The UK has consistently voted in support of the annual United Nations General Assembly Resolution calling for an end to the US embargo against Cuba. The embargo impedes the economic development of the country. Titles III and IV of the Helms Burton Act prevent and restrict British companies (among others) from conducting legitimate and lawful business in Cuba.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### ■ Breast Cancer: Aldershot

**Alex Baker:** [\[3511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase uptake of breast cancer screening in Aldershot constituency.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

In Aldershot at a local level, the team will soon start trialling an animated video to promote breast screening. This has been developed in partnership with Imperial College London.

On a national level, NHS England has developed an improvement plan in collaboration with key stakeholders to support local and regional uptake, which includes: expanding access and reducing inequalities by increasing the use of evidence based and evaluated interventions, focusing on low uptake areas and groups; improved data and analytics by ensuring we have the availability of population level data to show insights into uptake and support services, to deliver targeted initiatives; IT developments to continue development of the breast screening IT systems, as part of the Digital Transformation of Screening programme, and by starting a programme of work to enable people to book appointments through the NHS App; contracting and service oversight, by strengthening contracting mechanisms and performance management to monitor impact and benefits; and communication, by ensuring the programme has appropriate inclusive and accessible communication mechanisms and materials.



## ■ Cancer: Health Services

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[3193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has had discussions with Leukaemia UK on publication of a cancer strategy.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department has not had discussions with Leukaemia UK regarding the publication of a cancer strategy. The NHS Long Term Plan, published in January 2019, sets out the National Health Service's current key ambitions on cancer. The plan sets out the NHS ambition to increase the number of cancers diagnosed at stages 1 and 2 to 75%, to increase the number of people surviving cancer for five years by 55,000 as a result.

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

## ■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

**Kim Leadbeater:**

[\[3274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the evidential basis is for not including household members of people who are clinically vulnerable within the eligibility criteria for covid-19 booster vaccinations.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

As with all United Kingdom vaccination programmes, the decision of which groups are eligible for a particular part of the programme is made following careful consideration of the groups most at risk of illness, severe illness, or death, as a consequence of infection.

As currently available COVID-19 vaccines provide limited protection against transmission and mild or asymptomatic disease, the focus of the programme is on offering vaccination to those most likely to directly benefit, particularly those with underlying health conditions that increase their risk of hospitalisation following infection.

The benefit of vaccinating an individual to reduce the risk of severe disease in other people is much less evident now compared with previous years. For this reason, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation did not advise an offer of COVID-19 vaccinations in autumn 2024 for household contacts of people with immunosuppression.

## ■ Defibrillators

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[2731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) monitor and (b) assess provision gaps for open access defibrillators.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government is committed to improving access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in public spaces and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. The Department appointed Smarter Society to oversee the administration of a £1 million grant, and receives regular reports about the implementation of the grant process, including the distribution of AEDs.

We have made a further £500,000 available to fulfil existing applications to the Department's Community AED Fund, launched in September 2023. The criteria specified for the original grant continue to apply and will go to applications for AEDs in areas where there is the greatest need. This funding will go to those applications for AEDs which are in areas of high footfall, hot spots for cardiac arrest, and in areas that already have low access to AEDs.

**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[2770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to provide a sufficient number of public defibrillators to ensure that one is always accessible within five minutes of a cardiac arrest.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Government is committed to improving access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in public spaces and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. We have made a further £500,000 available to fulfil existing applications to the Department's Community AED Fund, launched in September 2023. The criteria specified for the original £1 million grant continues to apply, and this additional funding will go to those applications for AEDs where there is greatest need, including in areas of high footfall, hot spots for cardiac arrest, and areas that already have low access to AEDs.

**Alex Mayer:**[\[3882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to defibrillators in (a) Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard constituency, (b) Central Bedfordshire and (c) the UK.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

No assessment has been made on the adequacy of access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in the Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard constituency, Central Bedfordshire, or the United Kingdom as a whole. However, the Government is committed to improving access to AEDs in public spaces, and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. We have made a further £500,000 available to fulfil existing applications to the Department's Community AED Fund, launched in September 2023. The criteria specified for the original grant continues to apply and will go to applications for AEDs in areas where there is the greatest need, including in areas of high footfall, hot spots for cardiac arrest, and areas that already have low access to AEDs.

## ■ Dental Services

**Saqib Bhatti:**

[\[3818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's policy paper entitled Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry, published on 7 February 2024, whether he plans to continue the Smile for Life programme.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We are currently reviewing the policy paper, including proposals for a Smile for Life programme, and what elements can be taken forward effectively. We will implement our Dental Rescue Plan and prioritise initiatives that will see the biggest impact on access to National Health Service dental care.

## ■ Dental Services: Finance

**Saqib Bhatti:**

[\[3817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to ringfence dentistry budgets within the budgets of integrated care boards.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

NHS England has issued guidance on the ringfencing of dental budgets for 2024/25 and will be reviewing for the next financial year. Ringfencing funding for future years will be reviewed as part of the Planning Guidance process. The guidance is available at the following link:

[https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/PRN00888\\_Revenue-finance-and-contracting-guidance-for-2024-25\\_270324.pdf](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/PRN00888_Revenue-finance-and-contracting-guidance-for-2024-25_270324.pdf)

To ensure compliance against this requirement, and to strengthen oversight of funding that is used to deliver access to National Health Service dental care, NHS England will meet with and collect monthly returns from all integrated care boards to establish current and planned spend against the ringfenced dental allocations budget.

## ■ Dental Services: Graduates

**Saqib Bhatti:**

[\[3816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the consultation entitled Proposal for a tie-in to NHS dentistry for graduate dentists which closed on 18 July 2024.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

We are considering the responses received to the consultation and our position on this proposal will be set out in due course. The Government is determined to rebuild National Health Service dentistry and strengthening the workforce is key to our ambitions.

**■ Dentistry: Migrant Workers****Saqib Bhatti:**[\[3182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the consultation on the provisional registration for overseas-qualified dentists.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 4 September 2024]:* No date has been set. The Government is determined to rebuild National Health Service dentistry, and strengthening the workforce is key to our ambitions. Dentists that meet our high standards should be able to enter the workforce efficiently, and we are exploring the best ways to achieve this, including whether there is merit to the introduction of a provisional registration status for overseas-qualified dentists.

**■ Drugs: Scotland****Blair McDougall:**[\[3375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with the Scottish Government to (a) improve drug addiction treatments and (b) reduce drug-related deaths.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

As health is a devolved matter, each administration of the United Kingdom takes its own decisions on the provision of treatment and other action to address drug related deaths. Nonetheless, it is important that the four nations work together and share learning to tackle the health harms that drugs pose. The Department has been working closely with the Scottish Government and the other devolved administrations to expand access to naloxone, a life-saving medicine that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. The Government laid UK-wide 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 make it easier for naloxone to 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.

We will continue to work together with the Scottish Government and agencies such as Public Health Scotland, to monitor emerging threats posed by drugs, share learning between nations, and prevent drug related deaths across the UK.

**■ Food and Cosmetics: Pollutants****Esther McVey:**[\[2887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential risk of titanium dioxide in (a) food and (b) cosmetics.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) and the Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food,

Consumer Products and the Environment have assessed the safety of titanium dioxide. The COT has concluded that it is unlikely that there would be a risk to health from current United Kingdom dietary exposures of E 171 titanium dioxide.

## ■ Food: Advertising

**Dame Caroline Dinéage:** [\[2855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a timetable for the introduction of secondary legislation for further advertising restrictions (a) on TV and (b) online for less healthy food products.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

As set out in the King's Speech, in this parliamentary session, we will bring forward the necessary final guidance and secondary legislation to restrict advertisements of less healthy food and drink products before 9:00pm on television, and all paid-for advertising of these products online, to ensure the legislation comes into force as planned by 1 October 2025.

## ■ General Practitioners: Finance

**Saqib Bhatti:** [\[3178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential value for money of providing financial incentives for GPs to deliver continuity of care.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 4 September 2024]:* While an official assessment has not been made, the Government has committed to bringing back the family doctor for those who would benefit from seeing the same clinician regularly, for example those living with chronic illness. Improved continuity of care with the same general practitioner (GP) is associated with better health outcomes, fewer GP appointments over time, and fewer accident and emergency attendances. This will be achieved by incentivising GPs to see the same patients, and we will work with the profession and engage with stakeholders to inform how this is delivered.

Delivering our other commitments relating to GPs will also support improvements in the provision of continuity of care. For instance: building capacity in practices by training thousands more GPs; guaranteeing face-to-face appointments for all those who want one; delivering a modern appointment booking system; and shifting resources to primary and community care services over time.

**Saqib Bhatti:** [\[3180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, at what proportion of NHS spending he plans to set funding for GPs.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

*[Holding answer 4 September 2024]:* We greatly value the critical role general practitioners (GPs) play, and we are determined to address the issues they face by

shifting the focus of the National Health Service beyond hospitals and into the community. Under the previous government, primary care and GPs have been receiving a smaller proportion of NHS resources, and we're committed to reversing that. Departmental budgets for 2025/26 will be confirmed at my Rt hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Budget, on 30 October 2024.

## ■ Health: Policy

**Dr Beccy Cooper:**

[\[3619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to use indicators of health other than Body Mass Index to inform public health (a) priorities, (b) decisions and (c) strategies.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

One of the Government's five missions is to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future. The Health Mission has an overall objective to reduce the amount of time spent in ill-health, tackle health inequalities, and drive economic growth.

As part of this, we'll be taking ambitious steps to improve the nation's health, so that we see improvement across a range of public health indicators, including obesity. Further details will be set out in due course.

## ■ Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board: Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

**Mr Luke Charters:**

[\[3889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department are taking to support (a) the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and (b) people diagnosed with myalgic encephalomyelitis.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

NHS England is responsible for allocating funding to integrated care boards (ICBs), including the Humber and North Yorkshire ICB, which are in turn responsible for commissioning specialist myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), services that meet the needs of their population, subject to local prioritisation and funding.

The process of commissioning services should take into account best practice guidance, such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidance on ME/CFS diagnosis and management, published in October 2021. The NICE guidelines provide recommendation on principles of care for people with severe ME/CFS, including hospital care, and adapting a multidisciplinary approach involving access to a range of health and social care professionals based on needs.

The Department has funded the £3.2 million DecodeME study with the Medical Research Council to understand the causes and consequences of, and find treatments for, ME/CFS. This study aims to understand if there is a genetic component to the condition and, in doing so, increase our understanding of ME/CFS to support the development of diagnostic tests and targeted treatments.

A public consultation on the interim delivery plan for ME/CFS was run in 2023, and it is a priority of ours to publish the response to this consultation. Departmental officials are in the process of finalising a report summarising the responses. The consultation responses, alongside continued stakeholder engagement, will inform the development of the final delivery plan, which we aim to publish in the winter of 2024/25. The plan will focus on boosting research, improving attitudes and education, and bettering the lives of people with this debilitating disease.

## ■ Mpxv: Disease Control

**Wendy Morton:**

[2909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure pandemic preparedness in the context of the mpox outbreak in Africa.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will continue to keep the global situation and our domestic preparations under close review, and ministers across the Government are working together to coordinate our response.

The UKHSA is engaged with our international partners, including the World Health Organisation, European, American, and African centres for disease control and prevention and national public health agencies, ensuring we receive updates about international cases in a timely fashion.

The Government holds a stock of vaccines to provide vaccinations to protect high-risk individuals during outbreaks. The Government will make further decisions on vaccine procurement as the situation evolves.

The risk to the United Kingdom's population of being exposed to Mpox clade I is currently considered low. However, planning is underway to prepare for any cases that we might see in the UK. This includes ensuring that clinicians are aware and able to recognise cases promptly, that rapid testing is available, and that protocols are developed for the safe clinical care of people who have the infection and to prevent onward transmission.

**Adrian Ramsay:**

[3631]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking in response to the declaration by the WHO of Mpox as a public health emergency of international concern under the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR).

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will continue to keep the global situation and our domestic preparations under close review, and ministers across the Government are working together to coordinate our response.

The UKHSA is engaged with our international partners, including the World Health Organisation, European, American, and African centres for disease control and prevention and national public health agencies, ensuring we receive updates about international cases in a timely fashion.

The Government holds a stock of vaccines to provide vaccinations to protect high-risk individuals during outbreaks. The Government will make further decisions on vaccine procurement as the situation evolves.

The risk to the United Kingdom's population of being exposed to Mpox clade I is currently considered low. However, planning is underway to prepare for any cases that we might see in the UK. This includes ensuring that clinicians are aware and able to recognise cases promptly, that rapid testing is available, and that protocols are developed for the safe clinical care of people who have the infection and to prevent onward transmission.

### ■ **Mpox: Medical Treatments**

**Adrian Ramsay:**

[\[3632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign Commonwealth and Development on the steps required to help ensure equitable global access to (a) vaccines and (b) antivirals which have been effective against Mpox.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The United Kingdom is the largest flexible donor to the World Health Organisation (WHO) globally, helping the WHO allocate resources to where they are needed most, including responding to health emergencies such as Mpox. We are also providing £3 million to the WHO Regional Office for Africa, for health emergency response.

The UK is also the second biggest donor to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, providing £1.65 billion over the 2021 to 2025 period. Gavi works with governments to develop vaccine strategies, and will be critical to supporting a sustainable vaccine response. The UK also works with partners, such as the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, to support research and development for vaccines, treatments, and tests.

On the 21 August 2024 Lord Collins, The Minister for Africa and the United Nations, announced over £3 million of UK funding to partner with UNICEF in order to bolster efforts to tackle Mpox and cholera outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, helping to prevent the further spread of Mpox to neighbouring countries

### ■ **Neurology: Employment**

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[2732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on supporting employment opportunities for people with functional neurological disorders.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Long-term sickness continues to be the most common reason for economic inactivity among the working age population. We know that appropriate work is generally good for health and wellbeing. We want everyone to get work and get on in work, wherever they are and wherever they live. We want people to avoid poverty, and for this to



happen we must ensure that disabled people and people with health conditions can work and save for as long as they wish and are able to.

Disabled people and people with health conditions are a diverse group so access to the right work and health support, in the right place, at the right time, is key.

The Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Health and Social Care are committed to supporting disabled people and people with long-term health conditions, including functional neurological disorders (FND), and have a range of support available so individuals can stay in work and get back into work, including those that join up employment and health systems.

Measures include joining up health and employment support around the individual through Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care, as well as support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisors in Jobcentres and Access to Work grants. We also support the role employers play in increasing employment opportunities and supporting disabled people and people with health conditions to be part of the workforce, including through increasing access to Occupational Health, a digital information service for employers and the Disability Confident scheme. The information service is available at the following link:

<https://www.support-with-employee-health-and-disability.dwp.gov.uk/support-with-employee-health-and-disability>

As part of our Get Britain Working plan, 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.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines on FND state that symptoms of FND include recurrent dizziness, limb or facial weakness, numbness and tingling, difficulties with memory and concentration. Severity of symptoms also fluctuates and increases during times of stress. It is, therefore, important that employers provide appropriate adjustments for people with neurological conditions, including FND, to better support them in the workplace.

The two Departments will work together to support people with long-term conditions, including FND, back into work.

## ■ **Obesity: Children**

**Dr Beccy Cooper:**

**[3618]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of childhood obesity on inequalities in health outcomes between (a) deprived communities and (b) less deprived communities.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) collects data on children aged four to five years old, who would be in reception, and 10 to 11 years old, who would

be in year 6. It provides detailed data on childhood obesity by age, sex, deprivation, and ethnicity, as well as geographic analyses.

NCMP data for 2022/23 shows that, for children living in the most deprived areas, obesity prevalence was twice as high compared with those living in the least deprived areas in both reception and year 6.

For children in reception, the data for 2022/23 shows a gap of 6.6% for obesity prevalence between the most and least deprived areas. This is the smallest disparity gap seen since 2014/15, and has been driven by a greater drop in obesity prevalence in the most deprived areas, which is at its lowest level since 2015/16. For children in year 6, the gap in obesity prevalence between the most and least deprived areas in 2022/23 has reduced to 17.1%, but is still much larger than that seen in pre-pandemic years.

A growing number of children living with obesity are developing health conditions, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, bone and joint problems, tooth decay, and type 2 diabetes.

Further health outcomes associated with obesity occur in adulthood. Approximately 80% of adolescents living with obesity will continue to live with excess weight as adults, so it is important to create an environment which helps children maintain a healthy weight.

Where a child lives therefore influences their weight status and health outcomes. There are large and persistent disparities between the most and least deprived communities of England.

## ■ Parkinson's Disease: Newcastle-under-Lyme

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[3452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to help ensure that people with Parkinson's in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency receive (a) an early diagnosis and (b) swift treatment.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

NHS England's RightCare toolkit and Getting It Right First Time programme aim to improve care for people with Parkinson's disease by reducing variation and delivering care more equitably across the country.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidance, Parkinson's disease: Diagnosis and management in primary and secondary care, updated in 2017, sets out best practice for clinicians in the identification and treatment of Parkinson's, in line with the latest available evidence. The guidance states that if Parkinson's is suspected, people should be referred quickly and untreated to a specialist with expertise in the differential diagnosis of this condition.

There are 27 specialised neurological treatment centres across the National Health Service in England, with the nearest to Newcastle-under-Lyme being in the University Hospitals of North Midlands, which provide access to neurological multidisciplinary

teams to ensure that patients with Parkinson's can receive specialised treatment and support, according to their needs.

We expect integrated care boards (ICBs) and NHS trusts to have due regard to relevant NICE guidelines. It is the responsibility of the ICBs, including the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB which covers Newcastle-under-Lyme, to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, in line with these NICE guidelines, including diagnosis and treatment.

## ■ Processed Food

**Dr Beccy Cooper:**

**[3616]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce consumption of ultra-processed foods.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

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. We face an obesity crisis, and we will take action to tackle it head on, easing the strain on our National Health Service and creating the healthiest generation of children ever.

There is no universally agreed definition of ultra-processed foods (UPF), although NOVA is the most widely used classification system. NOVA categorises foods by how processed they are, rather than their nutritional composition.

In July 2023, the UK Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) published a position statement on processed foods and health, and concluded that observed associations between UPF and health are concerning, but it is unclear whether these foods are inherently unhealthy due to processing or due to their nutritional content. Given the SACN's concerns, they added the topic of processed foods and health to their watching brief and will consider it at their next horizon scan meeting in October 2024.

Government dietary advice, based on recommendations from the SACN, and as depicted within the Eatwell Guide, already shows that many foods that would be classified as ultra-processed are not part of a healthy, balanced diet as they are high in calories, saturated fat, salt, or sugar (HFSS). The Government's advice on healthy eating, including the Eatwell Guide's principles, are communicated through the NHS.UK website and the Government's social marketing campaigns such as Better Health, Healthier Families, and Start for Life.

As UPFs tend to be HFSS, they are also likely to be the focus of policies to reduce consumption of HFSS foods, including the regulations being brought forward to ban junk food advertising to children and stopping the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to 16-year-olds.

**■ Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors: Sexual Dysfunction****Ian Lavery:** [\[2901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what research his Department is undertaking on permanent antidepressant induced sexual dysfunction.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR has funded previous studies focused on the effects of antidepressant medication on sexual function. For example, a systematic review to determine the effectiveness of management strategies for sexual dysfunction caused by antidepressants, and to determine the adverse effects and acceptability of these different management strategies. The NIHR is not currently funding any research with a focus on the permanency of antidepressant induced sexual dysfunction. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including antidepressant-associated sexual dysfunction.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Abortion: Demonstrations****Mary Glendon:** [\[2325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that offers of practical help to women outside abortion clinics will be permitted when section 9 of the Public Order Act 2023 is implemented.

**Jess Phillips:**

Section 9 of the Public Order Act 2023 does not criminalise any specific activity within safe access zones. It introduces a new criminal offence for a person who is within a Safe Access Zone to do an act with the intent of, or reckless as to whether it has the effect of, influencing any person's decision to access, provide or facilitate the provision of abortion services, obstructing or impeding any person accessing, providing, or facilitating the provision of abortion services, or causing harassment, alarm or distress to any person in connection with a decision to access, provide, or facilitate the provision of abortion services.

**■ Asylum: Bournemouth****Jessica Toale:** [\[2642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people are a) waiting for a decision on their asylum applications in Bournemouth and b) currently residing in hotels in Bournemouth.

**Jessica Toale:** [\[2643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many hotels are being used as temporary accommodation for people seeking asylum in a) the United Kingdom, b) the South West and c) Bournemouth.

**Jessica Toale:**

[2644]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what measures her Department is taking to end housing of people claiming asylum in hotels in Bournemouth West constituency.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes identifying a range of options to reduce the use of hotels over time and ensuring efficiency and value for money across all accommodation arrangements.

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, including hotels, can be found within the Asy\_D11 tab for our most recent stats release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables).

Information on the location of individuals awaiting a decision on their asylum application is not published.

## ■ Asylum: Costs

**Neil O'Brien:**

[2472]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost to the public purse of the asylum system was in each year since 2005; and what estimate she has made of the cost for 2024.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Data on asylum costs has been disclosed each year since 2013-14 in the Home Office's Annual Report and Accounts. However, data for Financial Year 2024-25 is not yet published and will be available when the 2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts is published. Data for asylum costs was not published prior to Financial Year 2013-14.

Please refer to the below page references which are available through the following link:

Home Office annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Financial Year 2023-24 page 243 (page 247 on the PDF reader)

Financial Year 2022-23 page 244

Financial Year 2021-22 page 171

Financial Year 2020-21 page 159

Financial Year 2019-20 page 150

Financial Year 2018-19 page 135

Financial Year 2017-18 page 124

Financial Year 2016-17 page 115

Financial Year 2015-16 page 132 (page 133 on the PDF reader)

Financial Year 2014-15 page 124 (page 127 on the PDF reader)

Financial Year 2013-14 page 110 (page 127 on the PDF reader)

### ■ Asylum: Hotels

**Neil O'Brien:** [2473]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the median cost per night for hotel accommodation for asylum seekers was in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what the cost was of the (a) most and (b) least expensive decile.

**Neil O'Brien:** [2474]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the supported asylum population in each local authority ward in England was on 31 December 2003.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly, and fairly, including reducing the use of hotels over time. Additionally, the Government will be reviewing current Home Office arrangements to ensure efficiency and deliver value for money.

Accommodation costs are considered to be commercially confidential; therefore, the Home Office does not publish this information. The total specific breakdowns of hotel costs are not reportable in the format requested, but the expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at [HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/2019-2020-annual-report-and-accounts).

The number of asylum seekers in receipt of Section 95 support is published quarterly. At the end of quarter four 2003 published statistics indicate that there were 47,148 people housed in Dispersal Accommodation and a further 30,362 in receipt of subsistence only support. The geographical location of these supported asylum seekers was not published at that time. Since 2019 data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation has been published at [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/datasets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets).

### ■ Asylum: Mid Leicestershire

**Mr Peter Bedford:** [2683]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum applicants are resident in hotels in Mid Leicestershire constituency.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation is published by the Government in table ASY D\_11 here: [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/datasets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets).

## ■ Sexual Offences: South West

**Jessica Toale:**

[\[2646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) sexual assaults and (b) rapes were reported in (i) Bournemouth and (ii) the South West in each of the last three years.

**Jess Phillips:**

This Government will treat tackling violence against women and girls as a national emergency and that includes improving the criminal justice system response to sexual assault and rape.

The Home Office publishes information on the number of sexual offences and rapes reported to and recorded by the police in England and Wales at Community Safety Partnership Area, Police Force Area and Region in our police recorded crime and open data tables which can be found here: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-and-data-tables/police-recorded-crime-and-outcomes-open-data-tables).

The data requested is also summarised in the tables below:

<b>AVON AND SOMERSET</b>	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Sexual Offences	5,572	5,265	6,266
Rape	2,128	1,984	2,717
<b>DEVON AND CORNWALL</b>	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Sexual Offences	5,285	5,381	5,613
Rape	1,881	1,948	2,015
<b>DORSET</b>	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Sexual Offences	2,353	2,358	2,175
Rape	851	837	810
<b>GLOUCESTERSHIRE</b>	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Sexual Offences	1,907	2,203	2,079
Rape	640	736	718
<b>WILTSHIRE</b>	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Sexual Offences	1,812	1,937	1,880

WILTSHIRE	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Rape	588	632	640
BOURNEMOUTH	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Sexual Offences	844	795	754
Rape	346	310	259

## ■ Slavery

**Blair McDougall:** [3374]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to create a specific civil remedy of modern slavery.

**Jess Phillips:**

Modern slavery is a horrific crime that devastates lives, leaving victims traumatised with long-lasting effects.

There are various routes victims of modern slavery can take to seek compensation for the abuse they have suffered. This includes making a civil claim through the courts, an application to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority and / or a claim to the Employment Tribunal for unlawful treatment at work. Information about compensation available to victims of modern slavery can be found at: [Compensation for victims of modern slavery and human trafficking - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/compensation-for-victims-of-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking)

The Government is committed to improving our response to modern slavery and will set out next steps more broadly in due course.

## ■ Temples: Security

**Paula Barker:** [2147]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help protect Hindu temples.

**Dan Jarvis:**

We are absolutely 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 routinely assess potential threats to ensure that protective measures are in place to protect Hindu communities and their places of worship against terrorism and hate crime.

Additionally, Hindu temples in England and Wales can benefit from the Places of Worship Protective Security Scheme. This scheme offers physical 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.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Affordable Housing: Cornwall

**Jayne Kirkham:**

[3914]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will (a) remove the Affordable Housing Grant embargo placed on Cornwall Council and (b) take steps to (i) restore and (ii) backdate the grant.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

After being served a regulatory notice for health and safety failings, the previous Government prohibited Cornwall Council from accessing new Affordable Homes Programme funding. While I very much welcome the steps that the authority has taken toward addressing the identified breach, it is for the independent Regulator of Social Housing to determine when it might be appropriate to withdraw the notice.

Following the introduction of the new consumer regulation regime on 1 April, the RSH now issues regulatory judgements, which include new consumer gradings, rather than regulatory notices.

In light of these changes, the Government intends to consider its policy with regard to withholding AHP funding following breaches of consumer standards.

### ■ General Election 2024: Absent Voting

**Kevin Bonavia:**

[2568]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to review the (a) efficiency and (b) reliability of postal voting for UK nationals living abroad during the General Election on 4 July 2024.

**Alex Norris:**

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer given to Question UIN [199](#) on 26 July 2024.

### ■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

**Mr Clive Betts:**

[2743]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many units of accommodation in the (a) private and (b) social housing sector have combustible cladding; on how many such units is work under way to remove such cladding; and how many such units have no such work planned.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The latest data on remediation progress of 11m+ buildings identified with unsafe cladding is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-remediation-monthly-data-release-july-2024>.

This shows that as of 31 July 2024, in the private housing sector, 2,127 buildings have been identified as having combustible cladding. Of these, 416 buildings have remediation works underway, and works have not started on 1,119 buildings. In the social housing sector, 2,405 buildings have been identified as having combustible cladding. Of these, 528 buildings have remediation works underway, and works have not started on 1,210 buildings.

## ■ Homelessness: Health

**Jessica Toale:**

[\[2660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to tackle the health issues faced by people experiencing homelessness.

**Rushanara Ali:**

Homelessness levels are far too high and can have a devastating impact on those affected, including a range of health issues. The Government will look at these issues carefully and will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country to get us back on track to ending homelessness once and for all.

More widely, we are taking action to tackle the root causes of homelessness, including delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and building 1.5 million new homes over the next Parliament. We are also committed to abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions, preventing private renters being exploited and discriminated against, and empowering people to challenge unreasonable rent increases.

## ■ Housing: Construction

**Sarah Gibson:**

[\[2206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure that changes to the national planning policy framework prevent developers from land banking; and what steps she plans to take to help ensure that local authorities are able to build homes that suit local needs.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system that began on Tuesday 30 July includes proposals designed to support increased build out rates and promote mixed-tenure schemes that meet the housing needs of local people. In conjunction with the start of that consultation, the housebuilding industry made a public commitment to increase the pace at which homes are delivered and to get on and build where sites are viable and have implementable consent. The Government has also taken swift action to speed up site delivery through the New Homes Accelerator.

Local Plans, prepared by a local planning authority in consultation with its community, are the most effective means of shaping the future development of an area and

meeting local housing need. The Government has made clear it is seeking to achieve universal coverage of ambitious local plans as quickly as possible. To support local authorities, we are funding 300 additional planning officers and consulting on increasing planning fees.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**

[\[2451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she took account of net migration in setting the target for new homes in this Parliament.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Immigration is one of a number of factors that impacts assessments of housing demand and future housing supply. The Government's commitment to build 1.5 million homes over the course of the Parliament is intended to provide the homes the country needs.

## ■ Housing: Disability

**Jon Pearce:**

[\[2174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the supply of adapted housing for (a) adults and (b) children with disabilities in High Peak constituency.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The provision of appropriate housing for people with disabilities, including specialist and supported housing, is crucial in helping them to live safe and independent lives.

The National Planning Policy Framework outlines that it is for local authorities to assess the size, types and tenure of housing needed for different groups, including those who require affordable housing, people with disabilities, older people, families with children, and rural communities, and to reflect this in their planning policies. In 2019, we published guidance to help local planning authorities implement this policy.

## ■ Housing: Overcrowding

**Jon Pearce:**

[\[2176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of trends in the number of people living in overcrowded housing in High Peak constituency.

**Jon Pearce:**

[\[2177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of trends in the prevalence of damp and mould in social housing in (a) High Peak constituency and (b) Derbyshire.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The English Housing Survey sets out levels of overcrowding, damp and mould in people's homes and can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>. In 2022/23 the survey found that 19% of homes in the East Midlands did not meet the Decent Homes standard. Nationwide, 10% of private renters were living with damp and mould, followed by 7% of local authority renters, 4% of those in housing associations and 2% of owner occupiers. The survey found 12% of households that were overcrowded were likely to live in a home with damp problems present compared with 4% of those that were not overcrowded.

We are committed to decent, warm and safe homes of all tenures, and will say more on raising standards across the country this autumn.

### ■ Jews: Safety

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [2449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to help ensure Jewish communities feel safe.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [2450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her department is taking to help reduce cases of anti-Semitism.

**Alex Norris:**

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [1927](#) on 6 August 2024.

### ■ Local Plans

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [2455]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish a list of local planning authorities which (a) have and (b) do not have up to date local plans.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [2456]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure local planning authorities without an up to date local plan get their plans up to date.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

This Government has inherited a planning system in which only 31% of local planning authorities have adopted plans in the last five years. 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.

The Planning Inspectorate monitors the progress of local plans and publishes a list of the overall position for each local planning authority. The list of local plans can be found at the following [link](#).

The Government has set out changes to how we plan for the homes we need as part of the consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, launched on 30 July. Funding will be made available to support authorities at advanced stages of plan-making required to undertake additional work to take account of the updated NPPF once this is published.

## ■ Max Caller

**Laurence Turner:**

[\[3908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's publication entitled ministerial meetings, July to September 2023, updated on 14 December 2023, whether the then Secretary of State's meeting with Max Caller on 26 September 2023 was attended by officials.

**Jim McMahon:**

The meeting on 26 September 2023 between the former Secretary of State and Max Caller was attended by officials.

## ■ Members: Age

**John Glen:**

[\[2313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to allow for teenagers to be elected as hon. Members.

**Alex Norris:**

Persons aged 18 years and over are already able to stand and be elected at UK Parliamentary elections.

## ■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Expenditure

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[\[2635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page 9 of HM Treasury's document entitled Fixing the foundations: Public spending audit 2024-25, published on 29 July 2024, if she will list the (a) name and (b) value of the other small projects that her Department is cancelling.

**Alex Norris:**

In response to HMT's savings commission, MHCLG has agreed £154 million from the department's budgets. This comprises of several savings options on non-essential spending including:

- Cancelling the Investment Opportunity Fund, which had not started, saving £122 million;
- Cancelling the Antisocial behaviour (ASB) pilot programme, which had not started, saving a lifetime cost of £20 million. This Government believes there are more meaningful and better value-for-money interventions that would genuinely reduce incidents of ASB;

- Reducing funding for legal fees we no longer expect to arise from the previous Government's approach to extremism by £5 million; and,
- Savings from the Cambridge Growth programme totalling £7 million, including reduced spend on consultancy activity.

### ■ **Motorhomes: Parking**

**Steve Darling:** [\[2593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of placing a duty on local authorities to provide overnight parking for motorhomes on local authority owned land.

**Jim McMahon:**

Parking is the responsibility of local authorities, and it is for them to determine what is best for their own area. My department has no plans to consider such a duty.

Should members of the public wish to influence policies, statutory guidance allows local residents to petition their Local Council to initiate a formal review of parking policies in their area. Councillors will then vote on the action to be taken.

### ■ **Neighbourhood Plans**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[3747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to change the legal status of neighbourhood plans.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

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

### ■ **Private Rented Housing: Rents**

**Kevin Bonavia:** [\[2569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to enable local authorities to bring in rent controls for people in the 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.

### ■ **Sleeping Rough: High Peak**

**Jon Pearce:** [\[2178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support her Department provided to rough sleepers in High Peak constituency in winter

2023-24; and what steps her Department plans to take to support such rough sleepers in winter 2024-25.

**Rushanara Ali:**

High Peak Borough Council have received Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25 (RSI) funding to support rough sleepers, including during the winter months. High Peak Borough Council is part of a joint RSI bid led by Chesterfield Borough Council. The local authorities within the bid received £769,222 in 2023/24, and were allocated £624,328 for 2024/25.

Levels of homelessness and rough sleeping are far too high. The Government will look at these issues carefully 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.

■ **Sleeping Rough: Women**

**Paula Barker:**

[\[2149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to help reduce the number of women who are rough sleeping.

**Rushanara Ali:**

Homelessness and rough sleeping levels are far too high. This can have a devastating impact on those affected. We must address this and deliver long term solutions. We recognise that women sleeping on the streets have different experiences and needs to men, particularly relating to experience of violence and abuse, and that services may need to be delivered differently to meet the needs of women.

The Government will look at these issues carefully 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.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Finance**

**Steve Darling:**

[\[3340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure that investment in social rented housing will be prioritised for communities with (a) lower levels of social rented housing stock and (b) high levels of need.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government is committed to the greatest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. We intend to ensure that we are supporting the delivery of the right kinds of affordable homes to meet local need.

The bid scoring mechanism of the Affordable Homes Programme actively targets areas of acute housing need by generating greater value for money for social landlords and central Government, and we strongly encourage bids from these areas.

We are committed to setting out details of future Government investment in social and affordable housing at the forthcoming Spending Review.

## ■ Towns Fund

**Jayne Kirkham:** [\[3916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will extend the Towns Deal Fund spend deadline for 12 months until 31 March 2027.

**Alex Norris:**

The Towns Fund is due to close in March 2026 with the expectation that all funding recipients will have invested the entirety of their allocation by this date. The Chancellor's July 'Public Spending: Inheritance' speech set out the state of the UK's spending inheritance from the previous government - a forecasted overspend of £21.9 billion above limits set by the Treasury in the spring. In this context, the Chancellor has set out a path to confirming plans for this year and next at the forthcoming Budget on October 30th. In advance of the Budget, all current funding profiles still hold.

## ■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

**Jayne Kirkham:** [\[3915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will extend the Shared Prosperity Fund spend deadline for 12 months until 31 March 2026.

**Jayne Kirkham:** [\[3917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to replace the Shared Prosperity Fund after it expires.

**Alex Norris:**

Decisions on funding post March 2025 are a matter for the Budget.

We are working closely with local authorities and key stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition to future funding, so communities continue to benefit from this vital support. Officials remain available to discuss any issues impacting delivery.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Crimes against the Person: Sentencing

**Danny Beales:** [\[3638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing sentences for people convicted of assaulting public service workers .



**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Sentencing in individual cases is a matter for our independent courts. Parliament has provided the courts with a broad range of sentencing powers to deal effectively and appropriately with offenders, including discharges, fines, community sentences, suspended sentences and custodial sentences.

The law is clear that where an assault is committed against those providing a public service, performing a public duty, or providing a service to the public this is to be considered by courts as an aggravating factor, increasing the seriousness of the offending. This applies to assaults committed against a wide range of workers. The statutory aggravating factor came into force on 28 June 2022.

Going forward, we will undertake a review of sentencing, to make sure that our framework is consistent, coherent, and cuts crime. We will use this review to develop a new long-term vision for sentencing which makes sense to victims and the wider public. The Lord Chancellor will announce more details of this review in due course.

**Family Courts: Custody****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[2967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the presumption of contact at the Family Court does not result in unsafe contact arrangements.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The welfare of a child must be the court's paramount consideration when making decisions about a child's life. This is known as the welfare principle. Prior to the application of the presumption of parental involvement, the court is legally obliged to assess if a parent poses a risk of harm to the child - if their involvement would pose a risk to the child, the presumption does not apply.

The Ministry of Justice has undertaken evidence gathering on the presumption of parental involvement, focused on its application in the family court. We will publish the evidence and proposed next steps in due course.

As part of our commitment to ensuring the justice system is designed to put victims and survivors first, including those who have experienced domestic abuse, we are carefully considering the next steps for supporting victims and survivors across the justice system, including in the family court. We are working across departments to ensure that victims and survivors are supported and that children are kept safe.

**Family Proceedings****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[2968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to review the recommendations of the Final Report on Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

We are committed to ensuring that parties to private law children cases in the family courts are protected from harm and that the welfare of the child is always the court's paramount consideration when making decisions about children's lives.

The Ministry of Justice published a delivery update in May 2023 which outlined the progress made against the recommendations of the Final Report on Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases. This can be found at:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/646e0e577dd6e7000ca9b2f8/harm-panel-delivery-update.pdf>.

We will now take the time to consider what more should be done to ensure that children and families are kept safe and supported throughout the family justice system.

**■ Ministry of Justice: Redundancy Pay****Wera Hobhouse:****[3044]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the cost to her Department was of ministerial severance payments in each year from 19 December 2019 to 30 May 2024; which Ministers received a severance payment; and how much each Minister received.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

In accordance with the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991, paid Ministers below the age of 65 are entitled to a loss of office payment of one quarter of their claimed annual ministerial salary when they cease to hold office.

Departments are required to publish the detail of any ministerial severance payments made within their Annual Report and Accounts each year.

Details of such payments are published in departmental annual reports and accounts:

[Ministry of Justice Annual Report and Accounts 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118242/Ministry_of_Justice_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2022_to_2023_-_GOV.UK.pdf)  
([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

[Ministry of Justice Annual Report and Accounts 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118242/Ministry_of_Justice_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2021_to_2022_-_GOV.UK.pdf)  
([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

[Ministry of Justice Annual Report and Accounts 2020 to 2021 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118242/Ministry_of_Justice_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2020_to_2021_-_GOV.UK.pdf)  
([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

[Ministry of Justice Annual Report and Accounts 2019 to 2020 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118242/Ministry_of_Justice_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2019_to_2020_-_GOV.UK.pdf)  
([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

The financial accounts for 2023/24 will be released in due course.

**■ Prisoners' Release: Homelessness****Paula Barker:****[3208]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure prisoners do not become homeless upon release.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service delivers a transitional accommodation service, known as the Community Accommodation Service – Tier 3 (CAS3), which offers prison leavers who are subject to probation supervision and at risk of homelessness on release up to 12 weeks of basic, temporary accommodation to provide a stable base on release. The service has been gradually rolled out nationwide since July 2021 and since then has supported over 12,200 prison leavers who would otherwise have been homeless.

However, we know there is more to do to ensure people leaving prison can move to long-term settled accommodation, and will work closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to develop a long-term strategy to put us back on track to ending homelessness.

**Private Rented Housing: Evictions****Bob Blackman:****[2848]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average time has been for county courts to (a) accept, (b) consider, (c) process and (d) enforce possession cases brought by residential private landlords via Section 8 of the Housing Act 1988 in the last 12 months.

**Bob Blackman:****[2849]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the average time it would take for county courts to (a) accept, (b) consider, (c) process and (d) enforce possession cases brought by residential private landlords once Section 21 repossessions end.

**Heidi Alexander:**

Statistics on the timeliness of possession claims are published here: [Mortgage and landlord possession statistics: April to June 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics-april-to-june-2024). Data is published covering the period to June 2024.

The Government has announced its intention to legislate to abolish Section 21 repossessions. Once Section 21 repossessions are no longer available for landlords to use, the County Court will continue to work to the procedures and timelines set out in the Civil Procedure Rules for the management of possession claims including enforcement brought under other grounds.

**Probation Service****Blair McDougall:****[3370]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the backlog of cases within the probate service.

**Heidi Alexander:**

HM Courts & Tribunals Service has invested in more staff, alongside system and process improvements, which has seen record levels of grants of probate issued during the last 6 months.

Management Information published by HMCTS shows, despite continued high levels of receipts, the open workable caseload (cases not waiting for more information from the applicant) has reduced by over 50% (36,000 cases) since August 2023 and currently stands at 31,842 in June 2024.

The average mean length of time taken for a grant of probate (following receipt of the documents required) has reduced by 4.5 weeks in June 2024 compared to August 2023. The average timeliness for cases completing in June was 8.5 weeks.

**Reoffenders: Departmental Coordination****Caroline Voaden:**[\[3552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans she has to work with Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to help reduce reoffending by people in the criminal justice system.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice, working with the Department of Health and Social Care, is firmly committed to reducing reoffending by addressing health-related causes of offending behaviour.

Where appropriate, we are working to divert offenders with health needs out of the criminal justice system altogether, including through Liaison & Diversion services, present in all police custody suites and criminal courts in England. Community Sentence Treatment Requirements can also be used as part of community or suspended sentences. Previous research has shown reduced reoffending rates for these types of sentences compared to short custodial sentences, and we are working to evaluate their use.

For those in prison, we work in close partnership with NHS England, who are responsible for commissioning healthcare services, including drug treatment, in all English prisons, so that all prisoners have access to health care equivalent to that in the community. We also work with the Welsh Government, who are ultimately responsible for commissioning and delivering health services for people in prison in Wales. We also work in partnership to ensure that our prisons provide wider support to help prisoners engage with treatment. 80 prisons currently have Incentivised Substance Free Living units where prisoners commit to regular drug tests.

We also want to better support rehabilitation of prisoners leaving custody, who have engaged in treatment and help them to remain in treatment on release. NHS England's RECONNECT service supports prison leavers with vulnerabilities including mental health and substance misuse needs to engage with services through referrals and peer support.

## ■ Sexual Offences

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[3767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Official Statistics entitled Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2023, published on 16 May 2024, which offence descriptions in the dataset entitled Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2023 correspond to (a) Section 51A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Soliciting), (b) Section 1 of the Street Offences Act 1959 (Loitering or soliciting for purposes of prostitution), (c) Section 52 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Causing or inciting prostitution for gain), (d) Section 53 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Controlling prostitution for gain), (e) Section 53A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Paying for sexual services of a prostitute subjected to force etc.), (f) Section 33A of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 (Keeping a brothel used for prostitution), (g) Section 46 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 (Placing of advertisement relating to prostitution) and (h) Section 2 and 3(3) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (Human trafficking – sexual exploitation).

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes data for offences under the requested legislation in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2023](#) using following HO codes:

(a) Section 51A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Soliciting):

- 16701 - Soliciting another for the purpose of obtaining their sexual services as a prostitute in a street or public place

(b) Section 1 of the Street Offences Act 1959 (Loitering or soliciting for purposes of prostitution):

- 16604 - Person persistently loitering or soliciting for the purposes of prostitution

(c) Section 52 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Causing or inciting prostitution for gain):

- 02417 - Causing or inciting prostitution for gain

(d) Section 53 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Controlling prostitution for gain):

- 02418 - Controlling a prostitute for gain

(e) Section 53A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Paying for sexual services of a prostitute subjected to force etc.):

- 16702 - Paying or promising to pay a person to provide sexual services, where that person is subject to exploitative conduct to induce or encourage them to provide those services

(f) Section 33A of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 (Keeping a brothel used for prostitution):

- 02419 - Keeping a brothel used for prostitution

(g) Section 46 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 (Placing of advertisement relating to prostitution.):

- 16503 - Placing of advertisement relating to prostitution  
(h) Section 2 and 3(3) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (Human trafficking – sexual exploitation):
- 03608 - Arrange or facilitate travel of another person with a view to exploitation

## ■ Youth Justice: Finance

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[3755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reasons have there been late allocations of funding for the youth justice system for 2024-25.

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[3756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will take steps to tackle the late allocation of annual funding for the youth justice system.

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[3757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the (a) effectiveness of annual grant funding and (b) potential merits of maintaining long-term funding for youth justice.

### **Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Much of government spending is allocated via an annual budgetary process, which often requires complex choices that can take time to be resolved. This year, the General Election complicated this further – it was not possible for the Department to confirm funding decisions during the election period after the election was called on 22 May 2024. However, within a matter of days of coming into government, we made this decision, and it was communicated to Youth Offending Teams (YOTs).

This Government recognises the challenges associated with late annual allocations for local youth justice services and the need for YOTs to have stable funding for financial planning.

We want to ensure that local services are equipped to make effective use of grant funding. The upcoming multi-year Spending Review is an opportunity for this Government to assess how funding is most efficiently delivered.

## LEADER OF THE HOUSE

### ■ Leader of the House: Ministers

**Kit Malthouse:** [\[2395\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what (a) statutory and (b) non-statutory direct ministerial appointments excluding special advisers she has made; and (i) who the appointee was and (ii) what the (A) remuneration, (B) title and (C) terms of reference was for each appointment.

**Lucy Powell:**

I have not made any statutory or non-statutory direct ministerial appointments since being appointed as Leader of the House of Commons.

**NORTHERN IRELAND****■ Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023****Alex Burghart:**[\[3766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, which veterans' organisations he has met with to discuss his plans for the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023.

**Hilary Benn:**

In my written ministerial statement of 29 July 2024, I committed to undertake a period of consultation with all interested parties, including veterans organisations, to hear views regarding a practical way forward on legacy issues that complies with human rights and can command support across communities in Northern Ireland and beyond.

I began this process by meeting the Victims and Survivors Forum and the South East Fermanagh Foundation on 28 August 2024, and will meet with other organisations, including those representing veterans, in the period ahead.

**TRANSPORT****■ A226: Repairs and Maintenance****Jim Dickson:**[\[3673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to restore the collapsed section of the A226 Galley Hill Road, Greenhithe.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The A226 Galley Hill Road is a local road for which Kent County Council, as local highway authority, has responsibility. The Department for Transport has had regular discussions with Kent County Council to help understand the issue and is currently waiting for them to complete a detailed options analysis.

**■ Blue Badge Scheme: Chronic Illnesses****Julia Buckley:**[\[3491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of making lifetime Blue Badge awards to people with lifelong conditions.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

As a general principle, Blue Badge eligibility is based on mobility. Reapplying for a badge every three years gives local authorities the opportunity to reassess badge holders when their badges expire, ensuring that they continue to meet the criteria which makes them eligible for a badge. It also serves the purpose of making sure that the details local authorities hold about the badge holder, and those that are displayed on the badge itself, remain correct.

**■ Bodmin Parkway Station: Access****Ben Maguire:**[\[3646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of accessibility for passengers with reduced mobility at Bodmin Parkway railway station.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

We are carefully considering the best approach to the Access for All programme. This Government is committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognises the social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Vans****Alex Mayer:**[\[3415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles' report entitled Consultation outcome: driving licence flexibility for alternatively-fuelled vehicles, published on 10 October 2023, whether her Department (a) plans to remove the five-hour training requirement for drivers of electric vans weighing up to 4.25 tonnes and (b) implement the other reforms proposed in that report.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Government is reviewing the policy proposals detailed in the previously published consultation response on driving licence flexibilities for alternatively-fuelled vehicles.

**■ Motor Vehicles: Diesel and Petrol****Perran Moon:**[\[3901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is her policy to ban the sale of new (a) petrol and (b) diesel vehicles from 2030.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Government is committed to delivering greener transport by accelerating the transition to electric vehicles. As set out in our manifesto, there will be no sales of new pure combustion engine cars from 2030 under our plans. We will set out more details in due course.



## ■ **Motor Vehicles: Lighting**

**Greg Smith:**

[3112]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to fund independent research into the potential safety implications of headlight glare.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Yes. The government is in the process of commissioning independent research to better understand the root causes of headlamp glare and help identify potential countermeasures.

## ■ **Public Transport: South West**

**Rebecca Smith:**

[2213]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has for transport improvements in the South West; and whether it remains Government policy to (a) fund the new Tavistock to Plymouth railway line, (b) provide funding to complete the South West Rail Resilience Programme and (c) implement the £2 bus fare extension.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Government knows that Britain needs a modern transport network to help kickstart economic growth and is committed to delivering the biggest overhaul to transport in a generation, working closely with local leaders and industry partners across the country.

The Department is undertaking a full review of its infrastructure programme following the Chancellor's statement on the public spending inheritance on 29 July, which will consider the South-West Rail Resilience Programme and the scheme to restore rail services between Plymouth and Tavistock.

With regards to the £2 bus fare cap, delivering reliable and affordable public transport services for passengers is one of the Government's top priorities and we know how important this is for passengers and for local growth. The Government is urgently considering the most effective and affordable ways to deliver on these objectives.

## ■ **Railways: Compensation**

**Alex Mayer:**

[2192]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much was paid out to passengers by (a) West Midlands Trains and (b) all train operators as part of the Delay Repay scheme in each of the last 12 months for which data is available.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The most recent published figures for compensation paid out by train operators to passengers are for 2022-2023 and can be accessed at the following link:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/train-operating-companies-passengers-charter-compensation/train-operating-companies-passengers-charter-compensation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/train-operating-companies-passengers-charter-compensation/train-operating-companies-passengers-charter-compensation).

The figures include both Delay Repay compensation and also discretionary compensation paid by train operators for poor service, for example when toilets on the train are not available for use.

The figures for 2023-2024 are expected to be published later this year.

## ■ Railways: Midlands

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[2548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress her Department has made on the (a) designs for and (b) delivery of the Midlands Rail Hub.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Following approval of an Outline Business Case, £123m was released to Network Rail in March 2024 to commence detailed design of Midlands Rail Hub's first phase (for additional services between Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, and Worcester), while subsequent phases are at an earlier stage of development. Subject to future decisions about affordability and value for money, the first stage could be complete by the early 2030s.

The Chancellor set out on 29 July a range of pressures on public spending, including £2.9 billion of unfunded transport specific spending. Following this, the Secretary of State's Written Ministerial Statement on 30 July set out that the Department is undertaking an internal review of its capital spend portfolio. This will support the development of our new long-term strategy for transport. Any decisions about the portfolio will be subject to broader discussions and fiscal decisions made at Budget and Spending Review.

## ■ Railways: Nationalisation

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[2556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help (a) maintain and (b) improve the operational performance of (i) Greater Anglia and (ii) other private rail operators during the transition to public ownership.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Government's approach will be consistent across all operators, including Greater Anglia. While National Rail Contracts (NRCs) remain in place, we will set stretching performance targets for each operator through the annual business planning process. These targets will be specific to each operator, reflecting their individual circumstances. Where performance falls short, we will require operators to put in place robust improvement plans. The Secretary of State has already met a number of poorly performing train operators and their Network Rail counterparts, setting clear expectations for immediate improvement.

## ■ Railways: West Midlands

**Wendy Morton:** [\[2344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has for the West Midlands Rail Hub.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Following approval of an Outline Business Case, £123m was released to Network Rail in March 2024 to commence detailed design of Midlands Rail Hub's first phase (for additional services between Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, and Worcester), while subsequent phases are at an earlier stage of development. Subject to future decisions about affordability and value for money, the first stage could be complete by the early 2030s.

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## ■ Road Traffic: Noise

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[2920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with local authorities on the use of noise cameras on roads.

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[2921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of noise cameras on road noise levels.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department conducted roadside trials of noise camera technology between October 2022 and February 2023. Reports of these trials, including detailed assessment of the technology's performance and potential merits, were published on 17 March 2024.

The Secretary of State for Transport has not had discussions with local authorities on the use of noise cameras.

## ■ Rolling Stock: Manufacturing Industries

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[2546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to support the long-term sustainability of rolling stock manufacturing.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Government recognises the importance of rolling stock manufacturing, and alongside our plan for the railways, Getting Britain Moving, we have committed to develop a long-term Rolling Stock Strategy which will support British manufacturing and innovation. My officials are working at pace on its development, and I will set out further details in due course.

My officials work closely with the sector to understand future rolling stock needs. As trains are assets with a lifespan of 35-40 years, the Government will seek to end the boom-and-bust cycle by ensuring that there is a strong pipeline of work.

There is now a clear domestic UK market for rolling stock procurement, with current competitions for SouthEastern and TransPennine Express underway. With other potential procurements on Chiltern, Northern, and Great Western upcoming, there are and will be numerous business opportunities available for rolling stock manufacturers.

**■ Taxis: Disability**

**Sarah Green:** [\[3269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department holds information on the number of local authorities that have offered (a) loans and (b) grants to encourage the purchase of wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire vehicles.

**Sarah Green:** [\[3270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on (a) schemes and (b) initiatives to fund wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire vehicles.

**Sarah Green:** [\[3271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to increase the number of wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire vehicles in Buckinghamshire.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Disabled people should be able to travel easily, confidently, and with dignity.

I know that in some areas it can be difficult for wheelchair users to obtain a suitable wheelchair accessible taxi or PHV when they need one. Best practice guidance, published in November 2023, recommends authorities assess the demand for wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) and take steps to ensure that there are sufficient available, as part of a "mixed fleet" of vehicles suitable for a range of passenger needs.

The Department is not aware of whether there are any loan or grant schemes run by Local Authorities to encourage the purchase of WAVs.

The government's Plug-In Taxi Grant continues to provide up to £6,000 towards the cost of an eligible vehicle, which must be wheelchair accessible. We keep grants under the Scheme under review to ensure best value for the taxpayer.

As of 1 April 2023, 67% of authorities, including Buckinghamshire Council required all or part of their taxi fleet to be wheelchair accessible. Whilst the most recent annual taxi and PHV statistics survey included a new question on the nature of authority policies on WAVs, the responses are yet to be analysed.

## ■ Transport: Lincolnshire

**Victoria Atkins:**

[\[3708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her Department's policy is on spending £262 million from reallocated HS2 funding on Lincolnshire's (a) roads and (b) public transport.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The previous Government made a number of funding commitments in the Network North Command Paper. These will be examined closely by my Government in the coming months.

## TREASURY

## ■ Attendance Allowance

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

[\[2121\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending (a) a discount on and (b) an exemption from vehicle excise duty to people receiving Attendance Allowance.

**James Murray:**

The Government is committed to supporting disabled people and is determined that support should be focused on people who need it most. The aim of existing Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) exemptions for recipients of some disability benefits is to provide additional help for people who become disabled early, or relatively early, in life and as a result experience economic disadvantage. These allowances are therefore only available to people who become disabled before State Pension age.

For individuals who develop a disability after State Pension age, Attendance Allowance (AA) is a non-means-tested benefit which provides targeted help with the extra costs of disability and helps them maintain their independence. Unlike Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment, AA does not have a mobility component and is intended to cover the need for care or supervision an individual requires as a result of their disability rather than specific mobility needs. Individuals can however choose to use their AA to fund mobility aids.

The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the policy making process, and the Chancellor makes decisions at fiscal events in the context of public finances.

**■ Business: Closures****Jon Pearce:**[\[2185\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many high street businesses in (a) Wellingborough constituency, (b) Northamptonshire and (c) England have closed in each of the last five years; and whether she plans to make changes to the level of business rates in the next five years.

**James Murray:**

Data is not collected by the government on high street closures.

The government is committed to a fairer business rates system. The retail sector accounts for approximately 21% of Rateable Value but only contributes 5% to Gross Value Added (GVA). In our manifesto, we pledged to level the playing field between the high street and online giants, as well as to take steps to incentivise investment, tackle empty properties and support entrepreneurship.

**■ Cash Dispensing: Newcastle-under-Lyme****Adam Jogee:**[\[3471\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the number of pay to use ATMs in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The operator of the UK's largest ATM network, LINK, publishes data on the number of ATMs across each parliamentary constituency. This includes a breakdown of the number of pay-to-use ATMs operated by the LINK network. In the constituency of Newcastle-under-Lyme, LINK operated 17 pay-to-use ATMs out of a total of 81 cash access points.

The data can be accessed at: <https://www.link.co.uk/data-research/the-atm-network>

**Adam Jogee:**[\[3472\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to increase access to cash in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

While the ongoing trend in payments in the UK has been away from cash and towards digital payment methods, the government recognises that cash continues to be used by millions of people across the UK, including those who may be in vulnerable groups.

For this reason, cash access has been protected in UK law. The Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 provides the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) with responsibility and powers to seek to ensure reasonable provision of cash withdrawal and deposit facilities across the UK.

In July 2024, the FCA published its final rules setting out its approach to regulating access to cash, which come into force on 18 September. Under these rules, designated firms – which include the UK's largest banks and building societies, as

well as the ATM operator, LINK – will be required to conduct an assessment in response to a service closure or a cash access request from local residents, community organisations and representatives, and provide additional cash services if there is a need for it. LINK conducts these assessments of access to cash needs in communities and can recommend additional shared services, such as shared Banking Hubs or cash deposit services. Further information can be found via its website.

## ■ Crown Estate Commissioners: Wales

**Ben Lake:**

[\[3769\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the Crown Estate publishing the (a) asset value and (b) net revenue profit of the Crown Estate in Wales within its annual accounts.

**James Murray:**

To achieve efficiency in its operations, the Crown Estate runs many of its functions at a whole enterprise level. As a result, separate financial statements for Wales would not reflect the fact that expenditure is incurred for the benefit of the whole portfolio, and it is not possible to disaggregate net revenue profit attributable to Wales.

The Crown Estate published a [Wales Review](#) to supplement the annual report and highlight The Crown Estate's work in Wales.

## ■ Debts

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[3177\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) restricting early repayment charges on debt to benefit customers and (b) encouraging early repayment.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

While specific decisions around early repayment charges on loans are a commercial matter for lenders in which the Government does not intervene, there are rules that govern their use.

For mortgages, the Financial Conduct Authority rules set out that lenders should not impose early repayment charges at a level that is more than a reasonable pre-estimate of the costs that would be incurred as a result of a loan being terminated early. For unsecured credit, the Consumer Credit Act 1974 and accompanying regulations set out the requirements on firms where loans are repaid early.

Consumers should also be given adequate information about the existence of these charges in the pre-sale disclosure documents lenders are required to give them.

## ■ Domicil

**Jim Shannon:** [\[2331\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she plans to take to reform the tax status of people with non-domiciled residency.

**James Murray:**

The government has published a policy note setting out its plan to remove the concept of domicile status from the tax system, and to implement a new residence-based regime which is internationally competitive and focused on attracting the best talent and investment to the UK. The details of this plan can be found on gov.uk at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2024-non-uk-domiciled-individuals-policy-summary/changes-to-the-taxation-of-non-uk-domiciled-individuals>

## ■ Exports: Northern Ireland

**Jim Allister:** [\[3932\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how export procedures are applied under Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 to goods placed under the export procedure within the Union in accordance with Title V and Title VIII of that Regulation as they move from Northern Ireland to Great Britain.

**James Murray:**

The Windsor Framework removes the requirement for export procedures for goods moved from Northern Ireland to Great Britain that existed under the original Protocol, and replaces the 2020 agreement on the need for 'equivalent information' with such controls only applying to a niche set of goods. Detailed guidance on the treatment of these goods where exceptions apply, including goods declared for export in an EU country, is available on gov.uk.

## ■ Foreign Investment in UK: Yorkshire and the Humber

**Martin Vickers:** [\[2807\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps she is taking to help attract foreign direct investment into green industries in the (a) Humber and (b) UK.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The Treasury will continue to develop policy that supports investment in partnership with business. Investment is at the heart of this Government's growth mission and essential to increasing the number of jobs and improving productivity across the country. The Department for Business and Trade has a dedicated investment function in the UK and overseas, including the Office for Investment.

The Government is taking forward the reforms necessary to ensure foreign investors have the support needed to invest. This includes setting up new institutions such as Great British Energy, which will combine the power of the private sector and government to accelerate the UK's clean energy transition, and the National Wealth



Fund which will mobilise billions more in private investment in the UK's green and growth sectors.

The Chancellor will set out more detail on the National Wealth Fund ahead of the International Investment Summit in October.

## ■ Holiday Accommodation

**Jayne Kirkham:** [\[3918\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of excluding properties that are restricted by planning permission for holiday let use only from the removal of the Furnished Lets Allowance.

**James Murray:**

The Government will abolish the Furnished Holiday Lets (FHLs) tax regime from April 2025, and will apply to all furnished holiday let properties.

This measure will equalise the tax treatment of landlords' property income and gains.

## ■ Individual Savings Accounts

**Sarah Green:** [\[3267\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing early access penalty for lifetime ISAs from 25% to 20%.

**Sarah Green:** [\[3268\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the lifetime ISA property value limit.

**James Murray:**

The Lifetime ISA (LISA) was set up to help people build up savings for buying their first home, or for their later life. LISA funds, including any Government bonus, can be withdrawn for the purchase of a first home under £450,000, in the case of terminal illness, or from the age of 60.

Any unauthorised withdrawals are subject to a 25% withdrawal charge. This recoups the Government bonus, any interest or growth arising from it, and a proportion of the individual's initial savings. Reducing the withdrawal charge would encourage the use of LISAs in ways for which they were not intended.

The Lifetime ISA is set at an appropriate level to support most first-time buyers across the UK while targeting households that may find it most difficult to get onto the property ladder. Data from the latest [UK House Price Index](#) demonstrates that the average price paid by first-time buyers remains below the LISA property price cap in all regions of the UK.

The Government keeps all aspects of savings tax policy under review, and considers all representations made carefully, with any changes made as part of the Budget process.

## ■ Insurance Companies

**Claire Hanna:** [\[3190\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions she has had with regulators on ensuring that the insurance industry treats consumers equally in all regions.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

Treasury Ministers and officials have regular meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors on an ongoing basis.

The Government is determined that insurers should treat all customers fairly and insurance companies are required to do so under the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) rules.

The FCA is an independent body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry across the United Kingdom and has robust powers to act against firms that fail to comply with its rules.

## ■ Low Incomes: High Peak

**Jon Pearce:** [\[2186\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to help support people on lower incomes in High Peak constituency.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The government is focused on improving living standards across the country, which is why economic growth remains a top priority. If Real Household Disposable Income per capita had grown at the same rate between 2010 and 2023 as it did from 1997 to 2010, it would be over £4,000 higher today.

We are committed to ensuring economic stability, by keeping inflation and energy bills as low as possible. To do this, we need to fix the foundations and rebuild Britain, so we can make every part of our country better off. That is why we will soon outline plans to improve energy efficiency across the UK's housing stock, helping to reduce energy consumption, emissions, and household bills. Further details will be outlined in the upcoming Spending Review.

A new Ministerial Taskforce has been established to develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce child poverty. We have updated the remit of the Low Pay Commission to take to account of the cost of living when making recommendations on the National Living Wage.

We will collaborate with Claire Ward, the East Midlands Mayor, and the Combined County Authority, to develop an ambitious, long-term Local Growth Plan for the area, including High Peak and Derbyshire. This plan will address local strengths and barriers to growth in the East Midlands, aiming to drive economic growth, narrow inequalities, and support delivery of the national industrial strategy.

## ■ National Insurance Contributions and Pay: High Peak

**Jon Pearce:** [\[2605\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data her Department holds on the number of people in High Peak constituency who (a) paid national insurance contributions and (b) earned below £25,000 per year in financial year 2022-23.

**James Murray:**

The information for the tax year 2022 to 2023 is not yet available.

Table 3.15 of HMRC's Personal Incomes Statistics contains the latest constituency-level income estimates for the tax year 2021 to 2022.

## ■ National Wealth Fund: Devolution

**Pete Wishart:** [\[2745\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department plans to take to determine how the National Wealth Fund will be spent; and whether she plans to hold discussions with the devolved Administrations on such decisions.

**Pete Wishart:** [\[2746\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the devolved Administrations will have a role in determining where the National Wealth Fund is spent in those nations.

**Pete Wishart:** [\[2747\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions she has had with the Scottish Government on the administration of the National Wealth Fund.

**Pete Wishart:** [\[2748\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much and what proportion of the National Wealth Fund will be allocated to (a) Scotland, (b) England, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The National Wealth Fund will improve our ability to mobilise private capital in the UK's most important sectors and assets, supporting thousands of jobs across the country, and playing a central role in our industrial strategy. And it will generate a return for the taxpayer.

The National Wealth Fund will deliver for the entire United Kingdom. We have formally engaged devolved Governments for input on National Wealth Fund policy design.

To ensure investments can start immediately, the National Wealth Fund will deploy an additional £7.3bn of funding through the UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB), to invest in the priority sectors set out in the Manifesto, such as automotive, steel, carbon capture and green hydrogen.

The UK Infrastructure Bank already has an active presence in Scotland and works with Scottish Government, local authorities, industry bodies and a wide range of project sponsors, investors and lenders.

Further detail will be set out ahead of the government's International Investment Summit in October.

## ■ Parcels: Northern Ireland

**Robin Swann:**

[\[3923\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department is taking steps to (a) introduce new mechanisms for and (b) otherwise support (i) business to business operators and (ii) other businesses that have fast parcel operations between Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the period after the end of easements relating to the Northern Ireland Protocol.

**James Murray:**

The Government has engaged extensively with businesses and parcel carriers to implement the changes agreed under the Windsor Framework for parcel movements and will continue to do so.

**Jim Allister:**

[\[3931\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make a comparative assessment of the economic impact of the new arrangements for parcels transported between Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 30 September 2024 with the arrangements in place (a) between 1 January 2021 and 29 September 2024 and (b) before 1 January 2021.

**James Murray:**

The arrangements for sending parcels from Great Britain to Northern Ireland under the Windsor Framework will represent a significant improvement on those set out in the Northern Ireland Protocol.

If fully implemented, the Northern Ireland Protocol would have required full customs declarations for all parcel movements from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Under the Windsor Framework, parcels sent to or from consumers will not be subject to customs declarations or duty, allowing them to move as smoothly as they currently do. Parcels sent between businesses will be treated in line with equivalent freight movements.

## ■ Payments

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[3117\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report entitled UK Payment Markets Report, published by UK Finance in July 2024, what discussions she has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues, (b) financial institutions and (c) business groups on (i) trends in the numbers of and (ii) support for UK adults who mainly use cash for transactions.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

While the ongoing trend in payments in the UK has been away from cash and towards digital payment methods, the government recognises that cash continues to be used by millions of people across the UK, including those who may be in vulnerable groups or who otherwise rely mainly on cash. In May 2022, the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) Financial Lives Survey estimated that 3.1 million people paid for everything in cash over the previous year.

In recognition of the importance of cash access, it has been protected in UK law. The Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 provides the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) with responsibility and powers to seek to ensure reasonable provision of cash withdrawal and deposit facilities, with reference to the government's stated objectives for protecting cash access as set out in a government Policy Statement. The FCA must also seek to ensure that there is reasonable provision of free withdrawal and deposit facilities in relation to personal current accounts, so that those who rely on cash are protected.

In July 2024, the FCA published its final rules setting out its approach to regulating access to cash, which come into force on 18 September.

## ■ Pensioners: Income Tax

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[2694\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of people over State Pension age paid income tax at (a) the basic rate of 20%, (b) the higher rate of 40% and (c) the additional rate of 45% in the last financial year.

**James Murray:**

The estimated number of people who paid Income Tax by marginal rate in the 2023 to 2024 tax year can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1: number of Income Tax payers over the State Pension age by marginal rate of Income Tax for 2023-24

	<b>SAVERS RATE TAXPAYER AGED 66 AND OVER</b>	<b>BASIC RATE TAXPAYER AGED 66 AND OVER</b>	<b>HIGHER RATE TAXPAYER AGED 66 AND OVER</b>	<b>ADDITIONAL RATE TAXPAYER AGED 66 AND OVER</b>
<b>Population of SP aged Income Tax Payers</b>	84,300	7,020,000	744,000	91,500

A Scottish Income Tax payer with any taxable non-savings non-dividends income within the Scottish starter and intermediate bands is classified as a basic rate Income Tax payer, as this is the top rate they are paying. A Scottish Income Tax payer with only savings and/or dividend income within this band is also classified as a basic rate Income Tax payer.

The proportions can be calculated using the 12.4 million estimate of individuals over the State Pension age in the UK. This estimate is based on the latest [National population projections: 2021-based interim](#) publication from the Office for National Statistics.

The estimates are based upon the 2021 to 2022 Survey of Personal Incomes, projected in line with economic assumptions consistent with the Office for Budget Responsibility's March 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

## ■ Private Education: Business Rates

**James Cartlidge:** [\[3748\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to remove business rate relief for private schools.

**James Murray:**

As announced on 29 July 2024, the government will legislate to remove the eligibility of private schools in England to business rates charitable rates relief.

This was a tough but necessary decision that will secure additional funding to help deliver the government's commitments relating to education and young people, including opening 3,000 new nurseries, rolling out breakfast clubs to all primary schools, and recruiting 6,500 new teachers.

The business rates policy change will be legislated for through a local government finance bill, led by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which will be introduced following the Budget and is intended to take effect from April 2025, subject to Parliamentary process.

## ■ Private Education: VAT

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[2371\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions she has had with private schools on the Government's proposed policy to implement VAT on private school fees.

**James Murray:**

As the Government 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%.

A technical note setting out the details of this policy has been published online here: [VAT on Private School Fees & Removing the Charitable Rates Relief for Private Schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Draft VAT legislation has also been published alongside this technical note.

A technical consultation on the legislation and technical note will run until 15 September 2024. The Government is engaging with a range of stakeholders as part of this consultation.

**Clive Lewis:**

[\[2411\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the proposed application of VAT to private school fees on families who can only access SEND provision in private schools due to deficits in local provision.

**James Murray:**

The Government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity, ensuring every child has access to high-quality education, which is why we have made the tough decision to end tax breaks for private schools. This will raise revenue for essential public services, including investing in the state education system.

State education is accessible to all children. All children of compulsory school age are entitled to a state-funded school place if they need one and the Department for Education works to support Local Authorities to ensure every local area has sufficient places for pupils. Where pupils are placed in a private school because their needs cannot be met in the state sector, and they have their places funded by their Local Authority, the Local Authority will be able to reclaim the VAT they incur on these pupils' fees. In Northern Ireland, it will be the Education Authority who fund placements in private schools and will be able to reclaim the VAT in this way.

Where a placement at a specific private school is necessary to meet the pupil's needs in England, that school will be named in the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[2498\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July to Question 588 on Private Education: VAT, if she will make it her policy to extend the VAT exemption to children with (a) SEND and (b) in receipt of the Disability Living Allowance.

**James Murray:**

The Government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity, ensuring every child has access to high-quality education, which is why we have made the tough decision to end tax breaks for private schools. This will raise revenue for essential public services, including investing in the state education system

Where pupils are placed in a private school because their needs cannot be met in the state sector, and they have their places funded by their Local Authority, the Local Authority will be able to reclaim the VAT they incur on these pupils' fees. In Northern Ireland, it will be the Education Authority who fund placements in private schools and will be able to reclaim the VAT in this way.

## ■ Public Finance

**James Wild:**

[\[3129\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the statement issued by the Prime Minister's office of 27 July 2024, if she will publish the evidential basis behind the assessment of the state of the UK's economy and public services.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

On 29 July 2024, the Chancellor published the results of the spending audit carried out by the Treasury in a document titled 'Fixing the Foundations – Public spending audit 2024-25'.

The Chancellor has commissioned the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to prepare a full economic and fiscal forecast to be presented alongside a Budget on 30 October.

**Special Educational Needs****Rachael Maskell:**[\[2374\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor for the Exchequer, if she will take steps to ensure that pupils without an education, health and care who have experienced trauma are exempt from the introduction of VAT on private school fees.

**James Murray:**

The Government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity, ensuring every child has access to high-quality education, which is why we have made the tough decision to end tax breaks for private schools. This will raise revenue for essential public services, including investing in the state education system.

Where pupils are placed in a private school because their needs cannot be met in the state sector, and they have their places funded by their Local Authority, the Local Authority will be able to reclaim the VAT they incur on these pupils' fees. In Northern Ireland, it will be the Education Authority who fund placements in private schools and will be able to reclaim the VAT in this way.

Where a placement at a specific private school is necessary to meet the pupil's needs in England, that school will be named in the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This means that the VAT change will not impact pupils with the most acute additional needs, where these needs can only be met in private schools.

**Tax Avoidance****Neil Coyle:**[\[2347\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to review Section 684 activities with reference to the Loan Charge.

**James Murray:**

Section 684 of the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act (ITEPA) 2003 provides for the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) regulations. In 2022, the Court of Appeal considered HMRC's use of section 684(7A)(b) in relation to a disguised remuneration scheme.

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



## ■ Taxation

**Afzal Khan:** [\[2131\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department plans to respond to the consultation entitled Tax Simplification for Alternative Finance, which closed 9 April 2024.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[2132\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing the tax regulations for Sharia-compliant mortgages in line with conventional mortgages.

**James Murray:**

The Government is committed to the continued strength of the UK Islamic Finance sector, both as an important part of the UK's overall financial ecosystem and as an instrument of financial inclusion.

The alternative finance tax rules aim to provide a level playing field for tax purposes across alternative and conventional financing arrangements.

On 16 January 2024, HM Treasury published a consultation proposing changes to the Capital Gains Tax (CGT) rules that apply to alternative finance arrangements. The proposed changes seek to amend those rules so that where property is used as collateral for the purposes of raising finance, the CGT outcome is the same whether alternative finance or conventional finance is used. The consultation also asked whether there are any implications for capital allowances. The consultation closed on 9 April 2024 and the Government is considering responses. Next steps will be set out in due course.

## ■ Travel: Insurance

**Peter Swallow:** [\[3448\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Post-implementation review of the travel insurance signposting rules for consumers with medical conditions, published by the Financial Conduct Authority on 11 April 2024, what progress the Authority has made on implementation of the next steps.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The Government is determined that insurers treat customers fairly and they are required to do so under Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules.

Following its post-implementation review of its travel insurance signposting rules, the FCA set out a number of actions it would be taking to continue to improve access to travel insurance for customers with pre-existing medical conditions.

The FCA, as the independent regulator for financial services, will provide updates on its next steps in due course.

**■ UK Internal Trade: Large Goods Vehicles****Robin Swann:**[\[900173\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the impact of hauliers in supporting trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**James Murray:**

Hauliers play a very important role in supporting trade within the UK. The Government meets regularly with stakeholders involved in trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including representatives of the road haulage industry, particularly in view of the implementation of the Windsor Framework.

**■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland****Jim Allister:**[\[3933\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which body is responsible for taking customs duties that are required on goods moved in the red lane from Great Britain to Northern Ireland on arrival in Northern Ireland.

**James Murray:**

HMRC, as the UK's customs authority, is responsible for collecting customs duties, where applicable, for goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland that are 'at risk' of entering the EU.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Access to Work Programme****Deirdre Costigan:**[\[3864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce Access to Work claim (a) application and (b) renewal times; if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the cap on Access to Work; and if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the Access to Work scheme in helping disabled people to (i) stay in and (ii) start work.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Department for Work and Pensions is committed to reducing waiting times for new applications for Access to Work, as well as renewals. We are considering the best way to deliver that for customers. We have increased the number of staff processing Access to Work claims and have prioritised applications from customers who are about to start a job and renewals.

There are no current plans to change the maximum amount of annual grants available in Access to Work but we will keep this under review.

Access to Work is a popular scheme that helps many disabled people and those with health conditions to have suitable workplace adjustments. The 2018 qualitative evaluation of Access to Work ( [Access to Work: Qualitative Research with applicants](#),

[employers and delivery staff](#) ) reported that customers felt the scheme helped them to retain and progress in employment, improve confidence and mental wellbeing, and better enabled employers to recruit employees with health conditions or disabled employees.

## ■ Attendance Allowance

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

**[2120]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with the Motability charity on inclusion of Attendance Allowance recipients in their scheme.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Motability scheme is open to recipients of enhanced mobility Personal Independence Payment, higher rate mobility Disability Living Allowance, War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement and Armed Forces Independence Payment.

Attendance Allowance does not have a mobility component for those whose needs arise after State Pension age. This is because it is expected that many older people will develop mobility issues as part of the ageing process. Eligible benefits such as DLA or PIP are awarded to individuals under pensionable age and, as long as entitlement conditions remain satisfied, the mobility component can continue to be paid beyond State Pension age.

There are no current plans to include Attendance Allowance as an eligible benefit for the Scheme.

## ■ Bereavement Support Payment

**Ruth Cadbury:**

**[2922]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were denied Bereavement Support Payments in (a) 2024 and (b) 2023.

**Andrew Western:**

**Table 1: Number of Bereavement Support Payment (BSP) claims disallowed during 2023 and 2024**

	2023	2024
<b>Number of claims disallowed</b>	6240	2300

Notes

- Figures for 2023 covers the period of January 2023 to December 2023
- Figures for 2024 only covers the period of January 2024 to March 2024
- The number of claims disallowed have been rounded to the nearest 10

Source: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[2923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were denied Bereavement Support Payments in (a) 2024 and (b) 2023 due to their deceased partner not having made the necessary national insurance contributions.

**Andrew Western:**

**Table 1: Number of Bereavement Support Payment (BSP) claims disallowed due to the deceased partner having insufficient National Insurance Contributions during 2023 and 2024**

	2023	2024
<b>Number of claims disallowed</b>	1660	530

## Notes

- Figures for 2023 covers the period of January 2023 to December 2023
- Figures for 2024 only covers the period of January 2024 to March 2024
- The number of claims disallowed have been rounded to the nearest 10

Source: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

## ■ Carer's Allowance

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[3106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to review the (a) level, (b) eligibility criteria and (c) processes of Carer's Allowance.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Secretary of State undertakes a statutory annual review of benefit and pensions, and the value of Carer's Allowance is protected by up-rating it each year in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI).

This government will keep eligibility criteria and processes of Carer's Allowance under review, to see if it is meeting its objectives.

## ■ Carer's Allowance: Overpayments

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[3104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's strategy entitled Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System: Going Further, updated on 13 May 2024, whether she plans to continue the roll out of alerts telling carers that they have a possible overpayment of Carer's Allowance.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Department is currently assessing the results of a recent trial that issued an SMS message to prompt Carer's Allowance recipients, to remind them to contact the

department to report a change of earning. Changes of circumstances can be reported through Gov.uk, telephony and post.

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[3105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to reduce the (a) number and (b) size of Carer's Allowance overpayments.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

We recognise the challenges carers are facing and we are determined to provide unpaid carers with the support they need and deserve.

With respect to overpayments of Carer's Allowance, we are moving quickly to understand exactly what has gone wrong so we can set out our plan to put things right.

Claimants have a responsibility to report change of circumstances as they happen. Customers taking action as soon as possible, to let the department know of a change will reduce the number and size of overpayments.

#### ■ **Commonwealth: British Nationals Abroad**

**Kevin Bonavia:** [\[2571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will widen Bilateral Social Security Agreements including index-linked state pensions for UK nationals abroad with Commonwealth countries.

**Emma Reynolds:**

UK State Pensions are payable worldwide, without regard to nationality.

The policy on the uprating of UK State Pensions paid overseas is a longstanding one.

UK State Pensions are payable worldwide, without regard to nationality, and are only uprated abroad where there is a legal requirement to do so - for example in countries with which we have a reciprocal agreement that provides for up-rating.

There are no plans to widen Bilateral Social Security Agreements to include the uprating of State Pensions paid to recipients abroad.

#### ■ **Employment: Disability**

**Deirdre Costigan:** [\[3861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact the Disability Employment Charter proposals on disabled people's ability to (a) gain and (b) retain employment.

**Deirdre Costigan:** [\[3865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to implement the recommendations of The Disability Employment Charter.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Government has ambitious employment plans, including for disability employment. We will be setting this out through a forthcoming White Paper, the Employment Rights Bill and the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill. A fully inclusive labour market that enables disabled people and people with health conditions to have access to the same opportunities as everyone else to the benefits of work is crucial to meeting our ambition for an 80% employment rate.

Employers play a key role in supporting the health of their workforce and minimising health-related job loss. Proactive initiatives from employers and all parts of society, such as the Disability Employment Charter, to support disabled people and people with health conditions to thrive in work are welcome. While the Government has not made a formal assessment of its impact, we know that the employers signed up to the Disability Employment Charter are sending a positive message to current and potential employees.

**Equal Pay: Disability****Deirdre Costigan:**[\[3863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish a timeline for the introduction of the right to equal pay for disabled people through the introduction of mandatory disability pay gap reporting for large employers.

**Alison McGovern:**

Following the announcement in the King's Speech in July to take forward work on an Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, and this government's manifesto commitments to introduce the full right to equal pay for disabled people and disability pay gap reporting for large employers, the Disability Unit is currently taking forward work in these areas. Ministers will update the House as this work progresses.

**Occupational Health: Unemployment****Rachael Maskell:**[\[3718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to use occupational health to help reduce levels of economic inactivity.

**Alison McGovern:**

Expert-led impartial advice, including occupational health, can help employers provide appropriate and timely work-based support to manage their employees' health conditions, and also support business productivity.

Occupational health supports employers to maintain and promote health and wellbeing through assessments of fitness for work and advice about reasonable adjustments, work ability or return to work plans, as well as by signposting to treatment for specific conditions. Employers also have a choice about the type and level of Occupational Health service to provide for their employees.

The Government's Occupational Health programme includes £1m of funding for Phase 1 and £1.5m for Phase 2 of an Innovation Fund which has focussed on

increasing small medium enterprises (SME) access to and capacity in the occupational health sector, due for completion in March 2025. The fund has encouraged the development of new models of occupational health tailored to the self-employed and SMEs with a focus on better use of technology.

Further, the Occupational Health Workforce Expansion Funding Scheme (launched in July 2023), has funded registered doctors and nurses to undertake occupational health training courses and qualifications. To date over 200 doctors and nurses have undertaken training with exams taking place in May 2024.

## ■ Pension Credit

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[2369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of pensioners don't receive Pension Credit; and if she will make an estimate of the number of those pensioners living in (i) relative and (ii) absolute poverty.

**Emma Reynolds:**

According to the latest data available, for the financial year 2022/23, 10.7 million pensioners in Great Britain live in a household which is not in receipt of Pension Credit. That is 91% of all pensioners. 1.6 million of these are in relative poverty, and 1.2 million in absolute poverty, after housing costs. This represents 15% and 11% respectively of the relevant populations.

The Government is determined to ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

As part of the current Pension Credit Week of Action, we have joined forces with national charities, broadcasters and local authorities to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim.

From 16 September, we will be running a national marketing campaign on a range of channels. The campaign will target potential pension-age customers, as well as friends and family who can encourage and support them to apply.

Our future campaign messaging will also focus on encouraging pensioners to apply for Pension Credit before the 21 December 2024, which is the last date for making a successful backdated claim for Pension Credit in order to receive a Winter Fuel Payment.

We will work with external partners, local authorities and the Devolved Governments to boost the take-up of Pension Credit.

## ■ Pension Credit: Armed Forces

**Steve Darling:**

[\[3854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to review the inclusion of military compensation as income in the means test for Pension Credit.

**Emma Reynolds:**

There are no plans to change the way in which military compensation such as War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) awards affect Pension Credit.

When calculating a Pension Credit award, 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.

In contrast, payments from other schemes with a disablement element are fully taken into account as income for example, other public servants' schemes, such as the Fire Service, (Firefighters Compensation Scheme), or the Police Service, (Police Pension Scheme), have no income disregards applied at all, as any disablement elements form part of their occupational pension and so these are taken fully into account.

**■ Pension Credit: Take-up****Mary Glendon:****[2889]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent progress her Department has made on increasing the uptake of Pension Credit.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The latest available take-up estimates [Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022) cover the financial year 2021/2022 and suggest an overall Pension Credit take-up rate of 63%. The next take-up estimates covering the financial year 2022/2023 are due to be published in October.

The Government is determined to ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need. We will work with external partners, local authorities and the Devolved Governments to boost the take-up of Pension Credit.

As part of the current Pension Credit Week of Action, we have joined forces with charities, broadcasters and local authorities to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim.

A national Pension Credit marketing campaign in the autumn will focus on encouraging pensioners to apply by 21 December 2024, which is the last date for making a backdated claim for Pension Credit in order to receive a Winter Fuel Payment.



**Mary Glindon:**[\[2892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 9 of the policy paper entitled Fixing the foundations: Public spending audit 2024-25, published on 29 July 2024, what estimate her Department made of the level of uptake of Pension Credit in the (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26 financial year.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The estimate included within Fixing the Foundations assumed a 5 percentage point increase in the take-up of Pension Credit during 2024/25 as a behavioural response to the new link between Winter Fuel Payment entitlement and receipt of Pension Credit. The take-up of Pension Credit and benefits more generally can be affected by a range of factors. As a result, estimates of take-up will be subject to review at each Budget (including Autumn Budget 2024).

The Government is determined to ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

As part of the current Pension Credit Week of Action, we have joined forces with national charities, broadcasters and local authorities to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim.

From 16 September, we will be running a national marketing campaign on a range of channels. The campaign will target potential pension-age customers, as well as friends and family who can encourage and support them to apply.

Our future campaign messaging will also focus on encouraging pensioners to apply for Pension Credit before the 21 December 2024, which is the last date for making a successful backdated claim for Pension Credit in order to receive a Winter Fuel Payment.

We will work with external partners, local authorities and the Devolved Governments to boost the take-up of Pension Credit.

**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[3027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to increase the take-up of pension credit.

**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[3146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to encourage take up of Pension Credit.

**Mr Luke Charters:**[\[3894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to raise awareness of the availability of Pension Credit among people who may be eligible but are not in receipt of Pension Credit.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Government is determined to ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

As part of the current Pension Credit Week of Action, we have joined forces with national charities, broadcasters and local authorities to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim.

From 16 September, we will be running a national marketing campaign on a range of channels. The campaign will target potential pension-age customers, as well as friends and family who can encourage and support them to apply.

Our future campaign messaging will also focus on encouraging pensioners to apply for Pension Credit before the 21 December 2024, which is the last date for making a successful backdated claim for Pension Credit in order to receive a Winter Fuel Payment.

We will work with external partners, local authorities and the Devolved Governments to boost the take-up of Pension Credit.

## ■ Pensioners: Disability

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

[\[2700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to provide additional financial support to disabled people in receipt of the State Pension.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Ensuring a decent foundation State Pension for pensioners is a priority for this Government. That is why we have set out our commitment to the Triple Lock, which will substantially improve outcomes for current and future pensioners.

There are already other benefits for those who are disabled, Attendance Allowance (AA) provides additional financial support towards the extra costs faced by those over State Pension age (SPa) with a severe disability who have care needs. It is neither means-tested, nor based on National Insurance contributions paid and recipients can choose how they wish to spend it.

Those already in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment when they reach SPa can continue to receive those benefits. They are not obliged to switch to claiming AA.

Disability benefits open the door to additional amounts in means tested support, receipt of a disability benefit can provide a passport to additional amounts in means-tested benefits (notably Pension Credit and Housing Benefit) for those on low incomes and to Carer's Allowance for the person providing care for them.

## ■ Poverty: Knowsley

**Anneliese Midgley:**

[\[3300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were living in (a) relative and (b) absolute poverty in Knowsley constituency in each of the last 10 years.

**Alison McGovern:**

Statistics for the total number of people living in relative and absolute poverty are not available at a constituency level.

Statistics on the total number of people in living in relative and absolute poverty both before and after housing costs at regional level are published annually in the Households Below Average Income statistics [Households below average income \(HBAI\) statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-statistics)

Statistics on the number of Children living in absolute and relative poverty per constituency are published annually in the “Children in low income families: local area statistics” publication and can be found in tabs “5\_Relative\_ParIC” and “6\_Absolute\_ParIC”. These are only produced on a before housing cost basis.

A link to these statistics can be found here: [Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2023)

**■ Sick Pay: Disability****Deirdre Costigan:****[3862]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of her plans to strengthen statutory sick pay on the disability employment gap.

**Alison McGovern:**

No one should be forced to choose between their health and financial hardship, which is why we plan to strengthen Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), so it provides a safety net for those who need it most. The Plan to Make Work Pay commits to remove the Lower Earnings Limit to make it available to all workers and remove the waiting period so that everyone receives fair earnings replacement when they have to take time off work.

Any changes to SSP will be accompanied by a full Regulatory Impact Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment to assess the impact of the changes on a range of protected characteristics, but this will not directly assess the impact of the changes on the disability employment gap. However, we would expect that strengthening SSP would increase the overall employment rate of disabled people as well as reduce the difference between the employment rates of disabled and non-disabled people.

**■ Social Security Benefits: Data Protection****Shaun Davies:****[R] [3314]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to share data for free with local councils on (a) Universal Credit, (b) unemployment benefits, (c) young people who are out of work and (d) benefit fraud.

**Alison McGovern:**

DWP share personal data with local authorities. That includes three shares of Universal Credit data, with improvements to two of these due in the next 6 months,

and an additional Universal Credit data share currently being explored. Similarly, DWP share information about citizens on unemployment benefits, and young people out of work in multiple different data shares. On benefit fraud, we work closely with local authorities on HB fraud, and are not aware of any specific requests for any data in relation to this topic. But we are always open to considering local authority requests, so long as there is a legal gateway and business justification to do so.

## ■ Unemployment

**Jim Shannon:** [\[3982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has been made on trends of unemployment rates over the last 12 months.

**Alison McGovern:**

The unemployment rate has fallen slightly over the last 12 months, by 0.1%pts to 4.2%.

The unemployment rate does not capture everyone who is out of work. The economic inactivity rate has increased by 0.7%pts, equivalent to 350,000 people, over the same period. Economic inactivity due to long-term sickness is at a near-record high at 2.8m.

## ■ Universal Credit: Employment

**John McDonnell:** [\[2708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to continue the nationwide rollout of the Mandatory In-Work Progression offer.

**Alison McGovern:**

Getting people into work and helping them to progress at work is central to growing the economy. As part of our growth mission, the Government will produce a Get Britain Working White Paper, to set out the policy framework for delivering on our manifesto commitments.

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[2228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people will no longer be able to access winter fuel payments.

**Emma Reynolds:**

This Government is committed to pensioners – everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement.

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control.

For England and Wales, the changes in eligibility requirements are expected to decrease the number of people who get the Winter Fuel Payment from 10.8m to 1.5m.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need. There are other pensioners who are eligible for Winter Fuel Payments (as they claim other means tested benefits).

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[2366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's oral statement on 29 July 2024, Official Report, column 1038 on Public spending: inheritance, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of changes to the number of people who will be able to claim winter fuel payments on the ability of people in who are (a) in receipt of a State Pension and (b) not in receipt of pension credits to pay their energy bills.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[2367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 43 of Her Majesty's Treasury's policy document entitled, Fixing the foundations public spending audit 2024-2025, published on 29 July 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of removing the Winter Fuel Payment from people living in areas with a high cost of living.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[2368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 43 of her Majesty's Treasury's policy document entitled, Fixing the foundations public spending audit 2024-2025, published on 29 July 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential geographical impact of removing the Winter Fuel Payment from some recipients.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Ministers took account of the equality impacts in reaching their decision to link Winter Fuel Payments to receipt of Pension Credit and other qualifying income-related benefits in England and Wales from winter 2024-25.

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the Government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control. But it remains committed to pensioners – everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement.

Over the next five years we expect over 12 million pensioners will see their State Pensions increase by thousands of pounds as a result of our commitment to the Triple Lock. Protecting the Triple Lock even in the current economic climate shows our steadfast commitment to pensioners.

We are prioritising support for pensioners through our Warm Homes Plan which will support investment in insulation and low carbon heating – upgrading millions of homes over this Parliament. Our long-term plan will protect billpayers permanently, reduce fuel poverty, and get the UK back on track to meet our climate goals.

We know there are pensioner households which aren't claiming the Pension Credit they are entitled to, and we will work with external partners and local authorities to encourage people to make a claim.

**Mary Glendon:** [\[2890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the additional resources it will need to means test winter fuel payments.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The department will deliver this year's Winter Fuel Payments within the existing planned headcount. This is due to linking eligibility to Winter Fuel Payments with existing means tested benefits rather than means testing Winter Fuel Payments separately.

**Victoria Atkins:** [\[2939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the removal of the Winter Fuel Payment for pensioners not in receipt of a means tested benefits on the NHS.

**Emma Reynolds:**

This Government is committed to pensioners – everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement.

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control.

Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged over 80.

In making a decision on Winter Fuel Payment eligibility, the Government had regard to the equality analysis in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements.

**Dr Neil Hudson:** [\[3220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an estimate of the number of pensioners who will have winter fuel payment withdrawn in (a) Epping Forest constituency and (b) England.

**Emma Reynolds:**

In Epping Forest constituency, the estimated number of pensioners who will have Winter Fuel Payments withdrawn is 15,744. In England, the estimated number of pensioners who will have Winter Fuel Payments withdrawn is 8,609,778. This is

based on Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics and 22/23 Winter Fuel Payment statistics, (sources below).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of Pension Credit recipients for Epping Forest constituency and England from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for Epping Forest constituency and England. The Pension Credit data is based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024 in order to be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payments statistics.

Please note that the above does not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up we might see as a result of the policy change (means testing Winter fuel payments to those on Pension Credit and other means tested benefits). We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

Also, the published Pension Credit figures refer to households, so the number of individuals will be higher (i.e. taking account of households where it is a couple claiming Pension Credit).

Furthermore, Pension Credit claimants are the majority of those that will be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments, not all. There are other pensioners who are eligible for Winter Fuel Payments (as they claim other means tested benefits) but they are not considered in these figures as it is not possible to do so.

**Sources used:**

[winter-fuel-payments-caseload-2022-to-2023.ods \(live.com\)](https://www.parliament.uk/data-tables/winter-fuel-payments-caseload-2022-to-2023-ods)

[Stat-Xplore - Table View \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/stat-xplore-table-view) (Feb-24 data)

**Julia Buckley:**

**[3490]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what date people must submit a pension credit claim by to qualify for the 2024 winter fuel allowance.

**Emma Reynolds:**

A claim for Pension Credit can be backdated by up to three months, as long as the conditions of entitlement are met during that period. This means that any claim made by 21 December and successfully backdated can qualify for this year's Winter Fuel Payment.

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Eligibility**

**Mr Richard Holden:**

**[3167]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number and proportion of people previously in receipt of the winter fuel payment who will no longer be eligible to receive it in each (a) local authority and (b) constituency.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The number and proportion of people previously in receipt of the winter fuel payment, who will no longer be eligible to receive it in each local authority and constituency can

be derived using the following published statistics: [winter-fuel-payments-caseload-2022-to-2023.ods \(live.com\)](#) and [Stat-Xplore - Table View \(dwp.gov.uk\)](#).

These are 22/23 Winter Fuel Payment statistics and Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics.

Estimation of those who will no longer be eligible to receive Winter Fuel Payment can be calculated by subtracting the number of Pension Credit recipients for each local authority and constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for each local authority and constituency.

Please note that the Pension Credit data that is used should be based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024 in order to be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payments statistics.

In addition to that, the above figures do not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up. We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

Also, the published Pension Credit figures refer to households, so the number of individuals will be higher (i.e. taking account of households where it is a couple claiming Pension Credit).

Furthermore, Pension Credit claimants are the majority of those that will be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments, not all. There are other pensioners who are eligible for Winter Fuel Payments (as they claim other means tested benefits) but they are not considered in these figures as it is not possible to do so.

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment: Energy

**Victoria Atkins:**

[\[3711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the change in eligibility requirements for the Winter Fuel Payment in Winter 2024-25 on the affordability of energy for people aged over 65 in (a) Louth and Horncastle constituency and (b) rural off-gas grid areas.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Energy support including for those who live in areas off-grid is the responsibility of Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

The Home Upgrade Grant provides grants to low-income households to upgrade the energy performance of the worst quality, off-gas grid homes in England by installing multiple energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating. This will typically include insulation measures in combination with a heat pump to make the home heat efficient and suitable for the future as we build towards net zero.

This Government is committed to pensioners – everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement.

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the Government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control.



Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged over 80.

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment: Louth and Horncastle

**Victoria Atkins:**

**[3709]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of pensioners will no longer be eligible to receive the Winter Fuel Payment in Louth and Horncastle constituency in Winter 2024-25.

**Emma Reynolds:**

In Louth and Horncastle constituency, the estimated proportion of pensioners who will no longer be eligible to receive the Winter Fuel Payment is 90%.

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of Pension Credit recipients for Louth and Horncastle constituency, from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for Louth and Horncastle constituency (using the latest statistics, sources shown below), and dividing by the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for Louth and Horncastle constituency. The Pension Credit data is based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024 in order to be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payments statistics.

Please note that the below does not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up we might see as a result of the policy change (means testing Winter fuel payments to those on Pension Credit and other means tested benefits). We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

Also, the published Pension Credit figures refer to households, so the number of individuals will be higher (i.e. taking account of households where it is a couple claiming Pension Credit).

Furthermore, Pension Credit claimants are the majority of those that will be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments, not all. There are other pensioners who are eligible for Winter Fuel Payments (as they claim other means tested benefits) but they are not considered in these figures as it is not possible to do so.

**Sources used:**

[winter-fuel-payments-caseload-2022-to-2023.ods \(live.com\)](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payments-caseload-2022-to-2023.ods)

[Stat-Xplore - Table View \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/stat-xplore-table-view) (Feb-24 data)

**Victoria Atkins:**

**[3712]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people that will be affected by the change in eligibility requirements for the Winter Fuel Payment in Winter 2024-25 in Louth and Horncastle constituency.

**Emma Reynolds:**

In Louth and Horncastle constituency, the estimated number of pensioners who will have Winter Fuel Payments withdrawn is 26,570.

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of Pension Credit recipients for Louth and Horncastle constituency, from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for Louth and Horncastle constituency (using the latest statistics, sources shown below). The Pension Credit data is based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024 in order to be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payments statistics.

Please note that the below does not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up we might see as a result of the policy change (means testing Winter fuel payments to those on Pension Credit and other means tested benefits). We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

Also, the published Pension Credit figures refer to households, so the number of individuals will be higher (i.e. taking account of households where it is a couple claiming Pension Credit).

Furthermore, Pension Credit claimants are the majority of those that will be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments, not all. There are other pensioners who are eligible for Winter Fuel Payments (as they claim other means tested benefits) but they are not considered in these figures as it is not possible to do so.

**Sources used:**

[winter-fuel-payments-caseload-2022-to-2023.ods \(live.com\)](#)

[Stat-Xplore - Table View \(dwp.gov.uk\)](#) (Feb-24 data)

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

#### ■ Great British Energy: Public Appointments

**Joy Morrissey:**

[\[2492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Chair of Great British Energy was appointed through open competition; what his remuneration is; and whether he has registered his business interests and shareholdings.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 4 September 2024. The correct answer should have been:**

**Michael Shanks:**

The Secretary of State considered a range of candidates for the role of Start Up Chair for Great British Energy and directly appointed Juergen Maier as the strongest candidate. DESNZ intends to run an open, fair and transparent competition to recruit the permanent Great British Energy Chair in due course. The Chair's salary is £114,400 per annum. **Salaries for public appointments made by the department are usually published as part of the annual report and accounts for the relevant body. As the process for the annual report and accounts for Great British Energy is still being finalised, the department has released this information in the interests of transparency to Parliament.** Juergen Maier has declared his interests as part of the appointment process.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### HOME OFFICE

#### ■ Border Security and Asylum

**Minister of State (Dame Angela Eagle):**

[\[HCWS73\]](#)

This government is committed to tackling irregular migration. The tragic incident in the Channel earlier this week is a reminder of why the work to dismantle these dangerous and criminal smuggler gangs and strengthen border security is so vital. The number of asylum seekers crossing the Channel in small boats surged under the previous government. Criminal smuggling gangs are making millions out of these crossings, undermining our border security and putting lives at risk. We will tackle the root of the problem by going after these dangerous criminals and bringing them to justice. That is why this government is implementing a practical plan to tackle the small boat chaos.

The Home Secretary has already launched the new Border Security Command (BSC) to strengthen Britain's border security and smash the criminal smuggling gangs. The BSC will be led by a new Border Security Commander who will provide the cross-system strategic leadership and direction across several agencies, drawing together the work of the National Crime Agency (NCA), Border Force, Policing, the UK Intelligence Community, Immigration Enforcement and the Crown Prosecution Service, to better protect our borders and go after the smuggling gangs facilitating these crossings.

The BSC will work with colleagues across government and with international partners to disrupt the activity of criminal smuggling gangs and ensure those profiting from people smuggling are brought to justice.

As set out in The King's Speech, this government will introduce swift legislative measures to restore order to our border. Work is advancing on the planned Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill which will be introduced at the earliest opportunity. The proposed new legislation will include provisions to give the border security system, including law enforcement partners, stronger powers to disrupt, investigate and prosecute organised criminals facilitating organised immigration crime.

On 21 August the Home Secretary announced the recruitment of up to 100 new specialist intelligence and investigation officers at the NCA, to target, dismantle and disrupt organised immigration crime networks. This comes alongside the 50% uplift in the number of NCA officers stationed in Europol. These officers have been immediately deployed to support European operations to disrupt the activity of criminal smuggling gangs making millions out of small boat crossings.

The government has also established a new returns and enforcement programme to ensure that asylum and immigration rules are properly respected and enforced. Thirteen bespoke returns flights have now departed since we took office on 5 July, returning individuals to a range of countries including Albania, Poland, Romania, Vietnam and Timor-Leste. Those returned have no legal right to be in the UK and include foreign

criminals, failed asylum seekers and other immigration offenders. More than 400 people with no right to be here were flown to one destination country, with more than 200 leaving on a single flight – the largest number of people ever returned on a flight. These flights demonstrate the new government's ambition to take quick and decisive action to speed up removals and secure our borders.

The Home Office is also expanding the detention estate to bolster our capacity for swift, firm, and fair returns. The government is increasing detention spaces to support the higher pace of removals including reopening and adding initially 290 beds across Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) at Campsfield and Haslar, with further expansions in the future. This increase will ensure there is additional capacity to facilitate higher levels of enforcement and returns so that rules are properly respected.

We are rapidly expanding the work across government and with law enforcement partners to target, investigate and enforce penalties on unscrupulous employers who illegally employ those with no right to work here. Intensive Immigration Enforcement operations over the last few weeks have targeted rogue businesses suspected of employing illegal workers. Over the course of the operation, more than 275 premises were targeted, with 135 receiving civil penalty referral notices for employing illegal workers. In addition, 85 illegal migrant workers were detained for removal.

We are also improving value for money in asylum accommodation. The latest review of the proposed Scampton accommodation site has concluded that costs have risen significantly, compared to the initial estimates.

Costs of £60m have already been incurred on the site at Scampton as a result of work done and commitments made by the previous Government.

In addition, the estimated costs of opening the site and running it from this Autumn until the end of planned occupancy in March 2027 has now risen to a further £122m – taking the total cost for using this single site for a short time as asylum accommodation to at least £180m. This is an unacceptable cost. Taking into account these additional costs and projected occupancy levels, this clearly fails to deliver value for money for the taxpayer. This government is mindful of its inherited financial position and is determined to ensure that we deliver the best services at the best value for money for the taxpayer. We have also listened to community feedback highlighting the concerns about the history of the site and alternative development plans.

Although my officials have investigated other potential uses for the site, it is now better value for money to exit the site and avoid all future service provision costs where these have not yet been committed. We will dispose of this site within the rules laid down for Crown land. Although there will be some additional costs of holding and managing the site while this takes place, this still represents a better financial decision.

The government's intention is to return to using long-standing dispersed asylum accommodation and will do so as soon as is practicable, once we have made progress on clearing the backlog. Any decision regarding the use of accommodation sites will be fully considered, with a firm focus on value for money and ensuring proper standards are in place.

**JUSTICE****■ Imprisonment for Public Protection: Changes to Licence**

**Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Shabana Mahmood):**

[\[HCWS72\]](#)

It is right that Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences were abolished. We worked constructively in opposition to progress IPP reforms in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, which represent sensible changes to help rehabilitated offenders serving the IPP sentence on licence in the community to move on from their sentence in a safe and sustainable way. That is why I wish to inform the House of my intention to bring into force the IPP measures in the Act.

Section 66 amends sections 31, 31A and 32 of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 which provide for the termination of licence for those serving sentences of Imprisonment or Detention for Public Protection (DPP) and setting their licence conditions. Section 67 requires the Secretary of State to prepare and publish an annual report about the steps taken to support the rehabilitation of IPP and DPP offenders and their progress towards release from prison or licence termination and lay the report before Parliament.

I am clear that in commencing these reforms, public protection must come first. To ensure HM Prison & Probation Service can effectively manage these changes, the measures will be commenced in a phased approach starting on 1 November 2024, and with all measures commenced by 1 February 2025.

Phase 1 will commence on 1 November 2024 when sections 66 and 67 will come into force. This includes measures to:

- include a statutory presumption that the IPP licence will be terminated by the Parole Board at the end of the qualifying period. In practice, this will mean strong justification on public protection grounds would be needed not to terminate the licence; introduce a provision where an IPP licence will terminate automatically in cases where the Parole Board has not terminated the licence at the end of the qualifying period and where the offender has spent a further two continuous years on licence in the community (i.e. they have not been recalled to prison in that time);
- create a new power for the Secretary of State to release a recalled IPP offender – without the need for a release decision by the Parole Board – following a process known as Risk Assessed Recall Review (RARR);
- allow the Secretary of State to determine that for the purposes of the two-year automatic licence termination period, the prisoner's licence is treated as having remained in force as if it had not been revoked, where it is in the interests of justice to do so. This means that for an IPP or DPP offender released by the Parole Board or the Secretary of State, the Secretary of State can disapply the impact of the recall on the two-year automatic period which will not reset upon the prisoner's re-release from prison; and

- require the Secretary of State to lay an annual report before Parliament about the steps taken to progress those serving IPP sentences towards a safe release.

From 1 November 2024, the qualifying period will be two years for DPP offenders and three years for IPP offenders for the purpose of the automatic licence termination but will remain ten years for other purposes.

Phase 2 will commence on 1 February 2025 where the qualifying period for all other purposes, including when the Secretary of State must refer a DPP or IPP licence to the Parole Board for consideration of licence termination, will be two and three years respectively.

I want to make progress towards a safe and sustainable release for those serving the IPP sentence, but not in a way that impacts public protection. Commencing these measures is the first step in doing so. I will continue to monitor progress in this area, and the Government plans to consult expert organisations to ensure the right course of action is taken to support those serving IPP sentences.

## PRIME MINISTER

### ■ Machinery of Government

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

[\[HCWS71\]](#)

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

Responsibility for Union and devolution policy across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will move from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Cabinet Office. This change will support cross-government coordination and engagement with the devolved governments which will be led by the Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster as Minister for Intergovernmental Relations. Responsibility for devolution policy in England and engagement with Mayors and local government will remain with the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

This change is effective immediately.