



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 9 September 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:53 P.M., 09 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Redundancy Pay

Wera Hobhouse:

[3028]

To ask the Solicitor General, 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 in that period; and how much each Minister received.

Sarah Sackman:

Details of ministerial severance payments are published in the HM Procurator General and Treasury Solicitor Annual Report and Accounts. These can be found here: [Transparency and freedom of information releases - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases).

I confirm that over the period 19 December 2019 to 30 May 2024, the following payments were made:

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Cox KC MP – £23,612 (February 2020)

The Rt Hon Alex Chalk KC – £14,490 (August 2022)

Edward Timpson CBE KC – £14,490 (October 2022)

The Rt Hon Sir Michael Ellis KC – £23,612 (November 2022)

Information on any payments from 31 May 2024 will be released in due course.

All severance payments were made under the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991, which provides for severance payments to ministers who cease to hold office and are not re-appointed to government within three weeks. This reflects the lack of any notice period when ministers leave government.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Batteries: Safety

Kevin Hollinrake:

[2943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to include in the Product Safety and Metrology Bill (a) changes to safety standards for and (b) measures to help prevent ingestion of button batteries.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[2944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will have discussions with (a) Citizens Advice and (b) other stakeholders on the safety of battery-operated products imported from China.

Justin Madders:

UK product safety law requires that all products must be safe before being placed on the market and enforcement authorities have powers to take appropriate action where unsafe or non-compliant products are identified. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) works with stakeholders to ensure the safety of products on the UK Market regardless of their origins.

This Product Regulation and Metrology Bill will ensure the UK is better placed to address product safety issues we face today and in the future. It will allow for agile and robust regulatory measures for products, including lithium-ion and button batteries, placed on the UK market.

■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[3948]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership benefits all parts of the UK equally.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The United Kingdom as a whole will accede to the CPTPP, and every nation and region of the UK is expected to benefit from the agreement, which is expected to increase GDP by £2 billion a year in the long run as published in the Department's Impact Assessment (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cptpp-impact-assessment>). Northern Ireland's gross value added (GVA) is estimated to increase by around £70 million from UK accession to the CPTPP (relative to 2019 values).

The Department has started hosting a series of events leading up to entry into force to ensure businesses are aware of, and know how to take advantage of, the opportunities CPTPP will present. This activity is spread across the UK, including events across the Nations and Regions of the UK, and will increase in the run-up to and beyond entry into force of CPTPP.

■ Conditions of Employment**Jerome Mayhew:****[3092]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Employment Rights Bill on (a) SMEs and (b) other employment.

Justin Madders:

The Department is producing an impact assessment of the Employment Rights Bill, in line with the HMT Green Book and the Better Regulation Framework, consideration will be given to the potential impact on SMEs and other employment effects.

■ Consumer Goods: UK Trade with EU**Sammy Wilson:****[2796]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the EU General Product Safety Regulations on the ability of GB firms to trade with customers in the EU.

Justin Madders:

The updated GPSR largely formalises the reality of how businesses are already operating and the measures are therefore likely to have limited impact in practice. However, where businesses do require some support, we are exploring ways in which the Government can help. We are providing more guidance in this area, will keep this under review and continue to engage businesses directly to ensure we are supporting them to trade freely with the EU.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Communication**Neil O'Brien:****[3081]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how much his Department spent on communications in the latest year for which data is available.

Justin Madders:

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT), including spend by predecessor Department for International Trade (DIT), spent £24,299,000 on communications in financial year 2022-2023 as reported in the Department's annual report and accounts, available on GOV.UK.

This spend has supported DBT's strategic efforts to promote the UK's international trade agenda and achievements, position it as a destination for inward investment, and boost export promotion.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Redundancy Pay**Wera Hobhouse:****[3030]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what the cost to his 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.

Justin Madders:

Under the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991, eligible Ministers who leave office are entitled to a one-off payment equivalent to one quarter of their annual salary at the point at which they leave Government.

Details of such payments are published in the departmental annual reports and accounts, and ministerial salaries are published on GOV.UK at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministerial-salary-data>

■ Zero Hours Contracts

Mary Glendon:

[\[2894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to maintain zero-hours contracts for people who prefer these to other employment options.

Justin Madders:

As outlined in our Plan to Make Work Pay, we will end exploitative zero hours contracts by giving workers the right to a contract that reflects the number of hours they regularly work. We will also introduce a new right to reasonable notice of shifts, with compensation for shifts cancelled or curtailed at short notice.

We appreciate that zero hours contracts work well for some people. Those who are offered guaranteed hours will be able to remain on zero hours contracts if they wish. However we are committed to ending one-sided flexibility, and ensuring that if workers are not benefitting from the flexibility these contracts offer, they have a right to an alternative.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Communications

Neil O'Brien:

[\[3080\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on communications in the last year for which data is available.

Georgia Gould:

Cabinet Office Communications total spend (pay and non-pay) was £2,988,971.49 in FY 23/24, and it has a total budget (pay and non-pay) of £2,460,684.00 in FY 24/25.

■ Cabinet Office: Ministers

Kit Malthouse:

[\[2391\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, 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.

Georgia Gould:

A 'direct appointment' is a Ministerial appointment to a non-statutory office. It does not include appointments to Civil Service roles. Since 5 July 2024, the Cabinet Office has made no statutory or non-statutory direct ministerial appointments.

■ Cabinet Office: Redundancy Pay**Wera Hobhouse:****[3029]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the cost to his 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.

Georgia Gould:

The department publishes details of all ministerial remuneration including compensation for loss of office in its Annual Reports and Accounts.

The information can be viewed on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) at this address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/cabinet-office-annual-reports-and-accounts>

The Cabinet Office has published Annual Reports and Accounts for periods up to and including the financial year 2022/23. The 2023/2024 Annual Report and Account is due to be published in the Autumn. Information related to the financial year 2024/25 will be published after that year has closed.

■ Civil Service: Recruitment**Andrew Griffith:****[4271]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions have taken place at (a) official and (b) ministerial level between the Propriety and Constitution Group and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) on the establishment of the CSC's review of appointments made by exception at delegated grades since 1 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Commission is the independent regulator of Civil Service recruitment and carries out its functions independently of Government and in line with the provisions of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

On Friday 30 August the Civil Service Commissioner wrote to departments, including the CO, to say that they would carry out a short review of appointments made by exception since 1 July.

■ Covid-19 Inquiry**Mark Garnier:****[2069]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an oversight mechanism to monitor the implementation of recommendations from module one of the covid-19 inquiry.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Public inquiries are an important mechanism to learn lessons for the future. The Government will carefully consider all of the findings and recommendations of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 1 report.

Parliament, and in particular its Select Committees, has an important role in scrutinising government policy, including the implementation of inquiries' recommendations.

■ **Emergency Services: Medals**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[3949\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will review the criteria used for the awarding of the Elizabeth Emblem to include those severely injured whilst on emergency services duty.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government recognises the invaluable contribution of emergency service workers to the people of the United Kingdom, and that the nature of that role means those workers will often find themselves in situations that may present a danger to their personal safety.

The Elizabeth Emblem is awarded to the next-of-kin of public servants who have died as a result of their public service. Full details on how to apply for this award, and detailed eligibility criteria, are available on GOV.UK.

While there are no current plans to review the criteria for the Emblem along the lines suggested, the Government is happy to consider the case for any new medal or award, subject to comprehensive assessment across relevant departments.

■ **Government Communication Service: Social Media**

Neil O'Brien:

[\[3073\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the Government Communications Service spent on filming content for Ministers' social media channels in each of the last five years.

Georgia Gould:

Government Departments are responsible for their own social media content. The Government Communications Service does not provide a central resource for this. The Cabinet Office employs two digital officers who are responsible for producing social media content, including videos, for the Department's policies and in support of the Department's Ministers.

■ **Government Departments: Communication and Public Consultation**

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[2628\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 9 of HM Treasury's document entitled Fixing the foundations: Public spending audit 2024-25, published on 29 July 2024, what the estimated cost was of government (a) consultancy and (b) communications in 2022-23; and what the primary sources of each data source are.

Georgia Gould:

Departments set out their spend on consultants in their [Annual Reports and Accounts](#) (ARAs).

Details of all communications activity expenditure for departments is not held centrally.

Government Departments: Procurement

John Glen: [\[2869\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to move the Contracts Finder webpage on gov.uk out of beta status.

Georgia Gould:

The long term future of Contracts Finder is currently under review in anticipation of the launch of the Central Digital Platform, to support the Procurement Act 2023.

Government Departments: Standards

John Glen: [\[2293\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish a list of (a) each scheduled evaluation on the Cabinet Office Evaluation Registry for all government bodies and (b) what the target date is for each.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office Evaluation Registry is due to be launched to the public in the coming months.

Government Property Agency: Facilities

Jon Trickett: [\[2027\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to encourage the Government Property Agency to develop plans to insource facilities management services when contracts expire.

Georgia Gould:

The Government Property Agency's current contracts, which cover nearly 90 Buildings across the current government estate, commenced on 1st November 2023 for a minimum period of 5 years.

The Government Property Agency will consider all options for delivery when planning for the next generation of government contracts, including insourcing.

Life Expectancy: Aldershot

Alex Baker: [\[4108\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of trends in life expectancy in Aldershot constituency.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon Lady's Parliamentary Question of 3 September 2024 is attached.

Attachments:

1. [Letter from the National Statistician](#) [PQ4108.pdf]

■ Ministers: Members' Interests**John Glen:****[2870]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has issued guidance to Ministers on declaring (a) trade union membership, (b) general election donations and (c) constituency association donations in the List of Ministers' Interests.

Georgia Gould:

There is an established process in place for the declaration and management of ministers' private interests.

■ National Security: China**Tracy Gilbert:****[3521]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to tackle the potential security threat posed by Chinese state-linked companies in the Government supply chain.

Andrew Cooper:**[3529]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to tackle the potential security threat posed by Chinese state-linked companies in the Government supply chain.

Georgia Gould:

The Procurement Act 2023 introduces new powers to exclude and debar suppliers from public sector contracts if they pose a national security risk. To implement these powers, the Cabinet Office has established the new National Security Unit for Procurement, responsible for investigating suppliers on national security grounds, both within the government supply chain and for the wider public sector.

We have also taken action to remove surveillance equipment supplied by companies subject to the National Intelligence Law of China from sensitive government sites. A timeline for removal was published on 29 April 2024. The Cabinet Office is monitoring progress against this timeline and departments are on track to replace all such equipment by April 2025.

■ Parliamentary Private Secretaries: Internet**Daisy Cooper:** [2495]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make it his policy to (a) publish on the gov.uk website and (b) keep updated a list of current Parliamentary Private Secretaries.

Ruth Cadbury: [2924]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish a list of Parliamentary Private Secretaries.

Georgia Gould:

The list of Parliamentary Private Secretaries as of September 2024 is published on gov.uk and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-parliamentary-private-secretaries-pps-september-2024>

■ Transport: Costs**Siân Berry:** [2672]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the percentage change in real terms of the average cost per kilometre to an individual of travelling by (a) private car, (b) bus, (c) train and (d) domestic aeroplane since (i) 1997, (ii) 2010, (iii) 2015, (iv) 2017 and (v) 2019.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon Lady's Parliamentary Question of 30/07/24 is attached.

Attachments:

1. [Letter from the National Statistician](#) [PQ2672.pdf]

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Civil Society: Government Assistance****Rebecca Long Bailey:** [2929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector groups fulfilling local service needs.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) has policy responsibility for Civil Society, including voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (VCSEs). DCMS is supporting VCSEs fulfilling local service needs in a number of ways, including:

- Support for local commissioners through the Life Chances Fund to create partnerships between public, private and VCSE sectors as a means to tackle entrenched social issues. This innovative £70m fund has co-funded 29 projects

that are testing the use of social outcomes partnerships (SOPs) to provide flexible and effective local services. Since its launch in 2016 over 100,000 outcomes have been recorded by local projects. The Life Chances Fund will run to March 2025, with some projects continuing beyond this period. This government is continuing to look at how SOPs can be used to continue to support VCSEs.

- Delivery of a number of grant programmes which help VCSEs to in turn support their local communities, including the VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme, the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund and the Social Enterprise Boost Fund.
- Support through social investment which provides access to grants, repayable finance and a blend of the two. This government is continuing to look at how dormant assets can be used to support the availability of finance to facilitate VCSEs becoming more entrepreneurial and financially resilient. An estimated £350 million will flow into the Dormant Assets Scheme between 2024-28, with details on how this money will be allocated to be provided in due course.
- Through the Contract Readiness Programme, a £900,000 package of support enabling VCSEs in England to better compete for government contracts. The programme provides fully funded training for VCSEs interested in bidding for public contracts and support to public sector commissioners to increase awareness and understanding, with the aim of enabling more effective partnerships. Since launch, over 800 VCSEs have benefitted from the programme. This programme will run to March 2025. This government is continuing to look at ways VCSEs and Commissioners can be supported to develop effective partnerships.

■ Commonwealth Games

Adam Jogee:

[\[3486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Commonwealth Games on (a) her policies and (b) grassroots sports in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Stephanie Peacock:

The UK is proud to have hosted the Commonwealth Games twice in the past decade. This government welcomes the £1bn of Gross Value Added to the UK economy from the Games, including hundreds of millions to the local economy in the West Midlands. The Legacy Enhancement Fund from the Games continues to drive inward investment to and grassroots activity in the region, ensuring the area benefits from a lasting legacy of hosting the Games.

The Government is committed to developing grassroots sport and will work with our Arms Length Body Sport England to support projects which facilitate participation in the Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency. DCMS's Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities and Park Tennis Courts programme have already had an impact in the area by investing in a new 3G football surface at Roe Lane Playing Fields, and will continue to deliver high-quality, inclusive grassroots facilities that help more people access sport wherever they live.

■ Cultural Heritage: Railways**Mr Richard Holden:****[3170]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many heritage railways have received grants or financial assistance from the Government since 1999; and how much each of those which have been given support has received.

Chris Bryant:

Since 1999, the National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded £70,562,212 to the UK's heritage railways.

Within that amount, DCMS funded over 60 heritage steam organisations through the Culture Recovery Fund (2020 - 2021) providing nearly £15 million in support for the heritage rail sector. This has included multiple awards supporting the infrastructure of iconic heritage railways such as Ffestiniog, Bluebell and Severn Valley, as well as the restoration of individual locomotives and elements of rolling stock, including the world-famous Flying Scotsman.

Since 1999, Historic England (previously English Heritage) has awarded £280,396 to the UK's heritage railways. This included sites such as Bowes Railway Company in the North East which received seven grants since 2002 totalling £515,834. In addition, Bowes Railway Company received £36,241 (July 2020 to March 2021) through a Covid-19 Emergency Grant. Lynton and Barnstaple Railway Community Interest Company received £3,374 (June 2020 to September 2020) through a Covid-19 Emergency Grant. A £49k repair grant was provided towards the cost of the restoration of a Grade II* listed turntable in St Blazey, Cornwall in 2021. The turntable has been restored to operational condition by a social enterprise company, and allows main line steam engines to run into Cornwall on railtours bringing tourists to the Duchy, and be turned ready for their return journey. Historic England has also been supporting the Railway 200 celebrations in many ways including research, outreach and listing sites with links to heritage rail.

We do not hold information on grants given from parts of Government that are not DCMS and its arms length bodies.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Civil Society**Paula Barker:****[3196]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans her Department has to engage with civil society on the delivery of the Government's programme.

Paula Barker:**[3198]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to use the (a) expertise and (b) capacity of the voluntary and community sector to help (i) develop and (ii) deliver the Government's policy objectives.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to resetting the relationship with civil society and treating them as an equal, expert partner who will be integral to delivery of the Government's vision for national renewal.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has policy responsibility for civil society. Ministers and senior officials are engaging regularly with a range of civil society leaders to discuss the contribution that civil society can make to Government priorities.

Work is currently underway across Government to shape and define the five core missions and DCMS is working closely with lead departments to ensure that civil society is appropriately involved in delivery of these missions.

■ **Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Communications**

Neil O'Brien:**[3084]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much her Department spent on communications in the last year for which data is available.

Stephanie Peacock:

Communications supports the government in delivering for the public, ensuring information is shared widely and effectively, informed by data and using a broad range of channels. In DCMS, an in-house team delivers communications with a limited supporting budget, used for example to help deliver campaigns that reach members of the public who don't frequently engage with traditional media. In addition, internal communications ensures staff are informed and engaged - a proven driver of productivity - in support of delivering government and departmental priorities.

Spend on communications for the Department for Culture, Media & Sport during the 2023/24 financial year was £552,010.27 as outlined below:

COMMUNICATIONS SPENDING FOR FY 2023/24

Media monitoring and services	£242,753.55
Campaigns	£156,121.22
Research & Evaluation	£107,775.00
Digital services & equipment	£20,510.50
Internal Communications	£24,850.00

To note, the figures for 2023/24 are still being audited and so could be subject to change. The Annual Report and Accounts to be published in November 2024 post audit.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Redundancy Pay**Wera Hobhouse:** [\[3031\]](#)

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

Stephanie Peacock:

Under the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991, eligible Ministers who leave office are entitled to a one off payment equivalent to one quarter of their annual salary at the point at which they leave the government.

This applies only where a Minister is under 65 and is not appointed to a ministerial office within three weeks of leaving government.

Individuals may waive the payment to which they are entitled. That is a matter for their personal discretion, but this approach has been taken in the past.

Details of such payments are published in departmental [annual reports and accounts](#), and ministerial salaries are published on [GOV.UK](#). Future disclosures for 2023/24 will be published in due course.

■ Gambling**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** [\[2703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she plans to take to prevent gambling harms in the context of the findings of the Gambling Survey for Great Britain published on 25 July 2024.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[2704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take urgent steps to implement the reforms set out in the white paper entitled High stakes: gambling reform for the digital age, published by the previous Administration on 27 April 2023.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[2705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will immediately implement a statutory levy on gambling operators to fund research, education and treatment of gambling harms.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[2706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the prevalence of gambling advertising in the context of the findings of the Gambling Survey of Great Britain, published on 25 July 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

We are in the early stages of the new Government and are still considering the full range of gambling policy. The Government recognises the impact harmful gambling can have on individuals and their families and, as stated in its manifesto, the

Government is committed to strengthening the protections for those at risk. The Government will consider the best available evidence from a wide range of sources, including the Gambling Commission's Gambling Survey for Great Britain (GSGB), to inform decisions on how best to fulfil its manifesto commitment to reducing gambling-related harm.

■ **Gambling: Advertising**

Graham Leadbitter:

[\[3604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the Advertising Standards Authority upholds advertising standards in relation to pre-watershed online gambling adverts on (a) YouTube and (b) other websites.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is the independent body responsible for regulating advertising in the UK across traditional forms of media (print, radio, TV) and online. The Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) and Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP), sister organisations of the ASA, are responsible for codifying the standards for advertising to the marketing industry as part of their CAP and BCAP Codes. The government is not involved in these codes, nor in the investigations and enforcement delivered by the ASA.

However, as part of the Gambling Commission's licence conditions, gambling operators who advertise in the UK must comply with the advertising Codes. The ASA has the power to take action where there is evidence of advertising in breach of the Codes, wherever it appears, and the ASA can and does refer operators' advertising to the Gambling Commission for possible regulatory action.

■ **Holiday Accommodation: Licensing**

Jayne Kirkham:

[\[4135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to bring forward legislation on short term lets licensing.

Chris Bryant:

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 is already in place. This will enable us to reap the benefits of a thriving visitor economy whilst protecting the spirit and fabric of communities, including by giving local authorities valuable data on short-term lets in their area to help address possible housing impacts. We will set out further detail on how the scheme will work as soon as practicable.

■ **Matthew Webb**

Shaun Davies:

[\[3318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Captain Matthew Webb swimming the English Channel.

Stephanie Peacock:

As the first person recorded to swim unaided across the Channel, Captain Matthew Webb's achievement has no doubt inspired many people to undertake record breaking challenges of endurance. My department is not planning to commemorate the anniversary. Parliamentarians may choose to mark the occasion in other ways, for example by tabling a debate or an Early Day Motion to mark the achievement.

■ **Museums and Galleries: Fees and Charges****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[3164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to charge non-UK nationals to visit free museums.

Chris Bryant:

No.

■ **Olympic Games: Paris****Sammy Wilson:**[\[2797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made representations to the International Olympic Committee on the Paris Olympics opening ceremony.

Stephanie Peacock:

I have made no representations to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on the Paris Olympics opening ceremony.

The British Olympic Association, as the National Organising Committee for Great Britain and Northern Ireland, is the domestic representative to the IOC and does so operating independently of Government.

■ **Piers****Patrick Hurley:**[\[3327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many seaside piers there are; where those piers are located; which piers are local authority controlled; and which are privately owned.

Chris Bryant:

The Department for Culture, Media, and Sport does not hold this information centrally. The National Piers Society can be contacted for further information on this matter at <https://piers.org.uk/>

■ **Rugby: Finance****Paula Barker:**[\[3210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what funding her Department provides to support the growth of grassroots rugby league.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, should have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

The Government provides the majority of support for grassroots sport through our Arm's Length Body, Sport England - which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding. Since 2019, Sport England has provided over £34 million of support to programmes which facilitate participation in grassroots rugby league.

The Rugby Football Union (RFL) is the National Governing Body for rugby league and receives £11 million of funding from Sport England across up to five years to help deliver strategic objectives, including tackling inequalities and improving access to sport.

■ Sports Competitors: Disability**Andrew Cooper:**[\[3532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to provide additional funding to UK Sport to support aspiring para athletes at the grassroots level.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government provides the majority of support for grassroots sport through our Arm's Length Body, Sport England - which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding.

In Sport England's ten-year strategy, Uniting the Movement, they have ensured that each of their programmes directly help disabled people, and those with a long-term health condition, with initiatives like the 'We are Undefeatable' campaign and partnerships with disability sport organisations.

The Culture Secretary recently attended the launch of ParalympicGB's Equal Play Campaign where she expressed her determination to put sport at the heart of the school curriculum. This includes opening up opportunities for all young people, including those with disabilities, to be able to access sport and physical activity at school.

To fund the next generation of Olympic and Paralympic talent, Sport England is investing £120 million to increase participation in sport and boost diversity at a grassroots level to give more and better opportunities to all young people to explore and develop their potential.

■ Sports: Facilities**Helen Morgan:**[\[4278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to improve the standard of grassroots sports facilities in rural areas.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of where they live, has access to and benefits from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

The Government provides the majority of funding for grassroots sport through our Arm's Length Body, Sport England - which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding in areas of greatest need to tackle inactivity levels through community-led solutions. Sport England's Movement Fund offers crowdfunding pledges, grants and resources to improve physical activity opportunities for the people and communities who need it the most.

Funding from the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme continues to be invested in England through Sport England and our delivery partner, the Football Foundation.

■ Sports: Market Drayton

Helen Morgan: [3837]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to improve access to sports facilities in Market Drayton.

Helen Morgan: [4056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to expand the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme to include facilities in Market Drayton.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, has access to and benefits from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

The Government provides the majority of funding for grassroots sport through our Arm's Length Body, Sport England - which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding in areas of greatest need to tackle inactivity levels through community-led solutions.

The Government is also acting to support more people to get onto the pitch wherever they live through the delivery of £123 million UK-wide through the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme in 2024/25.

Funding from the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme continues to be invested in England through Sport England and our delivery partner, the Football Foundation, who plan their investment pipeline based on Local Football Facility Plans (LFFPs) which have been developed in partnership with local authorities and are in the process of being refreshed to reflect the current landscape. The existing LFFP for Shropshire can be found by visiting the Football Foundation's [website](#), and North Shropshire has benefitted from £152,070 of investment under this programme and the Swimming Pool Support Fund to date.

Should a constituent have an enquiry about prospective investment at a specific facility, they can get in touch with the Football Foundation directly via enquiries@footballfoundation.org.uk.

■ World Heritage Sites: Ironbridge Gorge

Shaun Davies:

[3317]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what support her Department is providing to (a) Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and (b) the wider World Heritage Site in Ironbridge Gorge.

Chris Bryant:

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust is a National Portfolio Organisation funded by Arts Council England, and receives £749,709 annually.

In 2022 Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (IGMT) also received £9.975m from Cultural Assets Fund as part of DCMS Culture Recovery Fund.

In addition, since 1994, National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded more than £12.7 million within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site area and has awarded the IGMT more than £20.9 million.

Historic England, the Government's statutory advisor on heritage and a DCMS arm's length body, provides support and advice on specific issues related to the management of the wider Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site.

■ Youth Services

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[3662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure there is adequate provision for youth services in all regions.

Stephanie Peacock:

This Government is committed to giving all young people the chance to reach their full potential and recognises the vital role that youth services and activities play in improving their life chances and wellbeing.

As set out in section 507B of the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a statutory duty to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people. This is funded from the local government settlement.

Additionally, as a government we are keen to ensure that there is appropriate youth provision to stop young people being drawn into crime and facing other poor outcomes. This is why we are creating the Young Futures programme, which will see the establishment of Prevention Partnerships in every local authority and the rollout of youth hubs across England and Wales. These Partnerships, supported by a network of hubs, will bring local services together and deliver support for young people to help them live safe and healthy lives.

This will build on the DCMS funding to invest £500 million in youth services to ensure every young person will have access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer.

■ Youth Services: Standards

Andrew Cooper:

[\[3530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure the adequacy of the level of provision of youth services.

Stephanie Peacock:

This Government is committed to giving all young people the chance to reach their full potential and recognises the vital role that youth services and activities play in improving their life chances and wellbeing.

As set out in section 507B of the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a statutory duty to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people. This is funded from the local government settlement

Additionally, as a government we are keen to ensure that there is appropriate youth provision to stop young people being drawn into crime and facing other poor outcomes. This is why we are creating the Young Futures programme, which will see the establishment of Prevention Partnerships in every local authority and the rollout of youth hubs across England and Wales. These Partnerships, supported by a network of hubs, will bring local services together and deliver support for young people to help them live safe and healthy lives.

This will build on the DCMS funding to invest £500 million in youth services to ensure every young person will have access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[2799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 1 February 2024 on Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Scheme Update, HCWS233, whether he plans to investigate the reasons for the inconsistent application of ARAP criteria for members of (a) CF333 and (b) ATF444.

Luke Pollard:

I am deeply concerned that many members of CF333 and ATF444 (the Triples) - our friends and allies - who should be eligible for ARAP remain in grave circumstances. As such, my clear focus is getting the Triples Review back on track and bringing all those individuals receiving overturned decisions to safety in the UK.

I have been working closely with officials since my Ministerial appointment to put in place the necessary conditions to get this right and ensure that the ARAP criteria are applied consistently across all applications in scope.

I fully intend to update the House on the review as soon as possible.

■ **Armed Forces: Northern Ireland**

Jim Allister: [\[4152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many British Army service personnel (a) live and (b) work in Northern Ireland.

Jim Allister: [\[4153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many full-time Royal Naval service personnel (a) live and (b) work in Northern Ireland.

Jim Allister: [\[4154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many full-time Royal Air Force service personnel (a) live and (b) work in Northern Ireland.

Luke Pollard:

The below table shows the number of UK Regular personnel stationed in Northern Ireland by Service as at 1 July 2024.

SERVICE	TOTAL
Royal Navy/Royal Marines	5
Army	1,230
RAF	70

The figures provided are based on Service personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence - where personnel work isn't necessarily where they live. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location. The Royal Navy/Royal Marines personnel on sea service are included against the local authority containing the home port of their ship.

Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 to prevent inadvertent disclosure. However, numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest 20 to prevent systematic bias. Figures between 1 and 5 inclusive are rounded to 5 to prevent possible disclosure. Totals have been rounded separately, and so Totals may not equal the sums of their rounded parts.

The below table shows the number of UK Regular personnel with a registered home address in Northern Ireland by Service as at 3 September 2024.

SERVICE	TOTAL
Royal Navy/Royal Marines	275
Army	1,121
RAF	237

This data is based on the Permanent Home Address in Northern Ireland recorded on the Joint Personnel Administration system (JPA).

■ Armed Forces: Workplace Pensions

Sam Carling:

[\[3621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to resume calculations of Cash Equivalent Transfer Valuations frozen as a result of the McCloud judgement for members of the Armed Forces Pension Scheme.

AI Carns:

In order to comply with 2015 Pension Remedy legislation (The Armed Force Remediable Service Regulations 2023), updated guidance is required from the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) to enable the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) to respond to requests for Cash Equivalent Transfer Valuations (CETVs) and to implement Pension Sharing Orders that relate to a member's remediable service.

Given the complexity of the 2015 Pension Remedy, the necessary guidance has been compiled in two stages.

The revised methodology has been finalised for individuals who are active or deferred members, or are pensioners who have made their remedy choice and whose relevant under/over payments have been settled. Work on requests received on or after 1 October commenced at the end of May 2024. These cases continue to be dealt with as swiftly as possible in order of the date they were received.

The calculation method is not yet confirmed for pensioner members who are yet to make their remedy choice within their election period, or where a remedy choice has been made, but any relevant under/overpayments have not been settled. The MOD is therefore currently unable to issue CETVs to these members.

Once the Ministry of Defence (MOD) receives these calculation instructions, the process and quality assurance checks will be put in place to process the outstanding cases. To mitigate the impact on those individuals affected, the MOD will, on receipt of a valid request for a CETV, prioritise the issue of the Remediable Service Statement.

Information has been published on the AFPS pages on Gov.UK at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/668cf40cd9d35187868f46a9/2015_Pension_Remedy_-_Divorce_Information_Note.pdf

■ Australia: Foreign Relations**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[2757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has met his Australian counterpart since 5 July 2024.

Luke Pollard:

The Secretary of State for Defence met his Australian counterpart, the Hon. Richard Marles MP, on 13 July 2024 when the Minister joined the Secretary of State on a visit to Sheffield Forgemasters.

■ Bangladesh: Armed Forces and Police**Apsana Begum:**[\[2525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) members of the Bangladeshi police, (b) members of the Bangladeshi Rapid Action Battalion and (c) other Bangladeshi personnel have been trained at Sandhurst in the last five years.

Luke Pollard:

No members of the Bangladeshi police or the Bangladeshi Rapid Action Battalion have been trained at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) in the last five years. Given the relatively low numbers of Bangladeshi personnel who have been training at RMAS, commercial sensitivities and data protection legislation restricts the disclosure of the figure. I hope the hon. Member will understand that this is to protect the identities of those trained at RMAS.

■ Commonwealth War Graves Commission**Adam Jogee:**[\[3464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has held discussions with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission since his appointment.

Al Carns:

The Secretary of State for Defence recognises the important work conducted by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) in maintaining the graves and memorials of fallen sailors, soldiers and aviators from the two world wars, in 23,000 locations across more than 150 countries and territories, and in telling their stories to new generations. Having engaged previously with the CWGC, the Secretary of State now looks forward to meeting the Commissioners, and working with them, in his capacity as Chair of the Commission.

■ Defence: Northern Ireland**Jim Allister:**[\[4155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of maximising the geo-strategic potential of Northern Ireland in the defence of the UK (a) in general and (b) in the context of its position relative to western approaches.

Luke Pollard:

Northern Ireland plays an important role in defending the UK, particularly through its defence industry which continues to contribute to the support provided to Ukraine. The Strategic Defence Review, launched by the Prime Minister on 16 July, will determine the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence to meet the challenges, threats and opportunities of the twenty-first century.

■ **Defence: Reviews****James Cartlidge:**[\[4233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will set out the assumed spending envelope for the Strategic Defence Review.

Luke Pollard:

The Strategic Defence Review will determine the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence to meet the challenges, threats and opportunities of the twenty-first century, as deliverable and affordable within the resources available to Defence within the trajectory to 2.5%. The Treasury will set out the path to spending 2.5 per cent of GDP on defence at a future fiscal event.

■ **Hammas: Russia****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[2764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the extent of relations between Hamas and Russia.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence continues to assess the international relationships of terrorist organisations on regional and global security, alongside the potential policy implications.

■ **Israel: Security****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[2762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the security situation in Israel.

Luke Pollard:

The Secretary of State for Defence has regular discussions with his Israeli counterpart regarding the security situation in Israel.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Redundancy Pay****Wera Hobhouse:**[\[3042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to his 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.

AI Carns:

Ministerial severance payments in each year from December 2019 to May 2024 are published as part of the annual report and accounts for the Department.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-defence-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024>

■ Navy: Recruitment**Kim Leadbeater:****[3273]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to update the Basic Eligibility And Entry Standards to the Royal Navy to allow applications from individuals with asthma when their condition is managed.

Luke Pollard:

Joint Service Publication (JSP) 950 Leaflet 6-7-7 Section 4 Annex D sets out the current medical entry standards for the Armed Forces for respiratory conditions, including asthma.

Medical entry standards, including those relating to asthma, are regularly reviewed by subject matter experts, military health professionals and military occupational physicians to ensure they are fair to everyone with aspirations of an Armed Forces career and are informed by the latest medical evidence and developments in treatment and diagnosis.

We are reviewing medical criteria as part of our work to look at recruitment. A detailed review of the annexes within Section 4 of JSP 950 Leaflet 6-7-7 is currently underway, with a wide range of specialists engaged. Updated annexes will be published as they are reviewed and endorsed.

■ Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023: Veterans**Andrew Bowie:****[3018]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential (a) impact of the proposed repeal and replacement of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 on veterans and (b) need for support for veterans in the context of potential civil action.

Andrew Bowie:**[3019]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposed repeal and replacement of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 on veterans.

AI Carns:

The Government recognises the dedicated service of veterans and serving personnel who did so much to keep people in Northern Ireland safe during the Troubles. We will engage closely with the veterans community on the way forwards in the Government's approach to legacy.

We recognise the impact that historical investigations can have on serving and retired Service personnel, including on their mental health. This Government is committed to supporting our veterans by providing welfare and appropriate legal support, at public expense, to those involved in ongoing legal processes. Veterans are offered a range of welfare support, for their individual needs and circumstances.

■ **Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Pay**

Dame Caroline Dinenge: [\[3668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to review his Department's 2023-24 pay settlement to employees of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

AI Carns:

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary are highly valued, specialist personnel who play a critical role in delivering the UK's defence outputs.

We are committed to listening to their concerns and keeping a continued dialogue to address the issues they have raised.

■ **Royal Hospital Chelsea: Grants**

Ben Coleman: [\[4151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to reduce the annual grant-in-aid to the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

AI Carns:

There are no plans to reduce the annual grant-in-aid to the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

■ **Russia: Ukraine**

Sir Julian Lewis: [\[3937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the use of gas by Russia in Ukraine; and whether he plans to supply respirators to Ukraine.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence continues to assess and monitor the evolving threat picture in Ukraine, including Russian use of chemicals as a method of warfare. The UK has been at the forefront of international support and assistance to the armed forces of Ukraine and has provided respirators and decontamination kits, as well as other protective measures to enhance Ukraine's protective capabilities against chemical weapons.

Our commitment to Ukraine is unwavering, we continue to work closely with our international partners to coordinate counter-CBRN support and assistance to the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

■ Ukraine: Warships

Graeme Downie:

[\[3596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Ukrainian naval ships are docked in UK waters; and what plans he has to return those ships to the Ukrainian navy for active service.

Luke Pollard:

The Royal Navy transferred two Sandown class mine countermeasure vessels to the Ukrainian Navy last year, both of which are docked in the UK.

The ships company are undergoing training and exercises with the Royal Navy and NATO partners to prepare them for future operations in the Black Sea. They are welcome to remain in the UK for as long as they need to.

■ Veterans: Compensation and Pensions

Steve Darling:

[\[3856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the number of veterans who were in receipt of the (a) War Disablement Pension, (b) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, (c) Service Invaliding Pension and (d) Service Attributable Pension on 2 September 2024.

Al Carns:

As at 30 June 2024, the latest date for when data is available, 78,469 veterans were in receipt of a disablement pension under the War Pension Scheme (WPS) and 4,798 veterans were in receipt of a Guaranteed Income Payment (GIP) following an injury/illness claim under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS).

As at 4 September 2024, the estimated number of veterans in receipt of a Service Invaliding Pension (SIP) is 12,744 and the estimated number of veterans in receipt of a Service Attributable Pension (SAP) is 1,685.

EDUCATION

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Mr Paul Kohler:

[\[900339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support creative education institutions.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises that the creative arts are essential contributors to our economy, society and soft power. Strategic Priorities Grant funding for specialist providers has been protected; the department is working with the sector to ensure a stable and secure higher education sector that provides a rich range of subjects, including the arts.

Catherine Atkinson:

[\[900340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with early years stronger practice hubs on funding.

Stephen Morgan:

The department has offered all Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs further funding until 31 March 2025 so they can continue providing early years educators with support to improve practice, supporting our mission to break down barriers to opportunity by giving children the best start in life.

The Stronger Practice Hubs Programme launched in 2022 to address the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the youngest children, with a focus on the most disadvantaged areas. The Hubs support early years settings and childminders by sharing effective practice, learning from the best available evidence, and building lasting local networks.

The department is committed to ensuring that every child in an early years setting receives high quality education and care. Evidence shows that this has a positive impact on outcomes in both the short and long term, particularly for the most disadvantaged children.

Jo White:

[\[900341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to identify children who are educated outside school.

Perran Moon:

[\[900343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to identify children who are educated outside school.

Stephen Morgan:

The department is committed to giving every child the best start in life, regardless of where and how they are educated. We cannot ignore the rising numbers of home-educated children and official data which shows that growing numbers of children have been moved into home education due to mental health concerns or lack of provision for special educational needs in their local schools.

Local authorities have legal duties to be satisfied that all children are receiving a suitable education. However, this duty is undermined by the fact that parents have no obligation to inform their local authority of their decision to home educate. This means that local authorities are unable to fulfil their duties. There is a risk that children are going under the radar and missing out on the education they deserve that will enable them to access the best opportunities in life.

For this reason, the government will use the Children's Wellbeing Bill to require English local authorities to maintain registers of children not in school. Parents and certain out-of-school education providers will be required to provide information for those registers. This will help local authorities piece together a fuller and more accurate picture of those children who are receiving education otherwise than at

school and target resources to locating and supporting those who are missing out on education. Local authorities will also have a duty to provide support to those home-educators who request it, which will act as an incentive for families to register.

The registers will contain information on those children who are registered on a school roll and are receiving education otherwise than at school. It will not include children who are on a school roll but failing to attend. The department is taking separate action on that important issue of persistent absence.

In terms of this new system of registration, parents can be assured that the registers will not be used to criminalise any parent who does not send their child to school. Parents who do not provide information for the registers will result in their local authority being unable to be satisfied that a child is not receiving a suitable education and so the local authority will need to proceed to a formal request for evidence about that education. If that evidence is not forthcoming, or is insufficient, this will usually lead to the local authority needing to issue a School Attendance Order. This is the same mechanism that exists in the current law; no change will be made.

The government takes the matter of data protection very seriously, including any threats to privacy and personal data. Local authorities will be legally restricted as to whom they may share register information with and for what purposes. The usual provisions of the UK-GDPR will apply to all data processing activities.

The department continues to work with local authorities on existing non-statutory registers and to collect data from those registers.

■ Adoption

Gregory Stafford:

[\[3654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to provide support to people who were subject to forced adoption between 1940 and 1970.

Janet Daby:

I have the deepest sympathy with everyone affected by historic forced adoption. The practice was abhorrent and should never have taken place. Moreover, the treatment that women experienced during this time was very wrong.

Following the report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR), 'The Violation of Family Life: Adoption of Children of Unmarried Women 1949-1976 (2022)', regulations were amended in 2023 to make it easier for adults to access adoption support. These amendments were widely welcomed.

The department is also currently funding the Adoption England project Improving Adoption Services for Adults (IASA) which is designed to maintain relationships and access to better support for adopted adults, including those adopted between 1940-1970.

■ Adult Education: Finance

Rosie Duffield:

[\[3053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Adult Skills Fund to cover learning (a) primarily and (b) solely for leisure purposes.

Janet Daby:

The government has devolved and delegated approximately 60% of the adult skills fund (ASF) to the 9 Mayoral Combined Authorities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, North East, South Yorkshire, Tees Valley, West Midlands, West of England, West Yorkshire and the Greater London Authority. The authorities are now responsible for the provision of adult education and allocation of the ASF in their local areas and it is for them to decide how they wish to prioritise funding.

In the remainder of England, the department continues to be responsible for adult skills funding. Within the ASF, the department will not fund provision where the primary or sole intent of the learning is for leisure.

The government has to take difficult decisions on where to prioritise funding. Given the economic and social challenges in the country, it is right that the primary purpose of the ASF is to support learners into employment and to progress to further learning. The ASF also supports wider outcomes including improving health and wellbeing, equipping parents and carers to support their child's learning and developing stronger and more integrated communities.

■ Childcare

James Wild:

[\[3130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to expand childcare to 30 hours per week for all eligible families with children aged between nine months and three years from September 2025.

Stephen Morgan:

Expanding access to affordable and high quality childcare is key to breaking down barriers to opportunity and is one of the driving missions of this government.

From 2 September 2024, hundreds of thousands of eligible working parents of children from nine months old have begun to access 15 hours of government-funded early education per week.

The department is looking ahead to delivering the expansion to 30 funded hours from next September. Eligible working parents of children aged nine months and above will be able to access 30 hours (over 38 weeks a year) from the term following their child turning nine months to when they start school.

The department is already taking action to help deliver the additional places needed for the next phase and to deliver the remainder of the promised 3,000 school-based nurseries from 2026 onwards, with a greater focus on more disadvantaged families.

James Wild:

[\[3131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many parents have applied for government-funded childcare codes for September 2024; and how many codes have been validated by childcare providers.

Stephen Morgan:

Since 2 September 2024, eligible working parents of children from nine months old can access 15 hours of government-funded early education per week.

Take up from parents is roughly in line with the position at this point in time prior to the April phase of the rollout for eligible working parents of two year olds. Internal figures show a similar trajectory, with over 200,000 entitlement codes validated by providers, meaning parents have secured a place. Thanks to the hard work of local authorities and childcare providers, the department is confident delivery is on track.

The department has not published figures yet because it normally takes a few weeks for local authorities and providers to have validated codes following the 31 August application deadline. The department will be publishing data on codes issued and codes validated for September 2024 in due course.

James Wild:

[\[3132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many additional places will be required in September 2024 for the expanded childcare offer.

James Wild:

[\[3134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many places will be required in September 2024 for the expanded childcare offer.

Stephen Morgan:

Ensuring that parents are able to access affordable and high quality childcare is a top priority. The department's focus in reforming the system will be to ensure that there are greater and more equal opportunities to access early education for every family, and that there are greater opportunities for children to thrive and develop. As an initial step, the department is working to deliver new places in 3,000 nurseries through upgrading space in primary schools. This will help deliver the expansion in childcare entitlements and ensure that a variety of different types of provision are available that suit the needs of different parents.

Based on assumptions around take-up, likely hours used and whether children are new or existing users of childcare, there is estimated to be demand of an additional 15,000 places for September 2024.

Thousands of children, aged from nine months, will get government-funded childcare for the first time, allowing them to access 15 hours a week, over 38 weeks a year, of high quality, accessible childcare.

Further information on the underpinning assumptions behind these estimates was published in the 2023 Spring Budget Policy costing information note:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66221ba8252f0d71cf757d2b/Spring_budget_2023_childcare_expansion_costing_note_information.pdf.

The department will continue to monitor the sufficiency of childcare provision through regular conversations with local authorities.

James Wild: [3133]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many additional staff will be required in September 2024 for the expanded childcare offer.

Stephen Morgan:

The department knows that to deliver the expanded early years entitlements, the sector will need additional staff. In total, the department estimated that compared to 2023, the new entitlements will create an increased need for workers in the region of 9,000 in September 2024.

In 2023, the number of staff increased by 12,900 (4%), from 334,400 in 2022, to 34,300 in 2023. This was before the department introduced interventions to support the growth of the workforce.

James Wild: [3136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many childcare places the 3,000 additional school-based nursery classrooms will provide.

Stephen Morgan:

High quality early education and childcare is a crucial opportunity to transform life chances.

In the coming months, the government will be setting out plans to deliver new places in 3,000 nurseries through upgrading space in primary schools. This will include both school-run nurseries and schools partnering with private, voluntary and independent providers.

The department is working closely with schools, local authorities and providers to understand what is needed to deliver this, and to ensure provision meets the needs of families and schools and is opened in the right places.

■ Childcare: Advertising

James Wild: [3137]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the (a) allocated budget and (b) amount already spent is for advertising the expanded childcare offer for children aged nine months and above.

James Wild: [3138]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the (a) allocated budget and (b) amount spent was for advertising the expanded childcare offer for children aged two before April 2024.

Stephen Morgan:

For the 2024/25 financial year, the department has an allocated budget of £2.4 million for the Childcare Choices campaign. This includes promotion of the expanded childcare working entitlements for nine month olds, as well as the existing offers for two, three and four year olds. Final spending will be confirmed.

For the 2023/24 financial year, the department had an allocated budget of £1.4 million for the Childcare Choices campaign. This included promotion of the expanded childcare working entitlements for two year olds as well as the existing offers for three and four year olds.

Children: Drownings**Mark Pritchard:**[\[2782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish an action plan to reduce deaths of minors from drowning.

Catherine McKinnell:

Swimming and water safety is a vital life skill and that is why pupils are taught how to swim and be safe in and around water at primary school.

Swimming and water safety are compulsory elements of the Physical Education (PE) National Curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2. For example, it includes teaching on how to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.

The department is focusing on a number of measures to support teaching in this area, as part of its ongoing review of the Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum. The public consultation on the revised draft RSHE statutory guidance closed on 11 July 2024. The revised guidance includes a new section called 'Personal safety', which outlines that pupils should know how to identify risk and manage personal safety in increasingly independent situations including around roads, railways and water.

It is vitally important that teachers have clear guidance, which is why the department will be looking carefully at the consultation responses, re-engaging with stakeholders and considering the relevant evidence before setting out next steps to take the RSHE guidance forward.

The department is also working closely with swimming and water safety stakeholders such as the Royal Life Saving Society UK and Swim England to support schools in raising attainment in primary school swimming and water safety. Support and advice from Swim England includes resources for schools and parents, which can be found at the following links: <https://www.swimming.org/schools/> and <https://www.swimming.org/learntoswim/learn-to-swim-information-for-parents/>.

Department officials have also worked alongside the National Water Safety Forum to develop free resources for schools to provide vital water safety knowledge that can go a long way to reduce drowning deaths. These resources can be found on the

Royal Life Saving Society website at: <https://www.rlss.org.uk/Pages/Category/water-safety-education>.

■ Children: Gender Dysphoria

Damian Hinds: [2813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many submissions her Department received to the consultation entitled Gender questioning children: draft schools and colleges guidance, open from 19 December 2023 to 12 March 2024.

Damian Hinds: [2814]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to publish its response to the consultation entitled Guidance for Schools and Colleges: Gender Questioning Children which closed on 12 March 2024

Catherine McKinnell:

The public consultation entitled 'Guidance for Schools and Colleges: Gender Questioning Children' received over 15,000 responses.

The government is clear that it is vitally important that teachers have clear guidance, which is why the department will look carefully at the consultation responses over the autumn before responding formally and setting out the next steps to take the Gender Questioning guidance forward.

■ Curriculum: Reform

David Baines: [900337]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to reform the national curriculum.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE.

The review will seek to refresh the curriculum to ensure it is cutting edge, fit for purpose and meeting the needs of children and young people to support their future life and work.

The government's ambition is for a curriculum that delivers excellent foundations in reading, writing and mathematics, and ensures every young person gets the opportunity to develop creative, digital, and speaking and listening skills particularly prized by employers.

The review will look closely at the key challenges to attainment for young people, and the barriers which hold children back from the opportunities and life chances they deserve – in particular those who are socio-economically disadvantaged, or with special educational needs or disabilities.

The views of the sector will be pivotal to the review and there will be extensive engagement throughout. A call for evidence will be launched in the coming weeks

and the review will also undertake a national roadshow, meeting and taking input from staff on the frontline.

■ **Dance and Music: Education**

Damian Hinds:

[\[2817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to amend the budget of the Music and Dance Scheme after January 2025.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government is committed to supporting specialist education in the creative sector, including the Music and Dance Scheme (MDS). This remains an important programme for giving opportunities for young people, allowing them access to specialist training and a pathway into the creative industries.

All the education providers on the scheme have been issued with grant funding agreements for the 2024/25 academic year and the final budget is set on the basis of the number of places that are filled and the relevant household income of parents or carers. The department is engaging with the eight providers that are private schools and are therefore subject to the VAT changes planned for January 2025. All the schools have also been made aware of the HM Treasury technical consultation which is open to 15 September, and they will be informed of the outcome of the consultation later this year.

The government is committed to extending opportunities for children and young people in the arts through a broader curriculum, ensuring all pupils in state-funded schools can access creative subjects such as music, alongside subjects such as maths and English.

Around 93% of school children in the UK attend state schools and ending the tax breaks on VAT, and business rates, for private schools is a tough but necessary decision that will secure additional funding to help deliver the government's commitments relating to education and young people.

■ **Disinformation: Education**

Alex Mayer:

[\[3427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including education on identifying misinformation online in the school curriculum.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering key stages 1 to 5, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE.

The review will seek to deliver a curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work, building the knowledge, skills and attributes young people need to thrive. This includes embedding digital, oracy and life skills in their learning.

The review will consider the key digital skills needed for future life and critical thinking skills to ensure children are resilient to misinformation and extremist content online.

■ Education: Telford

Shaun Davies: [3316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her Department's population assumption is for Telford for (a) pre school, (b) primary school, (c) secondary and (d) SEND provision in each academic year from 2020-21 to 2025-26.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department collects and publishes forecasts made by local authorities of demand for primary and secondary pupil places from the annual School Capacity (SCAP) survey, which are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. Forecast data is generated by local authorities based on their own data and local knowledge. These forecasts are challenged extensively during data cleaning processes. As with any forecast figures, there will be variation between the forecasts and the subsequent actual pupil numbers, and the level of accuracy is expected to reduce as forecasts are made further into the future.

This information is published at local authority level, with the latest publication covering the period 2022/23 to 2027/28, available for Telford and Wrekin here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/3d7c2bc7-052b-43f5-e0cc-08dccd7b577b>. Previous years can be found in earlier publications, all available on Explore Education Statistics. Data on special educational needs provision was collected for the first time in SCAP in 2023 and published as official statistics in development in 2024 within the aforementioned publication.

The department also publishes pupil population projections at national level and by school type annually, which are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-pupil-projections>. The latest publication includes historic pupil populations, plus projected population to 2028. These projections are not available at local authority level.

■ Free School Meals

Ben Maguire: [3647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 627 on Free School Meals, if she will make it her policy to commission an assessment of the potential merits of broadening the eligibility criteria for children to receive free school meals.

Stephen Morgan:

The department has not made a formal assessment of the merits of broadening the free school meals (FSM) eligibility criteria. The department is committed to tackling the grave issue of child poverty, which has gone up by 700,000 since 2010, with over four million children now growing up in a low-income family. That is why the

government is committed to delivering an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty, tackling the root causes, and giving every child the best start at life. To support this, a new ministerial taskforce has been set up to begin work on the Child Poverty Strategy.

The department is also committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity so that all children have the freedom to achieve and thrive in education. To support this aim, the government is committed to introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school, to set children up for the day and ensure they are ready to learn, while supporting parents and carers to work.

The department has additionally invested in programmes which provide over three million children with free and nutritious meals. This includes FSM, which 2.1 million disadvantaged pupils are registered to receive, and universal infant free school meals, which will benefit around 1.3 million pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2.

■ Higher Education: Freedom of Expression

Sir John Hayes:

[\[2727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which external stakeholders she met with ahead of revoking the second commencement regulations made under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

Janet Daby:

The department engages with a wide range of stakeholders on policy decisions, and the views of external stakeholders from across the higher education (HE) sector continue to inform decision making on the future of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

As set out in the Secretary of State's letter to colleagues and peers, the decision to pause implementation of the Act took account of the views of bodies representing university students and staff and also of Jewish groups, who feel that the Act is disproportionate, burdensome and damaging to the welfare of students and that it would expose HE providers to costly legal action, and that fear of sanction could push providers to overlook the safety and wellbeing of minority groups.

Ministers and officials in the department continue to meet with a full range of stakeholders representing not only HE providers, but also with academics with concerns about constraints on free speech. This engagement will feed into decision making on the future of the Act and the government's longer-term policy on free speech in the HE sector.

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Julia Buckley:

[\[3507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to continue the holiday activities and food programme after 2024.

Stephen Morgan:

The future of the Holiday Activities and Food programme beyond 31 March 2025, is subject to the next government Spending Review taking place this autumn. The department will communicate the outcome of that process in due course.

■ **Holiday Activities and Food Programme: Finance****Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[4048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on future funding for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

Stephen Morgan:

The future of the Holiday Activities and Food programme, beyond 31 March 2025, is subject to the next government Spending Review taking place this autumn. The department will communicate the outcome of that process in due course.

■ **Natural History: GCSE****Alex Mayer:**[\[3413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to introduce a Natural History GCSE in September 2025.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government has launched an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review covering key stages 1 to 5, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The Review will consider the current qualification pathways available at key stage 4 and 5. A call for evidence will be published in the autumn which will set out the areas the review group would particularly welcome input from. More information about the review is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-curriculum-and-assessment-review>.

■ **Nurseries****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[2969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of supporting maintained nursery schools.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:[\[2970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the provision of maintained nursery schools in (a) Wandsworth and (b) England.

Stephen Morgan:

Maintained nursery schools (MNS) are a valuable part of early years provision. There are 381 MNS as at January 2024. They are predominantly located in disadvantaged areas.

Additional supplementary funding is provided to local authorities for MNS in their areas. In the 2024/25 financial year, the initial budget for MNS supplementary funding is £82.6 million, subject to final budget update. The national average hourly rate for MNS supplementary funding is £5.27, the minimum supplementary funding rate is £4.64 and the cap on the hourly rate is £10.

Ensuring that parents are able to access affordable and high-quality childcare is a priority for the department. This includes delivering new nursery provision in primary schools to help deliver the expansion in childcare entitlements and ensuring that a variety of different types of provision are available that suit the needs of different parents. The department is continuing to monitor the sufficiency of childcare places.

The key measure of sufficiency is whether the supply of available places is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents and children. The department's Childcare and Early Years Provider Survey shows that the number of places available has remained broadly stable since 2019. 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 will discuss what action they are taking to address those issues, and where needed, the department will support the local authority with any specific requirements through our childcare sufficiency support contract.

Where a MNS does close, or is merged with a school, what replaces it must be of equal quantity, preserve expertise and specialisms, and it must be more accessible and convenient for local parents. The department has not received any reports on sufficiency challenges in Wandsworth.

■ Private Education

Caroline Voaden:

[\[3539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential financial impact on state schools of the introduction of VAT on private school fees.

Stephen Morgan:

The impact on the state sector as a result of the introduction of VAT on private school fees is being carefully considered. HM Treasury will deliver the tax changes. Further details of the government's assessment of the expected impact will be published at the Budget. A Tax Information and Impact Note will be published alongside the Finance Bill once the independent Office for Budget Responsibility has scrutinised and certified the impacts of the final policy.

■ Private Education: Closures**Adam Thompson:** [3324]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many private schools closed in each (a) parliamentary constituency and (b) upper tier local authority in England between 11 May 2010 and 5 July 2024.

Stephen Morgan:

1102 private schools closed between 11 May 2010 and 5 July 2024.

The data in the attached table breaks this down into a) Parliamentary constituency and b) Upper tier local authority in England.

Attachments:

1. [3324 Table](#)
[3324_Copy_of_Private_schools_closed_between_May_2010_and_July_2024.xlsx]

■ Private Education: Fees and Charges**Damian Hinds:** [2818]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the number of independent schools which charge lower fees than the average annual cost of provision in the state sector.

Stephen Morgan:

On a per pupil basis the total funding allocated to schools for 5 to 16 year old pupils, in cash terms, in the 2024/25 academic year, was £7,690. While the department does not hold data on private school fees, the Institute for Fiscal Studies calculates average private school fees across the UK were £15,200 in the 2022/23 academic year. This is around 90% higher than state school spending per pupil. This information can be found at: <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/tax-private-school-fees-and-state-school-spending>.

Damian Hinds: [2830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed application of VAT to private school fees on state secondary planning areas.

Stephen Morgan:

This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption on private schools. While the impact of this policy is being fully considered, research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies 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, with any displacement expected to take place over several years. This research can be found here: <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/tax-private-school-fees-and-state-school-spending>.

Details of the government's own assessment of the expected impact will be published at the Budget in the usual way, following scrutiny by the Office for Budget Responsibility.

The department cannot be certain of the precise level, if any, of transfer from private 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. The department will be monitoring demand and capacity using our normal processes and working with local authorities to meet any pressures.

■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[3402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make a comparative assessment of the adequacy of funding per pupil in (a) Stratford-on-Avon constituency, (b) Warwickshire and (c) nationally.

Catherine McKinnell:

The overall core schools budget will total £61.8 billion in the 2024/25 financial year. The average per pupil funding in England, as allocated through the schools block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), is £5,957.

In the 2024/25 financial year, the average per-pupil funding for Warwickshire, as allocated through the schools block of the DSG, is £5,634.

The DSG is allocated at local authority level, and as such the equivalent figures are not available for the Stratford-on-Avon constituency. The allocations that schools within a constituency receive are determined by the local funding formula in their area.

The figures provided include premises funding but exclude growth funding. The figures do not include the additional grant funding that schools across the country have received to support pay and pensions increases in 2024/25.

One reason why the per pupil funding figure in Warwickshire is lower than the average in England is that schools in Warwickshire have a lower proportion of pupils who attract deprivation funding through the NFF than the national average.

The department continues to consider the various funding formulae used at national and local levels to ensure that we have a fair education funding system that directs funding to where it is needed.

■ Schools: Admissions

Damian Hinds:

[\[2821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) pupils, (b) Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils and (c) 16-18 year-old pupils (i) were enrolled in state schools in September 2023 and (ii) are projected to be enrolled in state schools in September 2030.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department publishes statistics on the number of pupils at schools in England based on January school census data. Figures for January 2024 are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

As of January 2024, 8,498,587 pupils of all ages were enrolled at state-funded schools in England, of which 3,248,903 were in Key Stage 3 or 4 and 451,638 were in Key Stage 5, which corresponds to post-16 education.

A table showing the figures by school type can be viewed via this link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/de8d81d9-1e57-408a-9fad-08dcca50353d>.

The most recent pupil projections, which provide the projected number of full-time equivalent pupils in schools in England, by type of school and age to secondary school, are published here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-pupil-projections>.

Due to the uncertainty in longer term fertility assumptions, pupil projections in this release are published up to 2028, rather than up to 2032 as was the case in previous years.

Damian Hinds:**[2822]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many unfilled places there are at key stages 3 and 4 in state schools in (a) City of Bristol, (b) Kingston upon Thames, (c) Richmond upon Thames, (d) Salford and (e) Surrey; and how many pupils of those ages there are in independent schools in each of those areas.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on state-funded school places as at May 2023 is published at local authority level in the annual School Capacity statistics publication which can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>.

The total number of secondary unfilled places in these local authorities can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/94cbcc62-9d1a-4ab1-cf21-08dcca5019b8>.

This includes sixth forms as well as key stages 3 and 4 for schools with sixth forms. Data are not available by year group or key stage.

Data is collected from independent schools through the school level annual school census; this does not include phase but does include age of pupils. This information is published in the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' publication at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

Information on the number of pupils aged 11 to 15 enrolled in independent schools in January 2024 for these local authorities can be found here: <https://explore-education->

statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/67d55589-96d7-4445-9fa8-08dcca50353d.

However, please note that age does not necessarily directly align to state-funded sector primary, secondary and post-16 schools.

Damian Hinds:

[2823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of secondary schools are (a) at and (b) over capacity at key stages 3 and 4 in (i) City of Bristol, (ii) Kingston upon Thames, (iii) Richmond upon Thames, (iv) Salford and (v) Surrey.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on state-funded school places as at May 2023 is published at local authority level in the annual School Capacity statistics publication, which is available at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>.

The number and proportion of secondary schools at or over capacity for the requested local authorities can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/91c62513-ae0a-4c08-9fa3-08dcca50353d>.

This includes sixth forms as well as key stages 3 and 4 for schools with sixth forms. Data are not available by year group or key stage.

Damian Hinds:

[2825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many unfilled places there are at state school sixth forms in (a) City of Bristol, (b) Camden, (c) Haringey, (d) Kingston upon Thames, (e) Richmond upon Thames, (f) Southwark, (g) Stockport and (h) Surrey; and how many pupils of that age there are in independent schools in each of those areas.

Stephen Morgan:

Information on state-funded school places as at May 2023 is published at local authority level in the annual School Capacity survey. This survey can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>.

The capacity of state-funded school sixth forms and the number of students on roll in these sixth forms for these local authorities, which can be used to calculate unfilled places, is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/1df04bec-f3ec-4b8a-9fb7-08dcca50353d>.

Data is collected from independent schools through the school level annual school census. This data does not include phase but does include age of pupils. This information is published in the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' publication, which can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

Information on the number of students aged 16 to 19 enrolled in independent schools in January 2024 for these local authorities can be found here: <https://explore->

education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/d0df582b-2601-4fd8-cf33-08dcca5019b8.

However, please note that age does not necessarily directly align to state-funded sector primary, secondary and post-16 schools.

Damian Hinds:

[2828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answers of 2 August 2024 to Question 1652 on Pupil Numbers and Question 1653 on Further Education: Students, if she will bring forward publication of data on the (a) available capacity in (i) state secondary schools and (ii) school sixth forms and (b) numbers of pupils in independent-sector schools at equivalent ages by parliamentary constituency using current boundaries.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department publishes annual statistics on the capacity and pupils on roll in schools each spring at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity> and on the number of students enrolled in independent schools each summer, at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. In accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics, statistics publications are pre-announced on the GOV.UK website and can be accessed here: https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-education&order=updated-newest. Currently, the department has no plans to change this publication schedule. The scheduling ensures that statistics are released as soon as they are ready, while abiding by standards set by the Code of Practice for Statistics, in terms of trustworthiness, quality and value. The Code can be found at the following link: <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>.

Where statistics were published prior to the changes in parliamentary constituency boundaries, they will be updated to reflect the new boundaries in the next publication of statistics. This is expected to be in March 2025 for school capacity statistics and in June 2025 for statistics on schools and pupils, including independent schools.

It may be useful to note that the data requested is published at school level. This can be combined with information from 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS) to identify parliamentary constituency. GIAS currently reflects the changes made following the general election parliamentary constituency changes and is accessible here: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>. Updates to geographical data are made on a quarterly basis using data published by the Office for National Statistics.

■ Schools: Construction

Lee Anderson:

[3094]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to continue the school rebuilding programme for (a) Kirkby College, (b) Ashfield School, (c) Outwood Academy and (d) Nottinghamshire.

Stephen Morgan:

The department is committed to rebuilding or refurbishing all schools selected for the School Rebuilding Programme, including all schools selected in Nottinghamshire.

Well maintained, safe school buildings are a priority for the department to ensure they support a high-quality education for all children. All future decisions remain subject to the Spending Review.

Schools: Fees and Charges**Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[3219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of VAT on school fees on state school capacity in (a) Epping Forest constituency and (b) England.

Stephen Morgan:

HM Treasury is considering the potential impact of VAT on school fees on state schools as part of its development of an economic case. It is anticipated this impact will be minimal. Projections by the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggest that the number of pupils who may switch schools would represent only a very small proportion of overall pupil numbers in the state sector, less than 0.5%. Any pupil transfers from the private to state sector would also be expected to take place over several years, as many pupils transfer at normal transition points. The department will work with local authorities in England to help them manage any local pressures through normal processes where required.

Schools: Finance**Mark Ferguson:**[\[3283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average funding per pupil was in mainstream schools in (a) Gateshead Central and Whickham constituency, (b) the North East Combined Authority Area and (c) England in each of the last five years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The table below sets out funding statistics for the North East and England in each of the last five years.

The figures represent the funding provided through the schools block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). All of the figures in the table exclude growth funding but include premises. The figures do not include the additional grant funding that schools across the country have received to support pay and pensions increases in 2024/25.

The DSG is allocated at local authority level and, as such, the equivalent figures are not available for Gateshead Central and Whickham constituency. The allocations that schools within a constituency receive are determined by the local funding formula in their area.

The table below provides average per-pupil funding for the last five years, from the 2020/21 to 2024/25 financial years:

Year	DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK PER-PUPIL FUNDING	
	North East *	England
2020/21	£4,828	£5,055
2021/22	£5,220	£5,212
2022/23	£5,538	£5,534
2023/24	£5,869	£5,838
2024/25	£5,993	£5,957

* The data the department holds for the North East is for the North East region, as opposed to the North East Combined Authority Area.

■ Schools: Girls

Nadia Whittome:

[\[3231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking in schools to (a) tackle misogyny and (b) ensure girls' safety.

Catherine McKinnell:

Schools and colleges are under a legal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and must have regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' (KCSIE), which is the department's statutory safeguarding guidance. KCSIE contains information about child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as guidance on managing reports of child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Every pupil deserves to learn in a safe, calm classroom and the department will always support its hard working and dedicated teachers to make this happen. Schools should be clear in every aspect of their culture that sexism, sexual violence and sexual harassment are never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

The statutory guidance for Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) emphasises that schools should be alert to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, with any occurrences identified and tackled. Schools should make clear that sexism, sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and are not an inevitable part of growing up. The full RSHE guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

Schools should consider what they can do to foster healthy and respectful peer-to-peer communication and behaviour between boys and girls and provide an

environment which challenges perceived limits on pupils based on their gender or any other characteristic.

The department is currently reviewing the RSHE statutory guidance. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has been clear that children's wellbeing must be at the heart of this guidance for schools and, as such, the government will look carefully at the consultation responses, discuss with stakeholders and consider the relevant evidence, including the Cass Review which has since been published, before setting out next steps.

■ Schools: Pay

Damian Hinds:

[\[2812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the proportion of schools able to fully cover the incremental costs of the recommended pay increase using the funding announced.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is providing schools with almost £1.1 billion in 2024/25 through the Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG) to support them with overall costs. This funding matches what the department has calculated is needed to fully fund, at a national level, the 5.5% teacher pay award and the support staff pay offer in the 2024/25 financial year, after accounting for the overall available headroom in schools' existing budgets.

The department's judgement of affordability is based on national figures, which equates to the position of an "average" school. The funding system is not designed so that every school gets the same funding increase every year: it is designed so that schools seeing the largest pressures typically attract the largest funding increases. It does not match each individual school's precise costs, as schools have autonomy over their own spending.

■ Schools: Transport

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[3403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help improve school transport for children living in rural areas in Stratford-on-Avon constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department's home to school travel policy aims to make sure that no child is prevented from accessing education from a lack of transport. Local authorities must arrange free home to school travel for children of compulsory school age, 5 to 16, who attend their nearest school and would not be able to walk there because of the distance, their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, or because the nature of the route means it would be unsafe for them to do so. There are extended rights to free travel for children from low-income families.

Parents are responsible for making travel arrangements for children who are not eligible for free home to school travel. Good local bus services are an essential part

of prosperous and sustainable communities, providing access to schools and other services. This government has set out an action plan to deliver better bus services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions. As announced in the King's Speech, the government will pass the Better Buses Bill to put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders to ensure networks can meet the needs of the communities who rely on them, including in rural areas. The government also plans to empower local transport authorities by reforming bus funding to give local leaders more control and flexibility over their funding so they can plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities.

■ Schools: Uniforms

Mike Amesbury:

[\[3065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the statutory guidance entitled Cost of school uniforms, published on 19 November 2021, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending that guidance to reduce the number of branded items required.

Alex Mayer:

[\[3429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to update statutory guidance on the cost of school uniforms.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government has committed to legislate through the Children's Wellbeing Bill to limit the number of items of branded uniform and PE kit that schools can require. This proposed legislation will go further than the current statutory guidance, which only requires schools to keep branded uniform items to a minimum.

The existing statutory guidance will be updated once the new legislation has received Royal Assent. This will ensure that both work together to ensure that schools will need to justify every piece of branded uniform they include in their uniform policy. This will put an end to schools still requiring large numbers of branded items.

■ Secondary Education: Finance

Damian Hinds:

[\[2824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with (a) City of Bristol, (b) Kingston upon Thames, (c) Richmond upon Thames, (d) Salford and (e) Surrey local authorities on capital funding for additional secondary school places at key stages 3 and 4.

Stephen Morgan:

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places sits with local authorities. The department engages with local authorities, including those mentioned, on a regular basis to review their plans for creating additional primary and pre-16 secondary school places and to consider alternatives where necessary. When local authorities are experiencing difficulties, the department offers support and advice.

The department provides capital funding through the basic need grant to support local authorities to provide mainstream school places needed for year groups from reception to year 11, based on their own pupil forecasts and school capacity data. Nearly £1.5 billion of allocations have been confirmed to support local authorities to create school places needed over the current and next two academic years. Local authorities' allocations are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-need-allocations>.

■ Sixth Form Education: Admissions

Damian Hinds:

[2826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of state school sixth forms are (a) at and (b) over capacity in (i) City of Bristol, (ii) Camden, (iii) Haringey, (iv) Kingston upon Thames, (v) Richmond upon Thames, (vi) Southwark, (vii) Stockport and (viii) Surrey.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on state-funded school places as at May 2023 is published at local authority level in the annual School Capacity statistics publication, which can be found at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. School level data for sixth form capacity and number on roll is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-catalogue/data-set/ee325991-147a-4e4d-ba55-8dd5fdc8d160>. This can be used to identify schools at, or over, capacity, and then the proportion of schools within a local authority can be calculated.

The number of sixth form pupils on roll is higher than the reported capacity in: (i) five of the ten school sixth forms in the City of Bristol (50%), (ii) all ten of the school sixth forms in Camden (100%), (iii) three of the six school sixth forms in Haringey (50%), (iv) four of the ten school sixth forms in Kingston upon Thames (40%), (v) five of the ten school sixth forms in Richmond upon Thames (50%), (vi) six of the 15 school sixth forms in Southwark (40%), (vii) the only school sixth form in Stockport (100%) and (viii) 11 of the 28 school sixth forms in Surrey (39%).

School sixth forms often have higher numbers on roll than reported capacity, due to the subjects offered and timetabling.

■ Sixth Form Education: Finance

Damian Hinds:

[2827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with the local authorities in (a) City of Bristol, (b) Camden, (c) Haringey, (d) Kingston upon Thames, (e) Richmond upon Thames, (f) Southwark, (g) Stockport and (h) Surrey on capital funding for additional state school sixth form places above those planned before July 2024.

Stephen Morgan:

Local authorities have broad duties to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training. This includes a duty to secure enough suitable

education and training provision to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 19 or over and for whom an education, health and care plan is maintained. As regards sixth form places, if approached by a local authority, the department will discuss options with them to support them to meet their statutory duties.

The post-16 capacity fund provides funding to schools and colleges, including in Stockport and Surrey, to ensure there is enough capital capacity in schools and colleges to accommodate the demographic increases in 16 to 19 learners. It has made available £238 million in capital funding since 2021.

■ Special Educational Needs

Clive Lewis:

[\[2948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1512 on Special Educational Needs, how her Department monitors whether the Safety Valve programme leads to improvements in SEND service.

Clive Lewis:

[\[2951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1512 on Special Educational Needs, when her Department last undertook a review of the Safety Valve agreement with Norfolk County Council; and if she will publish the conclusions of the most recent review.

Catherine McKinnell:

Safety Valve agreements are established only when both the local authority and the department agree that the proposals will improve services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The department regularly reviews the implementation of all Safety Valve agreements through a monitoring process that takes place three times a year. These reviews are not published, in order to secure free and frank discussion between the local authority and the department.

Norfolk's agreement is currently subject to review, and the local authority is working with the department on a revised proposal within the programme's framework.

Clive Lewis:

[\[2949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1512 on Special Educational Needs, how her Department monitors whether local authorities are meeting their obligations to fulfil statutory duties to children and young people with SEND.

Clive Lewis:

[\[2950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1512 on Special Educational Needs, if her Department will publish a list of local authorities that have breached obligations to fulfil statutory duties to children and young people with SEND.

Catherine McKinnell:

A new Ofsted and Care Quality Commission Area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection framework was launched in January 2023. All local areas are due to receive a full inspection within five years, which will support local areas to achieve better outcomes and standards in line with our programme of reform. Ofsted publish final outcome reports on their website, and local areas are required to publish them on their organisation's website.

Where a council does not meet its duties, the department can take action that prioritises children's needs and supports local areas to bring about rapid improvement. The department works to monitor, support and challenge local authorities, working closely with NHS England to tackle weaknesses that sit with health partners.

The department collects a range of SEND performance metrics from local authorities on an annual basis and these are publicly available.

The department welcomes the publication of the Big Listen response. It will work with Ofsted to consider how outcomes for children with SEND or in alternative provision are better reflected in both the education inspection and the Area SEND inspection framework going forwards.

■ Special Educational Needs: Finance**Helen Grant:**[\[2866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will provide additional funding to councils to help SEND pupils.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department recognises the financial pressures on local authorities due to rising costs in the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system. The Core Schools Budget Grant will provide over £140 million in additional funding for special and alternative provision schools in 2024/25 to cover increased costs from teachers' pay and support staff negotiations. This is in addition to the £10.75 billion allocated this year for high needs funding and teacher-related costs.

The department's budget for the 2025/26 financial year is still under review, with funding allocations dependent on the upcoming Spending Review in October. The department recognises the delay and will announce allocations as soon as possible. We are acutely aware not only of the financial pressures that local authorities are facing due to the increasing cost of supporting young people with complex needs but also of the pressures on the government as a whole due to the financial situation it has inherited.

Rebecca Long Bailey:[\[2928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure increased funding for (a) SEN schools and (b) increasing existing SEN support in mainstream schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department recognises the financial pressures on local authorities due to rising costs in the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system. The Core Schools Budget Grant will provide over £140 million in additional funding for special and alternative provision schools in 2024/25 to cover increased costs from teachers' pay and support staff negotiations. This is in addition to the £10.75 billion allocated this year for high needs funding and teacher-related costs.

The department's budget for 2025/26 is still under review, with funding allocations dependent on the upcoming Spending Review in October. The department recognises the delay and will announce allocations as soon as possible. We are acutely aware not only of the financial pressures that local authorities are facing due to the increasing cost of supporting young people with complex needs but also of the pressures on the government as a whole due to the financial situation it has inherited.

The department is committed to improving mainstream schools' support of all their pupils with special educational needs.

■ Special Educational Needs: Knowsley**Anneliese Midgley:****[3301]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children have an education and health care plan in Knowsley constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department publishes annual statistics from school census data on children who have education, health and care (EHC) plans down to individual school level. The most recent figures for January 2024 can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>.

In January 2024, there were 1,103 (7.1%) children with an EHC plan in Knowsley constituency. This data was published before the changes to parliamentary boundaries and will be updated to the latest boundaries with the next publication of the series.

Anneliese Midgley:**[3302]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children in Knowsley constituency who have an education health care plan are attending the school named in that plan.

Catherine McKinnell:

The information requested is not readily available and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Statistics on pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>. These statistics include information on the type of setting that pupils with EHC plans attend, but not whether pupils attend the school named in their plan.

■ Special Educational Needs: Local Government**Gregory Stafford:**[\[3659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to ensure that local authorities have (a) fair and (b) timely procedures for processing EHCPs.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department wants to deliver better life chances for all, through a system which works for all.

The department knows that parents have struggled to get the right support for their children, particularly through a long and difficult education, health and care (EHC) plan process. The department will work across the sector to provide support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or in alternative provision (AP) and their families. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and AP settings, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

The department wants to ensure that EHC plan applications are processed promptly and plans are issued as quickly as possible where required, so that children and young people can access the support they need. The department has listened to parents, schools and local authorities and is reflecting on what practice could be made consistent nationally.

■ Special Educational Needs: Runcorn and Helsby**Mike Amesbury:**[\[3066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of SEND provision in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) sits with local authorities.

The department supports local authorities to meet this duty by providing annual capital funding. In March 2024, local authorities were notified of £850 million of investment in places for children and young people with SEND or who require alternative provision (AP).

Local authorities can use this funding to deliver new places in mainstream and special schools, as well as other specialist settings. It can also be used to improve the suitability and accessibility of existing buildings.

Cheshire West and Chester Council has received £11.6 million in capital funding through this route between 2022 and 2025. Halton Borough Council has received just under £5.5 million.

In summer 2023, the department also began collecting data from local authorities on available capacity in special schools, SEND units and resourced provision, along with

corresponding forecasts of demand for these places. This data will help the department to more effectively support local authorities to fulfil their statutory duty to provide sufficient specialist places.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[3067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the quality of specialist education in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Receiving the support to succeed is at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and to give every child the best start in life, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or in alternative provision. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

The government is committed to improving the school inspection system, including inspections of specialist settings. This will include moving away from the single headline grade to a richer system through a report card.

School report cards will be implemented for all state-funded schools, including those in the specialist sector. As part of our engagement and consultation process, we will explore whether, and how, these report cards need to be tailored to meet the unique needs of different types of state-funded schools.

Our new regional improvement teams will work with teachers and leaders in struggling schools to quickly and directly address areas of weakness and empower sustained improvement.

To drive up standards, all state-funded schools, including special schools, can draw on new regional improvement teams for help in accessing and understanding the array of available improvement programmes and training proven to make a real impact. These teams will encourage and foster a self-improving system where schools and trusts support each other, learning from peers, and sharing best practice.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Shropshire**

Julia Buckley:

[\[3506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of SEND provision in Shropshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

Following the last Ofsted inspection, departmental officials have been working with Shropshire Council to closely monitor progress against the areas for improvement identified by inspectors. The department has appointed a special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) advisor to support and work alongside Shropshire Council and the local area partnership.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as

they move into adult life. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach in collaboration with local area partnerships, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Stratford-on-Avon**

Manuela Perteghella:

[3405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve SEND provision in Stratford-on-Avon constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Following the last Ofsted inspection, departmental officials have been working with Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to closely monitor progress against the areas for improvement identified by inspectors.

The areas were:

(i) Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) waiting times, assessments and support following diagnosis.

(ii) Co-production.

(iii) Placement of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

(iv) Uptake of training for school staff working with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

(v) And the quality of the online local offer.

The department has appointed a SEND Advisor to support and work alongside WCC and the local area partnership.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach in collaboration with local area partnerships, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Warwickshire**

Manuela Perteghella:

[3395]

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

Catherine McKinnell:

Following the last Ofsted inspection, officials have been working with Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to closely monitor progress against the area for improvement identified by inspectors.

The areas were:

(i) Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) waiting times, assessments and support following diagnosis.

(ii) Co-production.

(iii) Placement of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

(iv) Uptake of training for school staff working with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

(v) And the quality of the online local offer.

The department appointed a SEND advisor to support and work alongside WCC and the local area partnership.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision (AP) receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach in collaboration with Local Area Partnerships, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

The department recognises the financial pressures on local authorities due to rising costs in the SEND system. The Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG) will provide over £140 million, at a national level, in additional funding for special and AP schools in the 2024/25 academic year, to cover increased costs from the 2024 teachers' pay award and the outcome of the support staff negotiations. This is in addition to the £10.75 billion allocated this year for high needs provision and teacher-related costs. Local authorities' allocations of the CSBG will be confirmed this autumn.

■ Sure Start Programme: Knowsley**Anneliese Midgley:****[3295]**

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

Janet Daby:

Data on children's centres is supplied by local authorities via the department's Get Information about Schools database portal at: <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>.

Based on information supplied by Knowsley local authority, one Sure Start children's centre has closed in the Knowsley constituency since May 2010. The name of the

centre was St Chad's Children's Centre, and the postcode was L32 1TZ. This is based on information supplied by Knowsley local authority as of 1 September 2024. These figures may be different to previous answers and could change again in the future, since local authorities may update the database at any time.

■ Teachers: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[2734]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of the planned new teachers will be allocated to schools in Lincolnshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

High quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education. There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state funded schools in England, but the government must do more to ensure it has the workforce needed to provide the best possible education for every child in all parts of the country, which is why the government has set out the ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers.

The department is developing its approach so that it can be clear on its target and held accountable against that target, with a focus on key subjects and in places where it is needed most. The department will share further details in due course.

The first crucial step towards achieving this is to ensure teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession and teachers get the pay they deserve, which is why the government has accepted in full the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools from September.

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

Alongside teacher pay, financial incentives are one of the most effective ways to increase teacher supply, and the department is continuing to support teacher trainees with tax-free bursaries of up to £28,000 and scholarships of up to £30,000 in shortage subjects. To help with retention, new teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing, who are in the first five years of their careers, also receive retention payments if working in disadvantaged schools. In the 2023/24 academic year, 55 schools in the Lincolnshire Local Authority area were eligible for these retention payments.

To further help teachers stay and thrive in the profession, the department is also addressing teacher workload and wellbeing, and supporting schools to introduce flexible working practices. The Flexible Working Ambassador Multi-Academy Trusts and Schools (FWAMS) Programme offers support to schools across every region in England to help implement flexible working. Schools in Lincolnshire that are

interested in receiving tailored peer support can contact the Hales Valley Trust, which is the Flexible Working Ambassador for the East Midlands.

The department has also established Teaching School Hubs across the country, which provide approved high-quality professional development to teachers at all stages of their careers. L.E.A.D Teaching School Hub and DRET Teaching School Hub are centres of excellence supporting teacher training and development across Lincolnshire.

■ Teachers: Stratford-on-Avon

Manuela Perteghella:

[3401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of teachers in Stratford-on-Avon constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

High-quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education. There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England, but we must do more to ensure we have the workforce needed to provide the best possible education for every child in all parts of the country, which is why the government has set out the ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers.

The first crucial step towards achieving this is to ensure teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession and that teachers get the pay they deserve. This is why the department has accepted, in full, the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools from this September.

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Alongside teacher pay, financial incentives are one of the most effective ways to increase teacher supply, and the department is continuing to support teacher trainees with tax-free bursaries of up to £28,000 and scholarships of up to £30,000 in shortage subjects. To help with retention, new teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing, in the first five years of their careers, also receive retention payments if they are working in disadvantaged schools. In the 2023/24 academic year, two schools in the Stratford-on-Avon constituency were eligible for these retention payments.

To further help teachers stay and thrive in the profession, the department is also addressing teacher workload and wellbeing and supporting schools to introduce flexible working practices.

The department has also established Teaching School Hubs across the country, which provide approved high-quality professional development to teachers at all stages of their careers. Tudor Grange Teaching School Hub is a centre of excellence supporting teacher training and development across Bromsgrove, Redditch, Solihull and Stratford-on-Avon.

■ Teachers: Workplace Pensions

Damian Hinds: [\[2810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of trends in the levels of in-service teachers opting out of the teachers' pension scheme.

Damian Hinds: [\[2811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of trends in the levels of independent-sector schools (a) consulting with staff on the teachers' pension scheme, (b) leaving the teachers' pension scheme and (c) pursuing phased withdrawal from the teachers' pension scheme.

Damian Hinds: [\[2819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the average cost to independent schools of the increase in employer contributions to the teachers' pension scheme in the academic year 2024-25.

Catherine McKinnell:

Departmental officials regularly gather data on the number of teachers opting out of participation in the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) and discuss this with members of the Scheme Advisory Board, which is made up of employer and member representatives. Due to pension auto-enrolment rules that apply when a maintained school converts to an academy and pension re-enrolment rules requiring teachers to re-submit opt-outs, it is difficult to discern any particular trend. However, officials also monitor the overall participation rate of those eligible to be in the TPS and this has remained consistent in recent years.

The department is not usually informed when independent schools consult with staff regarding ongoing participation in the Teachers' Pension Scheme. However, the scheme administrator does maintain a record of the number of independent schools participating in the scheme, as well as those that choose to leave the scheme either outright or by phased withdrawal. Independent school participation is regularly discussed with members of the Scheme Advisory Board, which is made up of member and employer representatives; such discussions start from the principle that independent schools participate voluntarily and have the right to cease participation if they so choose.

The employer contribution rate for the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) increased from 23.68% to 28.68% of member salary with effect from 1 April 2024. This followed on from the results of the most recent scheme valuation exercise, which was based on 2020 data. The revised rate will lead to an increase in pension costs for all

participating employers roughly equivalent to 5% of their teacher salary costs in the 2024/25 academic year. Work has not been undertaken to estimate an average cost increase across the independent school sector because this was needed to reflect the estimated costs of pension benefits that have been accrued by members of the TPS, and those benefits that are forecast to be accrued in future. Independent schools have the option to cease participation in the scheme, either outright or through phased withdrawal, if they do not consider they can meet the costs or otherwise no longer wish to continue participation.

■ **Training: Construction**

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[2741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps her Department has made to ensure that the construction sector is represented in the courses supported by the Skills and Growth Levy.

Janet Daby:

The department is working across government and in partnership with industry, including through the Construction Skills Delivery Group (CSDG), to ensure that our skills offer meets the needs of the sector.

This includes transforming the Apprenticeship Levy into a new Growth and Skills Levy. The new levy will build on the apprenticeships programme to create opportunities for learners of all ages, and give employers of different sizes greater flexibility to address critical skill shortages in their workforces and drive economic growth.

The department will set out more detail in due course, including further information on the role of Skills England in ensuring that levy-funded training delivers value for money and meets the needs of businesses.

■ **Wetherby High School: Construction**

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[2837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to fund the rebuild of Wetherby High School.

Stephen Morgan:

The department has confirmed that Wetherby High School is in the school rebuilding programme. Feasibility is expected to be complete by the end of the year, with procurement, planning and design to start from January 2025. All future decisions remain subject to the Spending Review.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Boiler Upgrade Scheme: Heat Batteries**

Deirdre Costigan: [\[4290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will launch a consultation on including heat batteries as part of the Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Heat batteries are one of the most promising alternative electric heating technologies, however, they are less efficient than heat pumps and will therefore use more energy to meet the same heating demand.

We expect most properties will ultimately switch to heat pumps as these are a proven technology and have been installed in high numbers in other countries. The Boiler Upgrade Scheme has also been designed to direct support towards technologies that offer the greatest carbon savings.

The Government will keep its position on alternative electric heating technologies under review as the supporting evidence base develops.

■ Carbon Emissions: Business

Clive Lewis: [\[2958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring (a) financial institutions and (b) other FTSE 100 companies to include information on their employees' commuting emissions within planned publications on carbon footprints.

Kerry McCarthy:

The Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) policy requires quoted UK companies and large unquoted UK companies and limited liability partnerships (LLPs) to disclose specified energy and emissions (generally Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions, with some limited Scope 3 requirements such as business travel for unquoted businesses) in their annual reports. The costs, benefits and practicalities of wider Scope 3 emissions reporting requirements - including employee commuting emissions – is being assessed to help inform the Government's decision on whether to endorse the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) standards in the UK. The Government will provide more information in due course.

■ Coal: Railways

Mr Richard Holden: [\[3169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 1 August 2024 to Question 1982 on Coal: Imports and Production, if he will make an estimate of the amount of coal the UK heritage rail requires on an annual basis.

Michael Shanks:

The Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES) Table 2.1 on Coal Commodities states that the annual figure for heritage railways usage is 15,000 tonnes -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a7a17249b9c0597fdb066a/DUKES_2.1.xlsx

Community Energy**Sir Jeremy Wright:****[2779]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Local Power Plan will contain measures to enable community energy schemes to sell electricity that they generate directly to local customers.

Michael Shanks:

The Local Power Plan will put local authorities and communities at the heart of the energy transition, giving them a stake in the shift to net zero as owners and partners in clean energy projects, allowing more to come online. Small-scale electricity generation sites can benefit from an exemption, which means they do not require a licence from Ofgem to generate electricity or to supply to local customers. Ofgem has further flexibility to award supply licences to generation sites that are above the exemptions threshold when restricted to specified local area.

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Communication**Neil O'Brien:****[3085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much his Department spent on communications in the last year for which data is available.

Michael Shanks:

For the financial year 2023/24 the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero spent £7.6m on communications including payroll and advertising.

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Redundancy Pay**Wera Hobhouse:****[3033]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the cost to his Department was of Ministerial severance payments during each year from 19 December 2019 to 30 May 2024; which Ministers received a severance payment; and how much each Minister received.

Michael Shanks:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero was created following a Machinery of Government change and the payroll entries were split from other Government Departments in September 2023. From the creation of the separate ledger for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero until 30 May 2024, there were no Ministerial severance payments made.

■ Electric Cables

Joy Morrissey: [3102]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will commission the ESO to make an estimate of the additional number of kilometres of transmission network that will be added to the electricity grid.

Michael Shanks:

The Secretary of State and Head of Mission Control wrote to the ESO on 23rd August to formally commission advice regarding the key requirements for the Government to meet its clean power commitment by 2030. This includes the transmission network

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66cda5c1e39a8536eac0532e/sos-chris-stark-letter-clean-power-2030.pdf>

More detail will be provided in the autumn.

■ Electricity: Infrastructure

Mr Richard Holden: [3168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 1981 on Electricity: Infrastructure, whether his Department has had such discussions in the period since the publication of the most recent quarterly list of meetings.

Michael Shanks:

I refer the hon Member to the answer I gave to UIN [1981](#). A record of Ministerial meetings is updated periodically on Gov.UK.

■ Energy: Housing

Josh MacAlister: [3289]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to provide further details on the (a) implementation and (b) scope of the Warm Homes Plan.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Through the Warm Homes Plan, we will invest an extra £6.6 billion over the next five years in clean heat and energy efficiency, upgrading five million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation. We will set out the full details of our Warm Homes Plan, and the approach to Net Zero Buildings more broadly, after the completion of the Spending Review Process.

Josh MacAlister: [3290]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to ensure the Warm Homes Plan integrates with existing energy efficiency schemes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Through the Warm Homes Plan, we will invest an extra £6.6 billion over the next five years in clean heat and energy efficiency, upgrading five million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation. We will set out the full

details of our Warm Homes Plan, and the approach to Net Zero Buildings more broadly, after the completion of the Spending Review Process.

Alex Mayer:

[3437]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his planned timeline is for rolling out his Department's Warm Homes Plan.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Through the Warm Homes Plan, we will invest an extra £6.6 billion over the next five years in clean heat and energy efficiency, upgrading five million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation. We will set out the full details of our Warm Homes Plan, and the approach to Net Zero Buildings more broadly, after the completion of the Spending Review Process.

■ Energy: Meters

Tim Farron:

[2791]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what data his Department holds on the number of smart meters installed that are reported as faulty, by constituency.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department does not hold data on smart meters operating in traditional mode at constituency level. Data held by the Department is reported at Great Britain-wide level and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/smart-meters-statistics>. Smart meters operating in traditional mode continue to record energy usage accurately but do not send automatic readings to energy suppliers.

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[4180]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what information his Department holds on the average cost to energy companies of (a) installing and (b) maintaining smart meters in domestic properties in (i) 2023 and (ii) 2024.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Smart Metering Implementation Programme collects data from energy suppliers on an annual basis pertaining to the costs and benefits of the smart meter rollout. This includes device and installation costs for smart metering equipment, as well as a range of metrics capturing the cost savings of smart meters compared to traditional meters. We do not provide average supplier costs due to commercial sensitivity.

■ Energy: Price Caps

Dan Carden:

[3061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of Ofgem's decision to increase the energy price cap from October 2024.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Ofgem's price cap increased for the period 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024 due to the increase in global wholesale energy prices. The Government believes that the only way to protect billpayers permanently from price shocks, is to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels and towards homegrown clean energy. The creation of Great British Energy will help us to harness clean energy and have less reliance on foreign, volatile energy markets, and help in our commitment to produce all of the UK's energy from clean power sources by 2030.

■ **Energy: Prices****Esther McVey:**[\[2885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what plans he has to help reduce household energy bills; and when those plans will come into effect.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes that the only way to guarantee our energy security and protect billpayers permanently is to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels and towards homegrown clean energy. The creation of Great British Energy will help us to harness clean energy and have less reliance on foreign, volatile energy markets, and help in our commitment to produce all of the UK's energy from clean power sources by 2030.

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

Paula Barker:[\[3217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions of the potential impact of energy price rises on levels of child poverty.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has not made an assessment on the impact of energy price rises on child poverty. The latest statistics on fuel poverty in England cover 2023 and can be found in the published Official Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>. Table 22 provide estimates of the number of households in fuel poverty by age of the youngest person in the household. Statistics for 2024 will be published in early 2025.

The Government is working with the recently announced Child Poverty Taskforce to deliver an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty, tackle the root causes, and give every child the best start in life.

Paula Barker:[\[3218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will take steps to help households with the cost of energy during winter 2024-25.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is committed to supporting households with the cost of energy this winter, and we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills for eligible low-income households.

I have also outlined our expectation to energy suppliers that they should do everything they can to support customers who are struggling with their bills, especially vulnerable consumers. Last month I met with energy suppliers and encouraged them to sign up to the Voluntary Debt Commitment for this winter, and I will work closely with them in the weeks ahead to ensure vulnerable consumers are supported through this winter.

Josh MacAlister:**[3288]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of (a) Government and (b) industry data on household (i) income and (ii) energy needs to develop a targeted support mechanism for energy bills (A) for low-income households and (B) generally.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government's Warm Home Discount (WHD) scheme provides targeted support to eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate off their winter energy bill, the vast majority of which are provided automatically. The WHD scheme provides rebates to pensioners in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit (Core Group 1) and those in receipt of one of the qualifying means-tested benefits and are living in properties which have an energy cost score, calculated from certain property characteristics, exceeding a high-energy-cost threshold (core Group 2).

In 2023/24 the WHD scheme delivered rebates to 3.14 million households in Great Britain. This represents an increase of around 646 thousand households receiving rebates and an increase of around £97 million of support, compared to 2022/23.

Since the WHD scheme began in 2011, over £4 billion in support has been provided to households.

■ Fuel Poverty: Knowsley**Anneliese Midgley:****[3299]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of households that spent more than 10 per cent of their household income on energy bills in Knowsley constituency in each of the last 10 years.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The latest statistics for the number of households in fuel poverty in parliamentary constituencies in England, can be found in the published sub-regional fuel poverty Official Statistics, in Table 4: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>.

Statistics on households required to spend more than 10% of their household income on energy bills are not available at the sub-regional level. The latest statistics at a national level can be found in the published fuel poverty trends statistics, in Table 20: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-trends-2024>

■ Fuel Poverty: Pensioners

Tracy Gilbert: [3520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the number of pensioners who will be in fuel poverty in winter 2024-25.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The latest statistics on fuel poverty in England cover 2023 and can be found in the published Official Statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>. Table 23 and Table 30 provide estimates of the number of households in fuel poverty by age of the oldest person in the household, and by employment status of the household reference person, respectively. Statistics for 2024 will be published in early 2025.

Andrew Cooper: [3528]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the number of pensioners who will be in fuel poverty in winter 2024-25.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The latest statistics on fuel poverty in England cover 2023 and can be found in the published Official Statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>. Table 23 and Table 30 provide estimates of the number of households in fuel poverty by age of the oldest person in the household, and by employment status of the household reference person, respectively. Statistics for 2024 will be published in early 2025.

■ Fuel Poverty: Winter Fuel Payment

John McDonnell: [2713]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the potential impact of changes to the winter fuel payment on the number of people living in fuel poverty.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

A statistical publication estimating the rate of fuel poverty for those in receipt of Winter Fuel Payment in 2023, and the proportion of households who would be in fuel poverty under new eligibility criteria, will be published in due course.

■ Gas Fired Power Stations

Joy Morrissey: [3099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether new unabated gas power stations will be required to maintain energy security.

Joy Morrissey:

[\[3101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to extend the lifetime of existing unabated gas power stations.

Michael Shanks:

To ensure security of supply, the electricity system requires generating capacity that can dispatch power in the event of high peak demand, unexpected outage or during periods of low renewable output. As we transition to clean power the government will work with the private sector to ensure flexible technologies such as hydrogen, long duration electricity storage and power with carbon capture and storage are deployed. We will continue to utilise unabated gas generating capacity, which will increasingly move to a backup role as low carbon alternatives deploy. The Government is considering the policies required to maintain security of supply.

■ **Great British Energy: Job Creation**

Esther McVey:

[\[2886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what types of jobs Great British Energy will create; and where those jobs will be (a) in the North west and (b) nationally.

Michael Shanks:

Great British Energy will create thousands of jobs and build supply chains across the UK, including at its future head office in Scotland. Its investments will support companies across the energy industry, providing opportunities for high quality, well-paid work. We already see the diversity of projects across the UK – from wind turbine construction in Teesside and Merseyside, to nuclear power in Suffolk, tidal projects in Scotland, hydropower in Wales, solar farms in Wiltshire and offshore wind in Belfast. Every part of the UK has a role to play in delivering energy security and transition to clean power by 2030.

■ **Heat Batteries: Housing**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of heat batteries on decarbonising homes.

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 circumstances. 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.

■ Heat Pumps

Mark Garnier: [R] [3578]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to introduce the Clean Heat Market Mechanism.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government will publish a response to the previous Government's consultation on the Clean Heat Market Mechanism in due course, which will set out the Government's plans in this area.

■ Hydrogen

Dr Jeevun Sandher: [R] [3578]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support (a) clean hydrogen generation, (b) the use of hydrogen in (i) heavy industry and (ii) transportation and (c) the (A) skills and (B) infrastructure required for the hydrogen economy.

Sarah Jones:

The Government is delivering revenue support to hydrogen production through the Hydrogen Production Business Model. This is being combined with demand-side measures including innovation and capital funding for industrial and transport users, as well as the development of environmental requirements on fuel-use and emissions.

In addition our National Wealth Fund will directly invest in ports, hydrogen and industrial clusters across the country, including £500 million to support the manufacturing of green hydrogen. And we will reward clean energy developers with a British Jobs Bonus.

■ Hydrogen: Loughborough

Dr Jeevun Sandher: [R] [3579]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how investors in hydrogen projects in Loughborough constituency can request funding from (a) the National Wealth Fund and (b) GB Energy.

Sarah Jones:

The National Wealth Fund was announced by the Chancellor on 9 July and further details will be set out at the International Investment Summit on 14 October. In the meantime, projects can approach UKIB who assesses each opportunity on a deal-by-deal basis and can be contacted by making an enquiry on the UKIB website.

Great British Energy will be an operationally independent company, overseen by a Board, rather than Ministers, benefitting from industry-leading expertise and experience across its remit. The Bill establishing Great British Energy is currently going through Parliament.

■ Hydrogen: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister:

[\[4156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much and what proportion of the Net Zero Hydrogen Fund was allocated to projects in Northern Ireland; and whether he plans to provide funding for green hydrogen generation in Northern Ireland.

Sarah Jones:

The Net Zero Hydrogen Fund, launched in 2022, aims to support the commercial deployment of new low carbon hydrogen production projects during the 2020s. Through strands one and two of this scheme, two projects in Northern Ireland have been offered a total of £5.1m in funding following successful applications through a competitive process. Total expenditure for the fund is yet to be finalised.

Further support for hydrogen production is being delivered through Hydrogen Allocation Rounds.

■ Hydrogen: Production

Martin Vickers:

[\[2806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of meeting the 6GW green hydrogen production target by using local electrolysis; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using (a) green hydrogen production from ammonia and (b) other technologies to meet this target.

Sarah Jones:

Government supports multiple hydrogen production pathways that meet our Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard and funding eligibility criteria. These are reviewed regularly.

The Energy Act 2023 enables support for hydrogen production via Government funding or a levy. We will provide an update on the funding arrangements for the hydrogen programme in due course. Funding decisions will take into account affordability and value for money.

■ Mission Control for Clean Power

Joy Morrissey:

[\[3103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Chris Stark to lead Mission Control to deliver clean power by 2030, published on 9 July 2024, what resources his Department has allocated to Mission Control for (a) administration, (b) personnel and (c) communications.

Kerry McCarthy:

The Department is in the process of establishing the Clean Power 2030 Unit, which will play a crucial role in supporting Chris Stark. Currently, the unit comprises of individuals with a mix of roles and skills ranging from policy and subject matter

expertise to project delivery, analysis and other roles. As with all teams within the Department, the team is supported by corporate functions including communications, finance and human resources, which operate across the organisation.

■ National Grid

Alex Mayer: [\[3423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of reprioritising the grid connection queue to favour viable projects with planning consent over (a) stalled and (b) speculative projects that have booked grid capacity.

Michael Shanks:

Government is working at pace with Ofgem, the Electricity System Operator (ESO), and network companies to accelerate electricity network connections. The ESO is developing proposals with stakeholders to raise requirements to obtain and retain a connection agreement. Under these proposals, stalled or speculative projects that cannot demonstrate sufficient progress would be removed from the connection queue and capacity reallocated to viable projects.

The ESO expects to submit its proposals to Ofgem in December 2024, for a decision in spring 2025.

Alex Mayer: [\[3424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department is taking steps to encourage flexibility in grid connection rules to allow operators to co-locate (a) wind, (b) solar, (c) battery and (d) other technologies through single points of connection.

Michael Shanks:

Connection customers are already permitted to co-locate different technologies through a single connection point.

Alex Mayer: [\[3425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of changing grid connection rules restricting operators from directly supplying households unless they acquire the same supply licence as large scale utility companies.

Michael Shanks:

Small-scale electricity generation sites can benefit from an exemption, which means that they do not require a licence from Ofgem to generate electricity or to supply to local customers. Ofgem has further flexibility to grant supply licences to generation sites that are above the exemptions threshold when they are restricted to specified local areas.

■ Nuclear Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre: Redundancy

Andrew Bowie:

[\[3676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with Sheffield University's Nuclear Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre on potential redundancies.

Michael Shanks:

The Nuclear Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (NAMRC) is part of the University of Sheffield and receives funding from the High Value Manufacturing Catapult. These organisations have been reviewing their nuclear innovation capabilities to ensure they are fit for purpose and delivered cost effectively. These reviews will complete soon and will inform the University's decision on the future of NAMRC.

Ministers and officials have engaged where appropriate, given the independence of the organisations involved, and will work with all the relevant parties to ensure that the critical staff, knowledge and capabilities in the NAMRC are preserved within the sector where needed.

■ Nuclear Power Stations

Andrew Bowie:

[\[3020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his planned timetable is for responding to the Alternative routes to market for new nuclear projects consultation, which closed on 12 April 2024.

Michael Shanks:

The Alternative Routes to Market for New Nuclear Projects consultation was published on 11th January 2024 and closed on 12th April 2024.

Consultation responses have been analysed and the Department intends to publish a factual response in due course.

Andrew Bowie:

[\[3024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of gigawatt scale selections in Europe on the UK's commitment to tripling nuclear globally by 2050.

Michael Shanks:

The UK has long established relationships with European partners considering gigawatt scale civil nuclear deployment and, as one of the 22 countries to sign up to a pledge to triple civil nuclear globally, is working to coordinate plans to deploy civil nuclear domestically and around the world. The Government recognises the increasing demand on supply chains as countries seek to meet their nuclear ambitions and so will work with industry to realise the full range of responsible deployment pathways.

■ Nuclear Power: Costs**Andrew Bowie:** [\[3023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the cost differential per kilowatt is for nuclear development for large scale gigawatt projects and small modular reactors.

Michael Shanks:

Great British Nuclear is currently administering the small modular reactor (SMR) technology selection process and is now in the process of evaluating bids. Given that this is a live procurement process it would be inappropriate at this time to comment on the economics of SMR power generation or to make any comparison across nuclear technologies, but all nuclear projects will be subject to a detailed value for money assessment, including cost.

■ Petrol: Prices**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[3124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Competition and Markets Authority's paper entitled Road fuel review, published on 12 October 2022, if he will make it his policy to introduce a statutory (a) open data fuel finder scheme and (b) monitoring function to help scrutinise the petrol industry.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

In the King's Speech 2024, the government has committed to introduce a Digital Information and Smart Data Bill, which could provide the legislative basis to implement the statutory open data scheme. The government will respond to the road fuels consultation, published earlier this year, in due course.

The Digital Markets, Competition & Consumer Act 2024 gives the Competition and Markets Authority information gathering powers to undertake the permanent monitoring function. We will commence these provisions as soon as possible.

■ Refineries: Grangemouth**Joy Morrissey:** [\[3100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether (a) he and (b) Ministers in his Department have met with the owners of the Grangemouth oil refinery.

Michael Shanks:

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

■ Renewable Energy: Imports**Martin Vickers:** [\[2808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing imports of renewable energy.

Michael Shanks:

In 2023, imports via interconnectors provided 10.2% of gross UK electricity supply, highlighting the key role that they already play. Imports via interconnectors can provide access to lower-cost electricity for GB consumers, reduce the need to dispatch higher carbon domestic generation during peak times, and enhance our security of supply. We expect interconnectors to continue to be an important component of our future decarbonised electricity system.

Ofgem are responsible for taking regulatory decisions for new interconnector projects. Their draft analysis for projects being assessed as part of the current regulatory window can be found at: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-policy-and-regulation/policy-and-regulatory-programmes/interconnectors>

■ Solar Power: Nature Conservation**Andrew Griffith:****[4052]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of large solar farms on the habitats of rare species.

Michael Shanks:

Planning applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects include a statutory requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment to be carried out and for the competent authority (decision-maker) to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment, which is published alongside the Decision Letter.

These assessments consider both the adverse and beneficial effects on designated habitats and rare species. Consultation is undertaken with the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Body such as Natural England and will include mitigation and compensation advice when necessary. Recent examples of environmental and habitats assessments for large solar farms demonstrate that there is often the opportunity to secure net gains for biodiversity.

■ Wind Power: Planning Permission**Graham Stuart:****[2774]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, which onshore wind farms in the UK have a decommissioning bond as part of their planning consent agreement.

Graham Stuart:**[2775]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what percentage of existing onshore wind farms in England have a decommissioning bond as part of their planning consent agreement.

Michael Shanks:

Given the large number of operational wind turbines within the UK, the Government does not hold this information centrally. Instead, this will be held by the relevant local planning authority.

■ Wylfa Power Station**Andrew Bowie:** [\[3022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress his Department has made on the Pre-Tender Market Engagement for nuclear development at Wylfa.

Michael Shanks:

Although pre-tender market engagement for large-scale nuclear published by the previous Government has now closed, we recognise the key role that the GBN-owned site at Wylfa can play in future nuclear projects and helping to achieve energy security and clean power. We will set out our plans for the site in due course.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Diversification****Tim Farron:** [\[2792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help support farmers with reduced subsidy income to transition into diversification schemes.

Daniel Zeichner:

For this Government, food security is national security, requiring a resilient and healthy food system that works with nature and supports British Farmers. The Government is supporting farmers in this through a range of measures. This includes [capital grants](#), designed to help farmers and land managers cover the cost of items that deliver specific environmental benefits.

The Government is also supporting farmers through Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELM) schemes, including the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). As part of the rollout of the SFI offer in 2024, we have been accepting expressions of interest and the first SFI agreements for 2024 are now live.

The Government will not be redesigning ELM schemes from scratch. Record numbers of farmers are now in an ELM scheme, and the Government wants to maintain the momentum that built over recent months. Therefore, the Government will optimise them in an orderly way, over time. The Government will work with the sector to make sure schemes produce the right outcomes for all farmers, including small, grassland, upland and tenanted farms, supporting food security and nature's recovery in a just and equitable way.

More broadly, the Government will support farmers with a new deal to boost rural economic growth and strengthen Britain's food security. This new deal will include the Government's plans to tackle rising energy costs, the biggest challenge to food production, cutting farmers' bills by introducing a public sector sustainable energy company - GB Energy. The Government will also use its own purchasing power to back British produce. The Government has an ambition to be able to supply half of all

food into the public sector from local British producers or certified to higher environmental standards, whilst being in line with WTO and domestic procurement obligations. This Government will also protect farmers from being undercut in trade deals. It will cut red tape to get farm exports moving more effectively, and reduce the UK's reliance on foreign imports, ensuring that seasonal, sustainable, healthy British food is on tables across the country.

■ **Agriculture: South Holland and the Deepings**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[3685\]](#)

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

Daniel Zeichner:

As of 03 September, there are **90** farm businesses with a Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) agreement for the South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

■ **Animal Welfare**

Dan Norris:

[\[2722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in the devolved administrations on a timetable for introducing activity regulations under the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023.

Daniel Zeichner:

Animal welfare is a devolved matter and we continue to work closely with the devolved administrations on animal welfare policies.

■ **Animal Welfare Committee**

Alex Mayer:

[\[3428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his Department's policy that deliberate cruelty against companion animals is a standing item on the agenda of the Animal Welfare Committee.

Daniel Zeichner:

Causing unnecessary suffering to an animal is an offence under Section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. In 2021, the maximum sentence for this offence was increased to five years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

The Government can seek independent, authoritative, impartial and timely advice from the Animal Welfare Committee for all animal welfare matters relating to animals kept by people.

In relation to companion animal welfare, the Committee advises the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Scottish and Welsh Governments. The

Committee produce reports according to topics agreed annually, but do not have standing items on their agenda.

More information on AWC's terms of reference and workplan is available on the GOV.UK page ([here](#)).

■ Animal Welfare: Fireworks

Alex Mayer: [\[3430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the impact of fireworks on (a) domestic and (b) wild animals.

Daniel Zeichner:

A number of animal welfare and veterinary organisations provide advice and guidance to enable people to minimise the impacts of fireworks on animal welfare. Users of fireworks should be aware of animals in the neighbouring area and use them responsibly. As a matter of best practice, those organising displays should give neighbouring owners plenty of advance notice of the fireworks display and should ensure that fireworks are not set off near livestock or horses in fields, or close to buildings that house livestock.

■ Animals (Low-welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023

Andrew Rosindell: [\[2749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a timetable for consulting on the activities that should fall within the activity regulations under the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[2750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to consult international zoological accreditation and certification bodies on future regulations under the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023.

Daniel Zeichner:

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

Evidence will support why any specific advertising ban is needed and relevant stakeholder engagement will be undertaken to ensure future bans will not prohibit high welfare tourist activity.

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

■ **Beavers: Conservation**

Steve Darling:

[\[3338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help increase the population of wild beavers.

Mary Creagh:

The Government supports species reintroductions where there are clear benefits for nature, people and the environment. All reintroductions in England are expected to follow the Code for Reintroductions and other Conservation Translocations. We will continue to work with Natural England to develop our approach to beaver reintroductions in England.

■ **Beavers: Nature Conservation**

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[\[4149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to (a) help encourage and (b) publish a strategy for the reintroduction of beavers into the wild.

Mary Creagh:

We understand the potential benefits that beavers can bring, including through creating wetland habitats and increasing biodiversity. The Government supports species reintroductions where there are clear benefits for nature, people and the environment.

All reintroductions in England are expected to follow the Code for Reintroductions and other Conversations Translocations. We will continue to work with Natural England to develop our approach to beaver reintroductions in England.

■ **Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control**

Sarah Champion:

[\[2904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answers of 12 August 2024 to Questions 1263 and 1675, what the most recent advice is that his Department has received from expert advisers on ending licenses for badger culling that have already been issued.

Daniel Zeichner:

On 30 August, the Government announced the start of work to refresh the Bovine TB strategy for England, to end the badger cull by the end of this parliament and drive down disease to save cattle and farmers' livelihoods. This will be undertaken in co-design with farmers, vets, scientists and conservationists, ensuring a refreshed strategy continues to be led by the best scientific and epidemiological evidence and advice.

As part of this announcement, existing cull licences will be honoured to ensure clarity for farmers involved in these culls whilst new measures can be rolled out and take effect. This follows previous advice that the gap between the end of one form of

badger disease control and the successful deployment of another, should be as narrow as possible to bank the maximum disease control benefits.

Further details can be found on GOV.UK at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-end-badger-cull-with-new-tb-eradication-strategy>.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Communication

Neil O'Brien:

[3086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much his Department spent on communications in the last year for which data is available.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra spent £1,503,000 on communications activity in the 2023/2024 financial year. Defra publishes details on spend on a monthly basis on GOV.UK as part of routine Government transparency arrangements.

Communications campaigns are an important part of delivering some of the Department's policies. Communications spend allows us to reach audiences in places and ways that ensure they are more responsive and open to hearing about our work and hopefully changing their attitudes and behaviours towards positive action.

■ Dogs: Smuggling

Lisa Smart:

[3358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of puppies illegally smuggled into the UK for sale in the last five years.

Daniel Zeichner:

By its very nature, we cannot know the true extent of puppy smuggling operations. However, the Animal and Plant Health Agency does hold data on the numbers of interceptions and detentions. In 2023, there were over 500 landings of cats and dogs intercepted at the Port of Dover and found to be non-compliant with the import requirements. Of these, 116 puppies and kittens were quarantined for being below the legally required minimum age for import.

The Government is committed to introducing the most ambitious boost in animal welfare in a generation. As outlined in the manifesto, this includes ending puppy smuggling.

■ Donkeys and Horses: Smuggling

John McDonnell:

[2709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle the smuggling of (a) horses, (b) ponies and (c) donkeys.

Daniel Zeichner:

Exporting horses and other equines from Great Britain for slaughter is banned under the Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Act 2024.

More broadly, the Government is reviewing options to improve equine identification and traceability.

■ Environment Act 2021**Adam Jogee:**[\[3477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Environment Act 2021; and whether he plans to amend it.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to delivering for nature, taking action to meet our Environment Act 2021 targets, to restore and protect our natural world. On 30th July, we launched a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) to make sure it is fit for purpose to deliver our ambitious targets to save nature. This will be followed by the introduction of a new, statutory plan to protect and restore our natural environment, with delivery plans to meet each of our targets.

■ Environmental Land Management Schemes**Adam Jogee:**[\[3475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's Environmental Land Management Schemes.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government is fully committed to Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes, including the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and will not be redesigning the schemes from scratch. Record numbers of farmers are now in an ELM scheme, and the Government wants to maintain the momentum that built over recent months.

ELM's design allows for ongoing improvements. The Government recently published a summary of [recent changes to SFI actions and scheme information](#), made in response to feedback from farmers, stakeholder organisations, and other experts. These include specific technical changes to various SFI actions to ensure they are achievable and effective in meeting environmental goals.

Looking forward, the Government will optimise ELM schemes in an orderly way, over time. The Government will work with the sector to make sure schemes produce the right outcomes for all farmers, including small, grassland, upland and tenanted farms, supporting food security and nature's recovery in a just and equitable way. To inform Defra's work with the sector, the Government will increase the transparency of schemes by publishing data on the impact they are having.

■ Fisheries: Finance

Steve Darling: [\[3332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to provide grant funding to support the modernisation of the fishing industry.

Steve Darling: [\[3333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to introduce incentives to replace older fishing vessels with fuel-efficient alternatives.

Steve Darling: [\[3334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to provide grant funding for the refurbishment of (a) fishing ports and (b) processing infrastructure.

Steve Darling: [\[3335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) providing additional Government funding and (b) co-funding with fishing groups to help improve the development of fisheries management plans.

Daniel Zeichner:

Decisions on future funding for the fishing industry will be taken through the Spending Review processes and in light of Government priorities, including food security, protecting nature and growing the economy.

Food security is national security, and a sustainable fishing industry is an important part of that. Decisions on future funding for the fishing industry will be taken through the Spending Review processes. Discussions on the opportunities and challenges facing the industry over the last two months have been helpful in gaining an understanding of what other types of support or Government action may be appropriate. These discussions will continue.

■ Fisheries: Migrant Workers

Steve Darling: [\[3337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the potential merits of amending visa rules for fishing crew to provide additional (a) employment and (b) welfare rights.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government understands that there are labour shortages across our seafood sectors, and ensuring sufficient labour availability in critical sectors is a Defra priority. The welfare of workers is of utmost importance to this Government as we look to build a coherent approach to skills, migration and labour market policy.

■ Flood Control: Sherwood Forest

Michelle Welsh:

[\[3906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the improvement of flood (a) defences and (b) resilience in Sherwood Forest constituency.

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.

The Environment Agency (EA) currently have no flood defences within the constituency except a section of flood bank in Lowdham.

The EA and partners are in the process of constructing a larger flood storage reservoir upstream of Lowdham to reduce the risk of flooding to 191 properties in the village. The scheme is projected to have £50 million in whole life benefits and to be delivered by early 2027.

The EA also carry out maintenance on parts of the River Leen, Bakerlane Brook, Cocker Beck and Dover Beck, and continue to monitor river levels, issuing flood warnings when required. The EA are working with partners to raise community awareness, plan for and respond to incidents, and support communities, alongside Local Authorities, in running Flood Warden schemes.

■ Flood Control: Shropshire

Shaun Davies:

[\[3315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Environment Agency is taking to help prevent flooding in Ironbridge Gorge; and what investment his Department is providing to protect (a) businesses and (b) properties from flooding in that 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.

Over the past 10 years, the Environment Agency (EA) has deployed the temporary flood barriers within Ironbridge Gorge 19 times, reducing flood risk to 23 homes along the Wharfage. The EA is supporting Telford & Wrekin Council in developing a scheme to reduce flood risk to those properties currently undefended in the Ironbridge Gorge. The council has secured investment of £1.14m and the project is planned to reduce flood risk to a further 32 properties.

The EA is also exploring options to reduce flood risk in neighbouring Coalbrookdale investing £70k to update its flood model.

As well as investing in flood risk management projects, the EA also provides a free Flood Warning Service in the Telford constituency.

■ Floods: Finance

Helen Morgan:

[\[3836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of ineligibility for the frequently flooded fund on communities which are frequently flooded.

Emma Hardy:

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

In July 2022, a ring-fenced £100 million Frequently Flooded Allowance (FFA) was created as part of the Government's £5.6 billion investment programme into flood and coastal erosion schemes.

The eligibility criteria for the FFA were designed, in collaboration with the Environment Agency, to ensure funding is targeted towards communities that have flooded more than once within the past ten years. They were subject to targeted testing with Regional Flood and Coastal Committees and representatives from Risk Management Authorities. The criteria aim to address some of the specific challenges faced by frequently flooded communities, particularly those that are smaller and more rural and can face barriers accessing funding due to the relative complexity and cost of building flood defences compared to the size of the community.

Projects not eligible for the FFA are able to apply for Grant in Aid as part of the Government's floods investment programme. We will review this programme to ensure flood risk management is fit for the challenges we face now and in the future.

■ Fly-tipping: Fines

Adam Jogee:

[\[3473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of local authorities ring fencing fly-tipping fines to pay for environmental recovery.

Mary Creagh:

This policy was introduced under the previous government. The department has not yet made any formal assessment on the implications of this policy. Defra supports and encourages local authorities to investigate all incidents of fly-tipping, including those on private land, and make good use of their enforcement powers.

■ **Furs: Imports****James MacCleary:**[\[3585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to introduce a ban on the import of animal fur.

Daniel Zeichner:

I refer the Honourable Member to the reply I gave to [PQ 958](#).

■ **Landfill: Fines****Adam Jogee:**[\[3457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data his Department holds on the number of fines issued to landfill site operators by the Environment Agency for a breach of permit conditions in each of the last ten years.

Mary Creagh:

The Environment Agency is able to take a range of enforcement action against non-compliances by site operators, in line with its Enforcement and Sanctions Policy. Some enforcement action may lead to a prosecution resulting in a fine imposed by the court. Over the last ten years there have been 7 prosecutions at landfill sites, totalling £488,200 of fines. These figures relate to prosecutions at landfill sites but are not all directly attributable to site permit holders.

■ **Livestock Worrying****Adam Jogee:**[\[3474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing legislation to extend livestock worrying offences to include roads and paths.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government recognises the distress livestock worrying can cause animals and their keepers.

We are considering the most effective ways to deliver our commitments in this area and will be setting out next steps in due course.

■ **Nature Conservation****Helen Grant:**[\[2862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help facilitate re-wilding in England.

Mary Creagh:

This Government has set out its intention to deliver for nature, taking action to meet our Environment Act targets, and working in partnership with civil society, communities and business to restore and protect our natural world.

Wilding or rewilding is the restoration of ecosystems to the point where they are more regulated by natural processes. This Government is supporting a number of initiatives to create wilder landscapes across England, as part of a broader approach to nature recovery. Rewilding is not appropriate in all situations, and we must balance priorities including food production.

One of the ways this Government is supporting wilder landscapes and wildlife-rich habitat is through Landscape Recovery (LR), one of Defra's Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes. LR is for landowners and managers who want to take a large-scale, long-term approach to producing environmental and climate goods on their land. It will facilitate and fund ambitious projects through bespoke, 20+ year agreements. LR supports objectives such as restoring ecological or hydrological function across a landscape, peatland restoration, woodland management, or habitat restoration.

■ Packaging: Recycling**Andrew Cooper:**[\[3531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on extended producer responsibility.

Mary Creagh:

The Government has interpreted that the MP is referring to the 'Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging' scheme as part of our packaging reforms. The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024, which reform the UK's producer responsibility system for packaging, are due to be brought before parliament in autumn this year, with the aim of these regulations coming into force by 1 January 2025.

■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances**Adam Jogee:**[\[3449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to phase out per-and-polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS); and whether he plans to align with EU regulation standards on PFAS.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is charting a new course to develop an ambitious programme to turn the tide and better protect our natural environment. Recently we announced a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan to deliver on our legally binding targets to save nature. This includes how best to manage chemicals, including the risks posed by PFAS. We have already announced plans to restrict firefighting foams and will set out more detail in due course.

■ **Pets: Imports**

Lisa Smart:

[\[3357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of resources allocated to enforcement agencies responsible for checking pets entering the UK.

Daniel Zeichner:

We operate one of the most rigorous and robust pet travel checking regimes in Europe. All dogs, cats and ferrets entering Great Britain non-commercially on approved routes undergo 100% documentary and identity check. We keep resource allocation for these checks under review in close liaison with enforcement agencies.

■ **Seafood: Trade Promotion**

Steve Darling:

[\[3331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to promote British seafood (a) domestically and (b) abroad.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government will tirelessly promote high-quality seafood from all parts of the United Kingdom, both at home and abroad. As part of the UK Seafood Fund DEFRA and its partners in the Department for Business and Trade and in Seafish have delivered the Seafood Exports Package. Since 2022 the Package has invested £1m over 3 years to support UK businesses to attend international seafood trade shows, take part in trade missions, and leverage help from in-market specialists in key target markets to connect with buyers. The Package is now in its final year, and any future extensions of this work will be considered as part of the Spending Review.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Abkhazia: Russia**

Mark Pritchard:

[\[2785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will join his EU counterparts in making representations to the Russian Federation over the construction of a naval base in Abkhazia.

Stephen Doughty:

We have repeatedly condemned Russia's illegal military presence and the Russification of Abkhazia, including through the proposed Russian naval base at Ochamchire, most recently in a UN Security Council Statement on the 16th Anniversary of Russia's invasion of Georgia. The UK fully supports Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, including over the breakaway territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in the face of continued hybrid aggression from Russia.

■ Balochistan: Human Rights**Sam Carling:** [\[3622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to help protect human rights in the Balochistan region, in the context of recent violence in that region.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK condemns recent acts of terrorism and violence in Balochistan and extends condolences to those families affected. The UK is deeply concerned about reports of human rights abuses and violations in Pakistan, including in Balochistan province. The British High Commission regularly raises these issues with the Government of Pakistan at a senior level, including the need to address allegations of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

■ Bangladesh**Shivani Raja:** [\[3346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to British citizens in Bangladesh.

Shivani Raja: [\[3347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assistance his Department is providing for people with family members in Bangladesh.

Shivani Raja: [\[3351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support is available to British citizens concerned about the safety of family members in Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

In our public statements, we urged for an end to the violence and a de-escalation of the situation. We continue to monitor the situation in Bangladesh closely. The safety of British nationals is always our main concern in determining our travel advice, and we keep it under constant review. Any British nationals in Bangladesh who are seeking consular assistance can contact us 24/7 at the British High Commission Dhaka on +880 255 668700 or contact the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office on +44 (0) 207 008 5000.

■ Bangladesh: Demonstrations**Daisy Cooper:** [\[4018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1627 on Bangladesh: Demonstrations, whether he has had discussions with his Bangladeshi counterpart on recent (a) protests and (b) violence since 30 July 2024.

Catherine West:

On 9 August, the Foreign Secretary's statement welcomed 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 has met with the Chief Adviser and Adviser for Foreign Affairs of the Interim Government in August. The British High Commission continues to engage with the Interim Government in Bangladesh on key priorities including the restoration of law and order.

■ Bangladesh: Hinduism

Shivani Raja: [\[3348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure the protection of (a) Hindu communities and (b) other religious minorities in Bangladesh.

Shivani Raja: [\[3349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of recent reports of (a) human rights violations against Hindus, (b) the destruction of religious sites and (c) targeted violence in Bangladesh.

Shivani Raja: [\[3350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Bangladeshi counterpart on the (a) persecution, (b) safety and (c) rights of Hindus in that country.

Shivani Raja: [\[3352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) international partners and (b) human rights organisations on the ongoing violence against Hindu communities in Bangladesh; and what diplomatic steps he is taking to help tackle that violence.

Shivani Raja: [\[3354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to monitor instances of ethnic and religious violence 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. We were clear that a full and independent UN-led investigation into recent events is 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 and promote national reconciliation. The UK is committed to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all, as guaranteed under international human rights law.

Shivani Raja:

[\[3353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what reports he has received from HM High Commission Dhaka on recent alleged attacks on Hindu temples in Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

The British High Commission in Dhaka is engaged with the Interim Government in Bangladesh to reinforce the message on an end to the violence and a de-escalation of the situation. 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 and promote national reconciliation. The UK is committed to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all, as guaranteed under international human rights law.

Sam Carling:

[\[3620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken diplomatic steps in response to recent violence against Hindu communities in Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

In our public statements, we urged for an end to the violence and a de-escalation of the situation. We were clear that a full and independent UN-led investigation into recent events is 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 and promote national reconciliation. The UK is committed to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all, as guaranteed under international human rights law.

■ Bangladesh: Human Rights

Dan Carden:

[\[3058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of potential implications for his policies of the human rights situation in Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

The UK has a long-standing commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights. In July, the UK government expressed concern about the situation in Bangladesh and called for all sides to work together to end the violence. We were clear that a full and independent UN-led investigation is 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. The UK supports the work of the UN as it works to conduct an impartial and independent fact-finding mission to identify human rights violations.

■ Bangladesh: Humanitarian Aid

Shivani Raja:

[\[3345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what humanitarian aid his Department is providing to Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

As a leading donor to the Rohingya refugee response, the UK has provided humanitarian aid of over £391 million since 2017 including food provision, clean water, healthcare and protection services. We are deeply saddened by the devastating flooding in Eastern Bangladesh and are providing £450,000 to fund relief efforts. The UK's humanitarian assistance to respond to disasters across Bangladesh this year had previously totalled £530,000 and supported more than 48,000 people affected by Cyclone Remal in May and flooding in Sylhet in July.

■ Bangladesh: Politics and Government

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to implement procurement deals agreed with the government of Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

In August, the UK Government welcomed the appointment of the Interim Government in Bangladesh, led by Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus. The British High Commission continues to engage with the Interim Government in Bangladesh on key priorities. The UK Government assesses procurement opportunities in accordance with relevant UK and international legislation and guidance.

■ Bangladesh: Religious Freedom

Navendu Mishra:

[\[3161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to his Bangladeshi counterpart on the protection of religious minorities in Bangladesh.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[3162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reported attacks on the Hindu community in Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

In our public statements, we urged an end to the violence and a de-escalation of the situation. We were clear that a full and independent UN-led investigation into recent events is 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 and promote national reconciliation. The

UK is committed to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all, as guaranteed under international human rights law.

■ Bangladesh: Rohingya

Andrew Rosindell: [\[2752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the Government's policy is on engaging with the government of Bangladesh on the matter of the Rohingya people in Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

As a leading donor to the Rohingya refugee response, the UK Government has provided over £391 million in Bangladesh to the Rohingya and host communities since 2017. We are committed to supporting the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh including ongoing support to protection services. Our High Commissioner in Dhaka continues to raise this issue with the Interim Government in Bangladesh. We will continue to work closely with UN agencies to provide basic services to Rohingya refugees while they remain in Bangladesh. Despite escalating conflict and ongoing access challenges, we are supporting those most in need through agile local partners.

■ Barbados: Foreign Relations

Adam Jogee: [\[3468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterpart in Barbados since his appointment.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary spoke to Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados on 6 July. They discussed a wide range of issues including Hurricane Beryl, the climate agenda and antimicrobial resistance.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Private Military and Security Companies

Andrew Rosindell: [\[2760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department has spent on private security companies in the British Indian Ocean Territory in each of the last five years.

Stephen Doughty:

The FCDO provides financial support to the BIOT Administration to enable it to discharge its responsibilities. We are not aware of the FCDO itself having spent any money on private security companies in BIOT in the last five years.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Tamils

Uma Kumaran:

[\[3605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on a decision regarding the most vulnerable Tamil refugees and migrants in the British Indian Territory of Diego Garcia.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is working closely with relevant departments and BIOT Administration to respond to the health and welfare needs of all the migrants present in Diego Garcia.

■ British Overseas Territories: Press Freedom

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure press freedom in the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Stephen Doughty:

Issues relating to media regulation on the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) are a matter for the BIOT Administration.

■ Caribbean: Foreign Relations

Adam Jogee:

[\[3483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Caribbean Community.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary spoke with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretary General, Dr Carla Barnett, on 15 August. The Foreign Secretary expressed solidarity with the Caribbean following Hurricane Beryl. They also discussed the situation in Haiti and reconfirmed the deep UK-CARICOM relationship, including the need to advance the UK-CARICOM Memorandum of Understanding.

■ China: Cybersecurity

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[\[3538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the level of cyber security threat posed by China.

Catherine West:

This Government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests. We will co-operate where we can, compete where we need to, and challenge where we must.

We continue to see evidence of Chinese state-affiliated cyber actors deploying sophisticated capabilities to pursue strategic objectives which threaten the security

and stability of UK interests. It has been raised at senior levels and we expect China to uphold its commitment to act responsibly in cyberspace.

■ China: Foreign Relations

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[3535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will undertake a review of attempts by China to influence UK (a) politicians and (b) Government.

Catherine West:

The UK will bring a consistent, long-term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests. This Government has committed to carry out an audit of the full breadth of the UK's relationship with China as a bilateral and global actor to improve our ability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities China poses. The Government's first duty is to protect our national security and keep this country safe.

■ China: Sanctions

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[2801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will introduce Magnitsky-style sanctions against Chinese officials involved in human rights abuses in Tibet.

Catherine West:

This Government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests. We will co-operate where we can, compete where we need to, and challenge where we must. We will stand firm on human rights, including China's repression of the people of Tibet.

On sanctions, the FCDO keeps all evidence and potential listings under close review. It is not appropriate to speculate on who may be designated in the future, as to do so could reduce the impact of the designations.

■ China: Tibet

Mr Richard Holden: [\[3174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Chinese counterpart on (a) closing down the residential boarding schools system, (b) preserving the (i) language, (ii) history, (iii) way of life and (iv) other aspects of the distinct identity of the Tibetan people, (c) religious and cultural freedom in Tibet, (d) the release of Panchen Lama, (e) the role of the Chinese state in the decision making process for the succession of the Dalai Lama and (f) the peaceful ending of the occupation of Tibet.

Catherine West:

This Government will stand firm on human rights, including China's repression of the people of Tibet. We will champion freedom of religion or belief for all abroad, and work to uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief through our position at the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora, and through bilateral engagement.

The Foreign Secretary raised human rights in his first meeting with China's Director of Foreign Affairs Commission Office and Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, on 26 July.

Commonwealth**Adam Jogee:**[\[3462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy and (b) implications for his policies of the candidates seeking appointment as the next Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

Stephen Doughty:

HMG is considering each candidate seriously in line with the UK's priorities. Who will be the next Secretary-General is a decision for Commonwealth Heads of Government to make by consensus at CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) in Samoa, in October.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Mpox**David Mundell:**[\[2776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support Mpox vaccine (a) distribution and (b) accessibility in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is second largest donor to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, providing £1.65 billion over 2021-2025. We are working closely with Gavi to enable access to mpox vaccines for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other African countries at risk. The UK have committed £160 million to international partner, Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). CEPI and Bavarian Nordic recently announced a clinical trial launching in late 2024 to assess vaccine effectiveness in children in Africa. Lord Collins has announced the additional £3.1 million funding to UNICEF for cholera and mpox response. This will reach 4.4 million people in affected communities.

Florence Eshalomi:[\[3242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assistance his Department is giving to the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the recent mpox outbreaks in that country.

Anneliese Dodds:

During his visit to DRC in August, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Africa), Lord Collins, announced £3.1 million UK funding to UNICEF for cholera and

mpox response in DRC. It will reach 4.4 million people in affected communities and will boost the DRC's national response for mpox by bolstering surveillance, and ensuring thousands of patients can access healthcare as well as nutritious food to fight infection. The UK is also providing £340 million core voluntary contribution to WHO over 2020-2024, as well as £3 million to WHO's regional office to Africa for health emergency response.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[3615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help increase the accessibility of covid-19 vaccines in lower-income countries.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK Government is the second largest donor to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance - committing £1.65 billion from 2021-2025. Gavi's COVID programme is meeting all the demand for COVID vaccines in lower income countries. Gavi also provides delivery support to ensure the vaccines get to the people that need them. This programme will run until the end of 2025. Since the onset of the pandemic Gavi has delivered over 2 billion doses of COVID vaccines.

■ Developing Countries: Water

Blair McDougall:

[\[3367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure access to clean water for people in the developing world.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is committed to advancing access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in developing countries and for those most likely to be marginalised, including women and girls. Our £18.5 million WASH Systems for Health programme is supporting governments in six developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to strengthen WASH systems. The UK also provides support to UNICEF to strengthen the capacity of 11 government partners to establish climate resilient WASH services. Last month I announced a new package of aid for Sudan, South Sudan and Chad. This package includes provision for 40,000 displaced people with safe water in South Sudan. Additionally, support to the Sanitation and Water for All partnership supports the leadership, collaboration and accountability needed for progress globally.

■ Development Aid: Armed Conflict

Mark Pritchard:

[\[2787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help improve access to (a) clean drinking water and (b) sanitation in fragile and conflict affected states and regions.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is committed to improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for people in the developing world. The FCDO WASH programmes that are in fragile and conflict affected states including in Chad, DRC, Ethiopia and Mozambique. One example is the £18.5 million 4-year WASH Systems for Health program which works with governments and stakeholders to strengthen the planning, finance, management and accountability systems to improve water and sanitation services. We are also providing UNICEF with £6.25 million over 4 years to strengthen the capacity of governments to provide climate resilient WASH services in countries including fragile and conflict-affected states.

■ Development Aid: Food Supply**Chris Law:**[\[2942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report entitled The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2024 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, published in August 2024, what steps his Department plans to take to support initiatives to close the financing gap for food security and nutrition.

Anneliese Dodds:

We are harnessing more and better-deployed finance for food, agriculture and nutrition. At the G20 Development Ministers Meeting in July, I announced the UK would join the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty to work in partnership to unlock much needed finance. We also support the G7 Apulia Food Systems Initiative which seeks to improve public and private funding for food security. We work to unlock climate finance, push multilateral development banks to stretch their balance sheets, provide technical assistance and finance to bring in more private sector investment, and support the reform of subsidies for more sustainable agriculture.

■ Development Aid: Poverty**Sarah Champion:**[\[2906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department plans to offer to the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty launched by the G20 Brazilian Presidency.

Anneliese Dodds:

At the G20 Development Ministers Meeting in July, I announced the UK would join the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty when it launches in November, offering UK expertise support to the secretariat, to join the Board of Champions, and to galvanise our networks to support the Alliance, including the UK development community, civil society and academia. We so far supported the Alliance's taskforce with expertise, co-financing a technical report on resource mobilisation delivered by the Overseas Development Institute. As we join, the UK will bring to bear our investments and expertise in food security, nutrition, social protection and more.

■ Development Aid: Water

Claire Hanna: [\[3192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to advance clean water, sanitation, and hygiene programmes globally.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is committed to advancing access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in developing countries and for those most likely to be marginalised, including women and girls. Our £18.5 million WASH Systems for Health programme is supporting governments in six developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to strengthen WASH systems. The UK also provides support to UNICEF to strengthen the capacity of 11 government partners to establish climate resilient WASH services. Last month I announced a new package of aid for Sudan, South Sudan and Chad. This package includes provision for 40,000 displaced people with safe water in South Sudan. Additionally, support to the Sanitation and Water for All partnership supports the leadership, collaboration and accountability needed for progress globally.

■ Food Supply

Chris Law: [\[2941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report entitled The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2024 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, published in August 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the estimate that 582 million people will be chronically food insecure in 2030.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK, the UN, other states, and NGOs use the findings of the annual "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World" report extensively. The persisting high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition outlined in the report are concerning. We remain steadfast in our commitment to address these, working alongside partners to provide immediate humanitarian support, tackle the causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, and leverage UK-funded science and technology expertise for more climate-resilient food systems. We support global initiatives, like the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty and the Child Nutrition Fund, in order to lift ambition, ensure better international coordination, and unlock much-needed finance.

■ Food Supply and Nutrition

Ellie Chowns: [\[3563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to address the root causes of hunger and malnutrition globally.

Anneliese Dodds:

We are committed to addressing the causes of global food insecurity and malnutrition, leveraging UK expertise and investment to build greater resilience to

shocks, help transform agrifood systems for greener, inclusive growth and nutritious and sustainable foods, support smallholder farmer livelihoods and tackle malnutrition, through initiatives like the Child Nutrition Fund and our support to the CGIAR, the world's leading agricultural science and innovation organisation. At the G20 Development Ministers Meeting in July, I announced the UK would join the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty to work in partnership to lift ambition and finance for long-term solutions.

Ellie Chowns:[\[3564\]](#)

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 the finding in the report entitled *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024*, published by the FAO in August 2024, that 2.8 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2022.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK, the UN and other states use the findings of the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* report extensively. The persisting high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition are concerning. We are committed to addressing these, working alongside partners to provide immediate humanitarian support, tackle the causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, and leverage UK-funded science and technology expertise for more climate-resilient food systems. At the G20 Development Ministers Meeting in July, I announced the UK would join the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty to lift ambition, ensure better international coordination, and unlock much-needed finance.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Aviation**John Glen:**[\[2868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his policy is on the use of (a) the G-GBNI A321 and (b) non-scheduled flights for official business.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary follows the Ministerial Code in relation to use of GBNI and non-scheduled flights for official business. This can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministerial-code/ministerial-code#travel-by-ministers>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Ministers**Kit Malthouse:**[\[2404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) statutory and (b) non-statutory direct ministerial appointments excluding special advisers he 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.

Catherine West:

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has made one direct ministerial appointment to date. Jonathan Powell has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Envoy for the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)/Chagos Archipelago Sovereignty Negotiation with Mauritius. Jonathan Powell's experience on the most sensitive international issues makes him uniquely qualified to carry out this role. His appointment was announced on Gov.uk on 6 September. The full statement can be found here:

[<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jonathan-powell-appointed-as-special-envoy-for-biot-negotiations>].

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Private Education**Dame Harriett Baldwin:****[2888]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1266 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Private Education, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact of the imposition of VAT on school fees from January 2025 on his departmental budget in (a) 2024/25 and (b) 2025/26.

Catherine West:

It has been long-standing practice under successive governments for the FCDO to support children of staff who have been, are, or will be posted abroad to complete key stages of their education without disruption. The FCDO cannot accurately estimate the impact of a 20 percent VAT increase on school fees, since we do not know if, or by how much schools will transfer the costs of fees to parents.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Redundancy Pay**Wera Hobhouse:****[3039]**

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

Catherine West:

The details of any ministerial severance payments can be found in the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office's (FCDO) Annual Report & Accounts. For FY 2019-20, details of payments can be found in the separate Annual Report & Accounts of the then Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the then Department for International Development (DfID).

France: British Nationals Abroad**Manuela Perteghella:****[3394]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of negotiating a reciprocal agreement

with his French counterpart to allow British citizens with properties in France to spend up to six months in France per year.

Stephen Doughty:

Both the UK and the EU allow for visa-free short-term travel in line with their arrangements for third country nationals. The UK allows EU citizens short-term visa-free travel for up to six months. Meanwhile, the Schengen Borders Code allows for third country nationals to travel within the Schengen Area for up to 90 days in any 180-day period; this is standard for third country nationals travelling to the EU. While we recognise that extending the 90-180 day period is a matter for Member States and the EU, the Government will continue to listen to and advocate for UK nationals abroad.

■ **Gaza: Aid Workers**

Blair McDougall:

[\[4086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure the safety of humanitarian workers delivering aid in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK Government remains concerned about the security of humanitarian workers in Gaza and continues to raise this issue internationally - including at the UK-led session at the UN Security Council on 29 August. Over 280 aid workers have been killed in Gaza, more than in every other conflict globally combined this year. We continue to press Israel for safe distribution of aid and an improved deconfliction mechanism to keep humanitarian operations safe from military operations. This was also raised by the Foreign Secretary in his visit to Israel on 16 August.

■ **Gaza: Children**

Kate Osamor:

[\[2963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of Save the Children's press notice entitled Gaza's missing children: Over 20,000 children estimated to be lost, disappeared, detained, buried under the rubble or in mass graves, published on 24 June 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Government is deeply concerned by the devastating impact of the conflict on children in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary has publicly condemned the tragic loss of civilian life since this war began and has made clear that all parties must comply with International Humanitarian Law. On 2 September, the Foreign Secretary noted in his Statement on the Middle East that Israel could reasonably do much more to ensure life-saving food and medical supplies reach civilians in Gaza.

Israel must respect the rights and vulnerabilities of children and the critical infrastructure that serves their basic needs. On 7 August, during her visit to the

region, the Minister of State for Development announced £6 million in funding for UNICEF to support vulnerable families in Gaza with lifesaving water, healthcare and specialist treatment for malnourished children. On 4 September I signed an agreement with Kuwait to deliver £4.5 million of joint support via UNICEF into Gaza and Yemen.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Alex Easton:

[\[4133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help increase levels of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement on 2 September, it is the assessment of this Government that Israel could reasonably do more to ensure that lifesaving food and medical supplies reach civilians in Gaza, in the light of the appalling humanitarian situation. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary continue to press Israeli leaders to deliver on their promise to "flood" Gaza with aid, including in two Foreign Secretary visits to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Prime Minister has spoken to PM Netanyahu and PM Mustafa.

The UK trebled its aid commitment to the OPTs in the last financial year and this Government will maintain significant funding this financial year to support trusted aid agencies on the ground. This includes £5.5 million to UK-MED, £6 million for UNICEF, and £21 million new UK funding to UNRWA, which will also support lifesaving work in Gaza.

■ Gaza: Reconstruction

Blair McDougall:

[\[3371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help reconstruction efforts in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is committed to the recovery, stabilisation and reconstruction of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) as soon as the context allows. Planning for that must start now. The UK is clear: this must be Palestinian-led and support a political process towards a two-state solution. The UK's humanitarian aid and technical assistance, including through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and to the Palestinian Authority, is helping to support Gaza and prepare for that next phase. But the scale of the challenge is large. According to a UN/World Bank assessment earlier this year, reconstruction costs will exceed \$18.5 billion. The UK is therefore committed to working with international partners, other donors, the UN, World Bank and private sector to begin planning for how we can meet this challenge.

■ **Hamas: UNRWA**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[3382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he was made aware that nine staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) may have been involved in the attack on Israel of 7 October 2023 (a) during his discussion with UN Secretary-General Guterres and (b) prior to his decision to reinstate funding to UNRWA.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

In January, the UK paused funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) following allegations that 19 staff were involved in the 7 October Hamas attack.

Catherine Colonna conducted an independent review that found the existing UNRWA framework was "robust", but neutrality issues persisted. UNRWA committed to implementing all recommendations. The Foreign Secretary was subsequently reassured that UNRWA is committed to the highest standards of neutrality. The Foreign Secretary called the UN Secretary-General on 18 July to discuss funding to UNRWA. He then announced resumption of funding to UNRWA on 19 July. The UN's Office of Internal Services Oversight (OIOS) led an investigation into the specific allegations against individual staff members. On 5 August, OIOS findings concluded that nine members of UNRWA may have been involved in the atrocities. We welcome UNRWA's action to terminate the contracts of these individuals.

■ **Iran: Political Prisoners**

Blair McDougall:

[\[3369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help end the execution of political prisoners in Iran.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK opposes the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. Iran's consistently high rate of executions is a deliberate attempt to instil fear and stifle dissent. In August, I said on X that we condemned the Iranian regime's executions, including that of protester Reza Rasaei. We will continue to hold Iran accountable for its appalling human rights violations, including at the UN Third Committee in October 2024.

■ **Iraq: Islamic State**

Sarah Champion:

[\[2905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the closure of (a) UNITAD in September 2024 and (b) camps for internally displaced people in the Kurdistan region of Iraq on the safety and security of the Yazidi community in Iraq.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK will work to ensure a smooth closure of UNITAD as its mandate ends on 17 September 2024. We have supported Iraq to develop capacity for Daesh accountability through UNITAD and international efforts to deliver justice will continue.

The UK remains committed to the safety and security of Iraq's Yazidi community. We continue to collaborate with the Iraqi and Kurdish governments, international agencies such as UNHCR, and the broader humanitarian community to resolve displacement-related issues. We want to ensure that any camp closures are supported by relevant UN agencies and that durable solutions ensure the safe reintegration of residents of IDP camps, including Yazidis, to their locations of settlement.

■ Israel: Palestinians**Kate Osamor:**[\[2964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of Save the Children's press notice entitled Physical abuse, infectious disease spreading as conditions for Palestinian children in Israeli military detention deteriorate, published on 22 July 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We engage regularly with Save the Children and received this report directly from the organisation. Save the Children is part of the BOND Occupied Palestinian Territories working group, and regularly raises the impact of the conflict on children. The most effective means of addressing these concerns is through UK funding to humanitarian partner organisations, and our advocacy work.

Fabian Hamilton:[\[3947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to help ensure that civil society organisations working on peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine are integrated into a future diplomatic resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The death and destruction in Gaza is intolerable. The UK is pushing for an immediate ceasefire. The fighting must stop, the hostages must be released and much, much more aid must enter Gaza. A deal is on the table, and we are urging both sides to show flexibility. The Civil Society organisations we work with are valuable partners of the government, and we welcome the opportunity to continue to work with them closely.

■ Israel: Security

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the security situation in Israel.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary has visited Israel and discussed the security situation with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Katz. We continue to urge Israeli and other regional actors to engage with the US-led discussions to reach a political settlement and resolve tensions diplomatically. A widening of the conflict is in nobody's interest. The Government is working in lockstep with our allies to de-escalate tensions and urge all parties to end the destructive cycle of retaliatory violence.

■ Jamaica: Foreign Relations

Adam Jogee:

[\[3467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Jamaican counterpart since his appointment.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary spoke to Kamina Johnson Smith, Jamaica's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, on 2 August. They discussed the importance of the UK-Jamaica bilateral relationship and climate issues including Hurricane Beryl.

■ Jimmy Lai

Blair McDougall:

[\[3366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to help secure the release of Hong Kong pro-democracy campaigner, Jimmy Lai.

Catherine West:

British national Jimmy Lai's case is a priority for the Government. The Foreign Secretary raised his case in his first meeting with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the ASEAN Summit on 26 July. We will continue to call on the Hong Kong authorities to end their politically motivated prosecution and immediately release Jimmy Lai and we will continue to press for consular access.

■ Lesotho: Foreign Relations

Adam Jogee:

[\[3470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterpart in Lesotho since his appointment.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK values its relationship with the Kingdom of Lesotho. The UK-Lesotho partnership is strong, focused on promoting Commonwealth values, partnering to

deliver economic growth, and building a more climate resilient world. The Foreign Secretary looks forward to working with Foreign Minister Mpotjoane to enhance and develop our shared partnership.

■ Middle East: Conflict Prevention

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[\[3536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help tackle the destabilising activities of Iran in the Middle East.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Iran continues to provide military, financial and political support to its proxies and partners -jeopardising international security. Iran has also threatened the security of its regional neighbours by attacking Pakistani, Iraqi, Syrian and Israeli territory since January. The Prime Minister spoke to President Pezeshkian on 12 August and the Foreign Secretary called Foreign Minister Araghchi on 23 August. Both urged their counterparts to restrain Iran's proxies and partners and avoid regional escalation.

■ Mpox: Disease Control

David Mundell:

[\[2777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to collaborate with international health organizations to improve the (a) surveillance and (b) containment of Mpox globally.

Anneliese Dodds:

Lord Collins recently visited DRC and announced £3.1 million to UNICEF to support the local response. This will reach 4.4 million people in affected communities. The UK's £340 million core voluntary contribution to the WHO supports it to allocate resources where they are needed most, including responding to health emergencies such as mpox. We have also contributed £3 million to WHO's Regional Office for Africa for health emergency response. Alongside our financial support, the FCDO continues to monitor the situation closely, staying in regular contact with the WHO and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

■ Mpox: Vaccination

Wendy Morton:

[\[2908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support countries affected by mpox with access to vaccines.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is second largest donor to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, providing £1.65 billion over 2021-2025. We are working closely with Gavi to enable access to mpox vaccines for the Democratic Republic of Congo and other African countries at risk. The UK have committed £160 million to international partner, Coalition for Epidemic

Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). CEPI and Bavarian Nordic recently announced a clinical trial launching in late 2024 to assess vaccine effectiveness in children in Africa. Lord Collins has announced the additional £3.1 million funding to UNICEF for cholera and mpox response. This will reach 4.4 million people in affected communities.

■ **Palestinian Authority**

Andrew Bowie:

[\[3016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Beijing Declaration on the potential for reform of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK supports a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people. Hamas cannot remain in charge of Gaza. The Foreign Secretary has spoken with the new Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority Mohammad Mustafa and offered the UK's support as his government implements much-needed reforms. A reformed and empowered Palestinian Authority is vital for lasting peace and progress towards a two-state solution.

■ **Palestinian Authority: Hamas**

Andrew Bowie:

[\[3015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the strength of links between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Hamas is a proscribed terrorist organisation responsible for an act of barbarism on October 7 that sought to kill countless Israelis and provoke wider conflict with Palestinians. Hamas cannot remain in charge of Gaza. The UK supports a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people. The Foreign Secretary has spoken with the new Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA) Mohammad Mustafa and offered the UK's support as his government implements much-needed reforms. An effective PA is vital for lasting peace and progress towards a two-state solution.

■ **Palestinians: Fire and Rescue Services**

Stephen Gethins:

[\[3985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his counterpart in Israel on the fire engine donated to Palestinian firefighters in Nablus that has been held by the port authorities in Ashdod since 21 July 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK continues to call on Israel to increase humanitarian and commercial access into the Palestinian territories by ensuring all aid crossings are fully operational, including the port of Ashdod. During his recent trip to Israel, the Foreign Secretary met with Israeli Officials and raised the urgent need for a rapid increase of aid for those most in need. Officials will raise the matter of this donation directly with the Israeli authorities at the earliest opportunity.

■ **Russia: Oil****Blair McDougall:**[\[3363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will extend UK sanctions on shadow oil tankers dealing in Russian oil to (a) those providing (i) storage facilities and (ii) fuel, (b) port operators that facilitate the docking of sanctioned vessels], (c) senior crew members operating on sanctioned vessels and (d) buyers, brokers and intermediaries that deal with sanctioned vessels and their cargo.

Stephen Doughty:

UK sanctions against Russia aim to deny Putin the means to continue his illegal war. We have sanctioned 15 shadow oil tankers to date - action which has materially disrupted the shadow fleet's ability to operate. The UK cannot comment on future sanctions. Nevertheless, as this Government made clear when we spearheaded a "call to action" against the shadow fleet in July, we are determined to go further to address the risks the shadow fleet poses to the environment, maritime safety and security in Europe, including through further sanctions. Anyone who assists UK-sanctioned vessels, including shadow tankers, exposes themselves to significant sanctions risk.

Blair McDougall:[\[3365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to take steps to ban the import of oil products whose origin is derived from crude oil of Russian origin.

Stephen Doughty:

The action the UK and its partners have taken to limit Russian energy revenues is having a significant impact, with Russia forced to shoulder a 24% reduction in oil and gas revenues in 2023 compared to 2022. Importers of oil and oil products into the UK, as well as those seeking to access UK services to facilitate above-cap oil trades, must provide proof that goods are not of Russian origin. The UK continues to limit Russian revenues, for example through our actions to disrupt and deter Russia's 'shadow fleet'. The Government is committed to rigorously enforcing our sanctions, keeps all our sanctions under review, and will not hesitate to take further action to limit Russian revenues which fuel its war machine.

■ Ryan Cornelius

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[3938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will have discussions with his counterpart in the United Arab Emirates on releasing Ryan Cornelius from imprisonment in Dubai.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

FCDO Ministers regularly raise consular cases with their counterparts at appropriate opportunities. The FCDO continues to provide consular assistance to Mr Cornelius.

■ Somalia: Foreign Relations

Afzal Khan:

[\[3069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has plans to meet President Abdikadir Ahmed Aw-Ali of the SSC-Khaatumo region in Somalia.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Foreign Secretary has no current engagement plans with Abdikadir Ahmed Aw-Ali. The UK Ambassador to Somalia engages regularly with a wide range of contacts in Somalia, including those from the SSC-Khatumo area.

■ South Africa: Foreign Relations

Adam Jogee:

[\[3466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his South African counterpart since his appointment.

Anneliese Dodds:

South Africa is a critical partner for the UK, whom we engage regularly at senior official and Ministerial level. The UK and South Africa have a deep and longstanding partnership based on shared values. We are working together to promote democratic principles and human rights for all as well as partnering to deliver economic growth and building a more climate resilient world.

On July 16, Lord Collins attended a Westminster Abbey service marking thirty years since the end of Apartheid and met with South African Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola. The Foreign Secretary then welcomed Foreign Minister Lamola as the first international guest of his tenure. They discussed the broad range of cooperation between the UK and South Africa across shared priorities on trade and investment, economic growth, addressing climate change, and ensuring security. The Foreign Secretary looks forward to future discussions with Foreign Minister Lamola.

■ Southern Africa: Visits Abroad

Adam Jogee:

[\[3482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to visit (a) Zimbabwe and (b) the Southern African Development Community region.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Foreign Secretary looks forward to visiting the South African Development Community (SADC) region moving forward and engaging with all member countries, including Zimbabwe, on a range of bilateral issues. The Minister for Africa has already visited both Angola and DRC within the first month of his role, highlighting the importance of the SADC region to the UK. I have visited South Sudan & Ethiopia, where I also met with the African Union Commissioner Bankole to discuss our shared priorities and express the UK's desire for a renewed, genuine partnership with the AU.

Since the Foreign Secretary's appointment, he has written to his Zimbabwean counterpart to reaffirm his commitment to working with the country in order to boost trade and investment, enhance strong people to people links and to tackle the climate crisis. As President Mnangagwa begins his role as Chairperson of SADC, the UK will continue to engage with Zimbabwe on areas of mutual importance, both through Ministers and the Embassy in Harare.

■ Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Laurence Turner:

[\[3557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 863 on Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief, when he plans to decide on the special envoy roles.

Anneliese Dodds:

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

■ Sri Lanka: Sanctions

Uma Kumaran:

[\[3606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of imposing Magnitsky-style sanctions against people in Sri Lanka accused of war crimes.

Catherine West:

Sri Lanka is a human rights priority country for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and we regularly engage with the Government of Sri Lanka on the need for truth, justice and accountability. The Global Human Rights sanctions regime is one tool in our foreign policy toolkit. The UK uses sanctions when we judge that they will be effective to achieve our foreign policy goals. It would not be appropriate to speculate about future sanctions designations as to do so could reduce their impact.

■ Sudan: Armed Conflict**Cat Smith:**[\[2358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to use the UK's position as penholder for Sudan at the UN Security Council to press for (a) a ceasefire before peace talks in August, (b) adherence to international humanitarian law and (c) the free flow of humanitarian aid.

Anneliese Dodds:

On 13 June, the UK successfully led a UNSC resolution calling for an immediate de-escalation in El Fasher and full, unimpeded humanitarian access, including the reopening of the Adre border crossing. It also requested that the Secretary-General provide recommendations on the protection of civilians. On 6 August, the UK called a UNSC session to urgently discuss the Famine Review Committee's findings and the need for the obstruction of aid by the warring parties to stop. The UK intervention reiterated our support for UN efforts in Sudan, including through the recommendations set out by the UN Secretary White Note, released on 15 March 2024 under UNSC Resolution 2417. We continue to put pressure on the parties to ensure the recent move to re-open Adre is honoured in full and without excessive restrictions. The Foreign Secretary publicly welcomed the ceasefire talks co-hosted by the US, Saudi Arabia, and Switzerland in August and urged the warring parties to participate.

Stephen Gethins:[\[3986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that arms are not reaching belligerents in the civil war in Sudan.

Anneliese Dodds:

There is a longstanding UK arms embargo in place for the whole of Sudan, as well as a UN arms embargo on Darfur. The Sudan Sanctions Regulations 2020 put in place sanctions measures to ensure the UK continues to meet its obligations under the UN sanctions regime relating to Sudan, to encourage the resolution of the armed conflicts in, and the stabilisation of, Sudan. As well as this, the UK has frozen the assets of nine commercial entities linked to the parties involved in the conflict. These sanctions were designed to press the parties to engage in a sustained and meaningful peace process, allow humanitarian access and to commit to a permanent cessation of hostilities. In our engagement with international partners, the UK continues to

emphasise the importance of refraining from actions that prolong the conflict. Those who have influence with the parties must use it to bring them to the negotiating table, to seek a political resolution to the conflict in Sudan.

■ Sudan: Humanitarian Aid

Cat Smith:

[\[2089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking with humanitarian groups and partners in Sudan to provide (a) humanitarian aid and (b) support for (i) food systems and (ii) local agriculture in Sudan; and if he will take steps to increase the level of aid for refugees from Sudan.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is working with international partners, including UN agencies, other donors and NGOs, to improve and increase the delivery of aid into Sudan. UK ODA to Sudan nearly doubled this year to £97m, with the vast majority of this funding going to humanitarian assistance. This aid will also provide additional support for food systems and local agriculture. As part of this, I recently announced an additional £15m to increase support for Sudan refugees fleeing to Chad and South Sudan. We will also continue to push for the best data and evidence to inform our policy and programming.

Laurence Turner:

[\[3556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help (a) reduce hostilities and (b) secure deliveries of humanitarian aid in Darfur.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is pursuing all diplomatic avenues to press the warring parties into a permanent ceasefire, allow unrestricted humanitarian access, protect civilians and commit to a sustained and meaningful peace process. We will continue to support and encourage international mediation efforts by: using our influence on the multilateral stage; direct messaging to the warring parties; and pressing for greater coordination between the different mediation tracks. We welcomed the re-opening of the Adre border on the 15 August. However, the warring parties must remove any unnecessary restrictions on trucks moving through Adre to urgently facilitate unimpeded access to those most in need. The UK called a UN Security Council session on 6 August to urgently discuss the findings by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)'s Famine Review Committee that famine is present in Sudan's Zamzam Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Northern Darfur, and we called on the warring parties to stop the obstruction of aid.

■ Switzerland: Foreign Relations

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has met his Swiss counterpart since 5 July 2024.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary and Federal Councillor, Ignazio Cassis, who is head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, had an introductory meeting at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on 26 and 27 July 2024.

■ Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[3950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the proceeds of the sale of Chelsea FC will be distributed to humanitarian causes in Ukraine.

Stephen Doughty:

We are working hard to ensure the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea FC reach humanitarian causes in Ukraine as quickly as possible, in line with the Government's unilateral declaration made at the time of sale. The proceeds are currently frozen in a UK bank account while a new independent foundation is established to manage and distribute the money; they are not held by the UK government. UK officials continue to hold discussions with Mr Abramovich's representatives, experts and international partners, and we are doubling down on our efforts to reach a resolution.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid**Jim Shannon:**[\[3967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether officials in his Department have had discussions with Donald Trump's presidential campaign team on military support for Ukraine.

Stephen Doughty:

It is a core part of the FCDO's work to engage individuals from across the US political spectrum, including the Presidential campaigns. We welcome sustained bipartisan US support for Ukraine, including passage of the supplemental funding package earlier this year, which has been absolutely key in the international effort.

■ Zambia: Foreign Relations**Adam Jogee:**[\[3469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Zambian counterpart since his appointment.

Anneliese Dodds:

Zambia is an important strategic partner with whom we engage regularly at Ministerial level on a broad range of bilateral, regional and multilateral issues. On 9th August 2024, Lord Collins of Highbury, had an introductory call with HE Mulambo Haimbe - the Zambian Foreign Minister. They discussed economic growth opportunities through the UK-Zambia Green Growth Compact, attracting private sector investment and climate resilience, including UK support for vulnerable communities amidst Zambia's severe drought.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Airedale Hospital: Repairs and Maintenance**

Anna Dixon: [\[3919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the full cost of rebuilding Airedale Hospital; and how much funding had been allocated to that project as of 4 July 2024.

Anna Dixon: [\[3920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for rebuilding Airedale General Hospital.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 5 September 2024]: The new hospital scheme for Airedale General Hospital has received £6.6 million of funding up to the end of 2023/24. The final funding envelope for the new hospital is subject to the approval of a Full Business Case, as is usual for large infrastructure projects.

We must reset the New Hospital Programme to put it on a sustainable footing, however we are clear that replacing hospitals built wholly or mostly with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete, including Airedale General Hospital, are the priority.

We are undertaking a full review of the programme to provide a thorough, costed, and realistic timeline for delivery and to ensure we can replace the crumbling hospital estate in England. The review will be completed this autumn, and once concluded, Parliament will be updated on the next steps for the programme.

■ Alzheimer's Disease: Drugs

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[3692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the decision by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on 22 August 2024 to licence lecanemab for patients with early stage Alzheimer's disease, what discussions he has had with NHS England on plans to make (a) lecanemab and (b) other anti-amyloid therapies available to patients.

Karin Smyth:

Department officials have had a number of conversations with colleagues in NHS England about their plans to support the adoption of any licensed and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended treatment for Alzheimer's disease.

The NICE is currently developing guidance for the National Health Service on the use of several potential new medicines for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, and is currently consulting on its draft guidance for the use of lecanemab. These are very difficult decisions to make, and it is right that they are taken independently, on the basis of the available evidence of costs and benefits. We understand how disappointing the NICE's draft guidance will be to all those affected, but we need to

make sure that the resources of the NHS are spent in a way that provides the most health benefit to society. The NICE's draft recommendations are now open to consultation, and the NICE will take the comments received fully into account when developing its final guidance.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs

Charlotte Nichols: [\[3153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there is an adequate supply of medicines for ADHD.

Alice Macdonald: [\[3411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the availability of ADHD medication; and what steps he is taking to improve the availability of that medication.

Andrew Cooper: [\[3525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to help improve access to ADHD medication.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working with industry to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of intensive work, some issues have been resolved. All strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules, and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available. We are working to resolve medicine supply issues, where they remain, for some strengths of methylphenidate. These are anticipated to be resolved by October 2024.

We are asking suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term.

The Department has worked with specialist clinicians to develop management advice for National Health Service clinicians to consider prescribing available alternative brands of methylphenidate prolonged release tablets. We would expect ADHD service providers and specialists to follow our guidance to offer rapid response to primary care teams seeking urgent advice or opinion for the management of patients, including those known to be at a higher risk of adverse impact because of these shortages.

To aid ADHD service providers and prescribers further, we have widely disseminated our communications and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/prescribing-available-medicines-to-treat-adhd/>

Josh MacAlister:

[\[3286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure sufficient supply of (a) creon and (b) other ADHD medications.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) used by patients with conditions such as cystic fibrosis and certain cancers, including pancreatic cancer. The supply issues are impacting countries throughout Europe and have been caused by limited availability of raw ingredients and manufacturing capacity constraints to produce volumes needed to meet demand. The Department is continuing to work with all suppliers of PERT to help resolve the supply issues in the short and longer term. This includes asking that they expedite deliveries, source stock from other markets, and increase production.

We have issued comprehensive guidance to healthcare professionals about these supply issues, which provides advice on how to manage patients whilst there is disruption to supply. This guidance is being kept under review and updates will be made as necessary. Serious Shortage Protocols are in place for Creon 10,000 and 25,000 capsules to limit prescriptions to one month's supply whilst stocks are limited.

The Department has also been working hard with industry to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are also impacting countries throughout Europe. As a result of intensive work, some issues have been resolved. All strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules, and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available. We are working to resolve the remaining issues impacting some strengths of methylphenidate. This includes asking suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term.

The Department has worked with specialist clinicians to develop management advice for clinicians which includes consideration to prescribe available alternative brands of methylphenidate prolonged release tablets. We have widely disseminated our communications and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping to ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients.

■ Brain Cancer: Medical Treatments

Claire Hazelgrove:

[\[3611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) widen treatment options on the NHS for people with brain tumours and (b) prevent patients from having to go abroad to access treatment.

Karin Smyth:

People with brain tumours have access to various treatment options on the National Health Service, including surgery, radiotherapy and systematic anti-cancer therapies, depending on the nature and stage of the tumour.

The Government is committed to improving waiting times for cancer treatment, so that people with brain tumours can get access to the care they need more quickly. We will start by delivering an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, as the first step to ensuring early diagnosis and faster treatment.

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.

■ Cancer: Medical Treatments**Grahame Morris:**[\[3694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cancer patients have had access to minimally invasive cancer therapies in the last year by integrated care board.

Grahame Morris:[\[3695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of non-invasive cancer treatment technologies in the NHS.

Jim Shannon:[\[3697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that minimally invasive cancer therapies are available for patients across the country.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 5 September 2024]: Data on the number of cancer patients that have had access to minimally invasive cancer therapies in the last year by integrated care board (ICB), is not collected. The adoption of new treatments, including increasing the number and availability of minimally invasive cancer treatments, into the National Health Service in England is generally the result of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance and commissioner decisions. Both NHS England and the ICBs are required to put access in place for any treatment that carries a positive recommendation from the Technology Appraisal programme, operated by the NICE.

Where treatments are approved by the NICE through the Technology Appraisals programme, the NHS is required to make them available within agreed timescales, which vary by technology. Implementation of any NICE approvals will be supported by the service readiness assessment, and the development of additional capacity where necessary.

During 2024/25, NHS England will continue to support all ICBs in integrating the planning and commissioning of suitable specialised services with their wider

population-level commissioning responsibilities, in line with their individual timeline for delegation. All systems are asked to make progress in transforming pathways of care in their priority areas.

Jim Shannon:

[\[3698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that NICE guidelines on access to minimally invasive cancer therapies is followed.

Karin Smyth:

The adoption of new treatments, including minimally invasive cancer treatments, into the National Health Service in England is generally the result of National Institution of Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance and/or commissioner decisions. Both NHS England and integrated care boards are required to put in place access for any treatment that carries a positive recommendation from the Technology Appraisal programme, operated by NICE.

Where treatments are approved by NICE through the Technology Appraisals programme, the NHS is required to make them available within agreed timescales, which vary by technology. Implementation of any NICE approvals will be supported by the service readiness assessment and the development of additional capacity where necessary.

■ Cancer: Tomography

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[3693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) it remains his policy to double the number of cancer scanners in the NHS and (b) that includes doubling the number of positron emission tomography scanners.

Karin Smyth:

We are working towards our commitment of doubling cancer scanners to address the challenges in diagnostic waiting times. Our commitment is related to magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography (CT) but of course we are also considering what increase in PET Computed Tomography (PET-CT) capacity is needed to accelerate cancer diagnosis and build a National Health Service fit for the future.

■ Cancer: Women

Sir John Hayes:

[\[2728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussion with NHS England about improving early detection of Ductal Carcinoma in situ in women.

Karin Smyth:

Improving early diagnosis of cancer, including breast cancer, is a priority for NHS England. NHS England has an ambition to diagnose 75% of cancers at stage 1 or 2 by 2028, which will help tens of thousands of people live longer. The National Health

Service in England carries out approximately 2.1 million breast cancer screens each year in hospitals and mobile screening vans, usually in convenient community locations.

Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) is usually detected on a mammogram through the breast screening programme. In the United Kingdom, one in five breast cancers found by screening are non-invasive breast cancer, including DCIS. The Department and NHS England have regular ongoing meetings in regard to the breast screening programme and breast cancer awareness.

The Department is committed to improving waiting times for cancer patients across England by delivering an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, as the first step to ensuring early diagnosis and faster treatment.

■ **Care Homes: Aldershot**

Alex Baker: [\[3517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of residential care homes that have closed in Aldershot constituency since 2010.

Stephen Kinnock:

Since 2010, the total number of residential care homes that have closed in the Aldershot constituency is 29.

Alex Baker: [\[4106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of care homes were rated as good by the Care Quality Commission in Aldershot constituency on 3 September 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

There are currently 22 care homes registered with Care Quality Commission in the Aldershot constituency. As of the latest data from 1 August 2024, 16 of those care homes, or 73%, are rated 'Good'.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[3147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will allow contacts of people with immunosuppression to be eligible for the covid-19 vaccination programme in autumn 2024.

Rachel Gilmour: [\[3570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide covid-19 vaccinations to the (a) families and (b) carers of patients with immunosuppressant diseases.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[3660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will include (a) unpaid family carers and (b) household contacts of immuno-suppressed individuals in the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Daisy Cooper: [\[3782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to extend the covid-19 booster vaccination this autumn to (a) unpaid and (b) young carers.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 5 September 2024]: The primary aim of the autumn 2024 COVID-19 vaccination programme remains the prevention of severe illness, hospitalisations, and deaths, arising from COVID-19. On 2 August 2024 the Government accepted the advice of the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to offer a COVID-19 vaccination to those aged 65 years old or over, those living in care homes for older adults, and those aged between six months and 64 years old who are in a clinical risk group in England this autumn. Additionally, vaccination will be offered to all frontline health and social care workers, as well as staff in care homes for older adults.

There are no plans to offer a COVID-19 vaccination to unpaid carers, including young carers, or the families and household contacts of people with immunosuppression, during the autumn 2024 campaign in England. Unpaid carers and household contacts of those with immunosuppression have previously been offered vaccination on the basis that it indirectly protected those more vulnerable with whom they are in contact. The JCVI advice for autumn 2024 is that in the era of highly transmissible Omicron sub-variants, any protection offered by the vaccines against transmission of infection from one person to another is expected to be extremely limited. The indirect benefits of vaccination in these groups, vaccinating an individual to reduce the risk of severe disease in other people, are therefore less evident than in previous years.

■ **Dental Services: Aldershot**

Alex Baker: [\[3509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase access to NHS dentistry in Aldershot constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

This Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

Alex Baker: [\[3510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of provision of NHS dentists in Aldershot constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

From 1 April 2023, the responsibility for commissioning primary care, including dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. According to the 2024 GP patient survey results, 81% of people who tried to get a National Health Service dentist appointment in the last two years in Frimley ICB were successful compared to 76% in England. Of those who tried to get an appointment in the last two years, 87% of existing patients were successful compared to 35% of new patients.

Alex Baker:[\[4115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children aged four and under were admitted to hospital for a tooth extraction due to decay in Aldershot constituency in each of the last five years.

Alex Baker:[\[4116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children aged 11 and under were admitted to hospital for a tooth extraction due to decay in Aldershot constituency in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The data requested for the Aldershot constituency is not available, as it is not obtainable at a constituency level.

■ Dental Services: Contracts**Mr Jonathan Brash:**[\[4070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the NHS dental contracting framework.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

■ Dental Services: Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard**Alex Mayer:**[\[3431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of NHS dental provision in Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

From 1 April 2023, the responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. In the 24 months to March 2024, 277,447 adults saw a

National Health Service dentist in the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB, equal to 36% of the adult population in the ICB. In the 12 months to March 2024, 132,424 children saw an NHS dentist in the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB, equal to 55% of the child population in the ICB.

Patients unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through an NHS dental practice are advised to contact NHS 111 for assistance. NHS dentists are now required to update their NHS website profiles at least every 90 days to ensure patients have access to up-to-date information on where they can access care.

■ **Dental Services: Sherwood Forest**

Michelle Welsh: [3905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of dentistry practices accepting NHS patients in Sherwood Forest constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

As of 4 September 2024, there were four open dentistry practices in the Sherwood Forest constituency, three of which were showing as accepting 'children aged 17 or under', 'adults 18 or over', and 'adults entitled to free dental care'.

This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website, and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

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

■ **Dental Services: Southport**

Patrick Hurley: [3328]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of dentists taking new NHS patients in Southport constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

As of 10 July 2024, there were 12 open dentistry practices in the Southport constituency, four of which were showing as 'accepting new adult patients when availability allows'. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website, and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

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

■ **Dental Services: Standards**

Noah Law: [4138]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for legislative reforms to improve the provision of dental services.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to tackling the challenges patients face when trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and to recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and retaining NHS dentists.

Department of Health and Social Care: Redundancy Pay**Wera Hobhouse:****[3038]**

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

Karin Smyth:

The details of any ministerial severance payments can be found in our Annual Report & Accounts. Payments made in 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years will be released in due course

Each payment corresponds to the statutory entitlements as laid out in the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991. The Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991 is available at the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1991/5/contents>

Disease Control**Victoria Atkins:****[2940]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the UK's preparedness for (a) mpox and (b) future outbreaks and pandemics.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 4 September 2024]: The Secretary of State and I have met regularly with officials from the Department, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the National Health Service on this issue.

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. Planning is underway, including work by the Department, the UKHSA, and the NHS, to prepare for any cases that we might see in the United Kingdom.

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 risk to the UK 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.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[4007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ban vaping in indoor spaces.

Andrew Gwynne:

Whilst vapes can be an effective quitting aid for adult smokers, the Government is concerned about the worrying rise in vaping among children, and there are legitimate concerns about the unknown long-term harms from vaping. The Government will soon introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill which will reduce the appeal, access, and availability of vapes to children. We will set out more details shortly.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Public Places**

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[3275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to update the guidance on Use of e-cigarettes in public places and workplaces, published by Public Health England in July 2016; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of further restrictions on vaping in public spaces.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is concerned about the worrying rise in vaping among children, and there are legitimate concerns about the unknown long-term harms from vaping. Whilst the evidence base on second-hand vaping is still developing, and is less strong than smoking, the degree of harm is unlikely to be 0%. There are no current plans to update the guidance on the use of e-cigarettes in public places and workplaces, published by Public Health England in July 2015.

However, the Government will soon introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill which will reduce the appeal, access, and availability of vapes to children, including by banning vape advertising and branding. We will set out more details very soon.

■ **Food: Genetically Modified Organisms**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[3176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing mandatory labelling for genetically modified food.

Andrew Gwynne:

Existing labelling rules for genetically modified organisms (GMO) stipulate that foods sold in the United Kingdom that contain GMO ingredients must be labelled. This labelling gives consumers the choice on whether to consume such foods containing, or consisting of, GMO ingredients, and the choice to avoid such foods, should they wish to do so. In the case of food sold loose, or where food has been cooked in GMO products, for instance cooking oil, this information must appear on a notice, menu, ticket, or label which can be easily read by customers.

Information about any characteristic or property which renders a food consisting of or containing genetic modifications different from its conventional counterpart, such as its composition, nutritional value, the intended use of the food or feed, or any health implications for certain sections of the population, must also be included.

General Practitioners: Aldershot**Alex Baker:**[\[3516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of face-to-face GP appointments in Aldershot constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are finding it increasingly difficult to see a general practitioner (GP). Patients cannot get through the front door of the National Health Service, so they aren't getting the timely care they need.

We have pledged to guarantee a face-to-face appointment for all those who want one. We will make sure the future of general practice is sustainable by training thousands more GPs, ensuring increased capacity across the NHS to deliver this commitment and secure a future pipeline of GPs.

General Practitioners: Gateshead Central and Whickham**Mark Ferguson:**[\[3281\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

The data provided has been sourced from NHS Digital and shows the number of open practices as of August 2024, and in August 2014 as no data is available prior to this. The data only includes main practices in the Gateshead Central and Whickham constituency and does not include branch practices. Locations have been mapped to current constituency boundaries. Open and close dates for practices were identified using data from NHS Organisation Data Service.

As of August 2024, there are 15 open practices in the Gateshead Central and Whickham constituency. In August 2014, there were 19 open practices in the Gateshead Central and Whickham constituency.

■ General Practitioners: Knowsley**Anneliese Midgley:**[\[3297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the NHS GP provision in the Knowsley constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP) and we are committed to fixing the the crisis in GPs, to secure the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service.

We will fix the front door to the NHS, ensuring that patients receive the care they deserve by increasing the proportion of funding for GPs and primary care, and shifting the focus of the NHS out of hospitals and into the community.

We have committed to ending the 8:00am scramble for GP appointments by introducing a modern booking system. We will guarantee a face-to-face appointment for anyone that wants one, bring back the family doctor, and introduce Neighbourhood Health Centres to bring together vital health and care services, ensuring healthcare is closer to home.

Additionally, we have committed to recruiting over 1,000 newly qualified GPs through an £82 million boost to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, which will increase the number of GP appointments delivered, secure the future pipeline of GPs, and take pressure off those currently working in the system.

■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Colne Valley**Paul Davies:**[\[4142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase access to sexual health services in Colne Valley constituency.

Paul Davies:[\[4319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to expand access to preventative HIV care beyond sexual health services in Colne Valley constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to improving the sexual health of the whole population, which would encompass access to and quality of sexual health services within England, including in the Colne Valley constituency.

Public health services commissioned by local authorities in England continue to be funded through a ring-fenced Public Health Grant. In 2024/25, the total Public Health Grant to local authorities has been confirmed at £3.603 billion, through which sexual health services are funded. Local authorities are best placed to commission sexual health services that best meet the needs of their local population. We will work with local government and other key partners to prevent ill health, improve the wider

determinants of health, reduce the inequalities that drive poor health, and agree on the most effective interventions to achieve our shared ambitions.

The Government has committed to commission a new HIV Action Plan to end new HIV transmissions within England by 2030, which will consider how best to improve access to HIV prevention and care. Department officials are working with ministers and key sector stakeholders in the development of the plan, and an update will be provided in due course.

■ **Gonorrhoea and Mpox: Vaccination**

Florence Eshalomi: [\[3240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on the implementation of recommendations given by The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on the routine provision of (a) MPOX vaccination and (b) the targeted use of the meningococcal B vaccination for gonorrhoea prevention.

Florence Eshalomi: [\[3241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a timeline for implementing the recommendations of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on the (a) routine provision of MPOX vaccination and (b) targeted use of the meningococcal B vaccination for gonorrhoea prevention.

Andrew Gwynne:

On 10 November 2023 the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) issued advice on creating targeted, routine vaccination programmes for the prevention of Mpox and gonorrhoea.

Officials across the Department, the UK Health Security Agency, and NHS England are developing policy options based on the JCVI's advice. A decision on the vaccination programme for the prevention of gonorrhoea will be taken following the outcome of this process. The policy position on the Mpox vaccination programme is being updated to reflect the emerging international concerns, and a decision on this is expected shortly.

■ **Gynaecology**

Sir John Hayes: [\[2729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that women in need of urgent gynaecologist appointments can be seen in person.

Karin Smyth:

This Government is committed to putting patients first, especially where their health is deteriorating as they wait too long for the care they need. This means making sure that patients are seen on time and prioritised according to need to ensure the best possible care. Providers are responsible for delivering appointments in the most appropriate way for patients. Most hospital attendances happen in person, with only 14.7% of outpatient attendances in 2022/23 delivered remotely in gynaecology.

■ Health Services: Foreign Nationals

Rupert Lowe:

[\[3445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what amount of charges were issued by NHS trusts for treatment to non-UK residents not entitled to free secondary healthcare in each of the last three financial years; how much of that amount was successfully recovered in each of the last three financial years; and what is the outstanding amount.

Karin Smyth:

We have taken 'non-UK residents' to mean chargeable overseas visitors. The Department publishes data on the income identified from chargeable overseas visitors in England as part of the Department of Health and Social Care Annual Report and Accounts. The cash payments received by the National Health Service from overseas visitors are also published annually in the consolidated NHS provider accounts. The following table shows the aggregate income identified, and cash payments received by the NHS in England, from overseas visitors over the last three years:

YEAR	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Aggregate income identified	£61,000,000	£67,000,000	£100,000,000
Cash payments received in-year	£21,000,000	£25,000,000	£32,000,000

Source: the Department of Health and Social Care Annual Report and Accounts and Consolidated NHS provider accounts.

NHS charges can be recovered up to six years from the date of invoice, and therefore the amount recovered in a year does not necessarily mean it was identified in the same financial year.

■ Health Services: Knowsley

Anneliese Midgley:

[\[3296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS sites have closed in Knowsley since May 2010; and what the (a) name and (b) postcode was of each site.

Karin Smyth:

The information requested is not held centrally. The Department is not one that is land-owning but works closely with NHS England to ensure that National Health Service estates should first and foremost support and enable the NHS's operational requirements.

Integrated care systems are now developing comprehensive infrastructure strategies to inform the future pipeline of land and the overall approach to optimising the estate. When completed, these will inform our national approach.

■ Health Services: Shropshire

Shaun Davies:

[3309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the performance of (a) Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Trust, (b) Shropshire Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board and (c) NHS Shropshire Telford and Wrekin with respect to (i) waiting times, (ii) value for money and (iii) CQC reports

Karin Smyth:

The Government has been clear that National Health Services are currently not meeting the high standards that patients should expect, and is committed to supporting the NHS to return to the standards set out in the NHS Constitution. As a first step, my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has appointed the Professor Lord Darzi to lead an independent investigation of NHS performance, which will report this month.

NHS England holds integrated care boards (ICBs) and NHS providers to account for delivery of national priorities and statutory functions and oversees them via the NHS Oversight Framework, which assesses the effectiveness of each NHS system across five themes: quality of care, access, and outcomes; preventing ill-health and reducing inequalities; people; finance and use of resources; and leadership and capability. More information is available at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/B1378_NHS-System-Oversight-Framework-22-23_260722.pdf

NHS England has allocated the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust and the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB to segment four of the NHS Oversight Framework segmentation. As a result, both are receiving national mandated support with NHS England's Recovery Support Programme. They are also subject to NHS England's regulatory undertakings.

The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust and the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB are currently in Tier 1 for urgent and emergency care, electives, and cancer, which means they receive intensive and significant national and regional support and oversight. The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust's overall rating from the Care Quality Commission, published in May 2024, is 'requires improvement'.

■ Heart Diseases: Screening

Sir Christopher Chope:

[4168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of providing annual ECGs to young people on the number of

victims of sudden cardiac death; and if he will hold discussions with his Italian counterpart on lessons that could be learned from that country.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK National Screening Committee reviewed screening young people for sudden cardiac death in 2019. They found there was insufficient evidence to support the introduction of whole population screening in the United Kingdom. However, this issue is kept under review.

The review found that there continued to be uncertainty regarding the number of people affected, that there is not a good predictive test, and that there is no agreement about who to treat and how people should be treated. There are currently no plans to talk with the Italian Minister of Health on the matter of sudden cardiac death.

■ **Hinchingbrooke Hospital: Concrete**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[3380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the remaining lifespan is for the buildings within Hinchingbrooke Hospital constructed from reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete panels.

Karin Smyth:

In 2021/22, the Department and NHS England jointly commissioned a detailed structural assessment of the five hospitals built mostly using reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) to assess the condition and rebuild options, which included Hinchingbrooke Hospital. The report estimated that the remaining life of the RAAC panels across the five hospitals would generally extend until approximately 2030, following the installation of fail-safe steelwork.

We are clear that hospitals built wholly or mostly with RAAC, including Hinchingbrooke Hospital, will be replaced through the New Hospital Programme as a priority. We are undertaking a full review of the programme to provide a thorough, costed, and realistic timeline for delivery, and to recognise the particular needs of the RAAC hospitals. The review will be completed this autumn, and once concluded, Parliament will be updated on the next steps for the programme.

Like all National Health Service sites in England with confirmed RAAC, Hinchingbrooke Hospital is part of NHS England's national RAAC programme, backed by £954 million since 2021/22. Hinchingbrooke Hospital has received over £39 million to deliver required mitigation, safety, and eradication works, to keep facilities safe and open in line with the current recommendations of the Institution of Structural Engineers.

■ HIV Infection: Aldershot

Alex Baker:

[4114]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of people who were diagnosed with HIV in Aldershot constituency in each of the last five years.

Andrew Gwynne:

While the information is not collected in the format requested, the following table shows the number of people diagnosed with HIV for the local authority of Rushmoor, which covers the Aldersholt constituency, from 2018 to 2022:

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
HIV diagnoses 3	9	4	6	11	
HIV diagnoses 2 first made in England	7	4	5	4	

Source: HIV annual data tables are published on the GOV.UK website, and are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hiv-annual-data-tables/hiv-testing-prep-new-hiv-diagnoses-and-care-outcomes-for-people-accessing-hiv-services-2023-report>

■ Hospices

Chris Bloore:

[3874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) hospices there are in the UK and (b) patients are supported by hospices on average each year.

Stephen Kinnock:

There are over 200 adult and 50 children's hospices in the United Kingdom. It is estimated that those hospices support over 300,000 people each year, including people at the end of life, their families, carers, and bereaved relatives.

Whilst the majority of palliative and end of life care is provided by National Health Service staff and services, we recognise the vital part that voluntary sector organisations, including hospices, also play in providing support to people, and their loved ones, at end of life.

■ Hospitals: Concrete

James Wild:

[2139]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 19 December 2023 to Question 1258 on Hospitals: Concrete, what assessment he has

made of the potential implications for his policies of the Mott MacDonald report on reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

Karin Smyth:

As my rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, announced, and as subsequently confirmed in the Chancellor's statement on 29 July 2024, there is a full and comprehensive ongoing review of the New Hospital Programme to provide a realistic and costed timetable for delivery. This will consider the urgent need to rebuild the seven hospitals built mostly using reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) to protect staff and patient safety.

The Secretary of State will consider the findings and update Parliament on the outcome of the review reporting back to patients, clinicians, and local communities on the next steps for the New Hospital Programme. We will provide a clear and realistic timetable for delivery of the Programme and agree the investment needed to get patients the care they deserve.

■ **Hospitals: Construction**

James Wild:

[\[3127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his oral contribution of 23 July 2024, Official Report, column 516, what the terms of reference are for his Department's review of the new hospital programme; and what his planned timetable is for completion of that work.

Karin Smyth:

We are reviewing the New Hospital Programme to put it on a sustainable footing, including a realistic timetable for delivery and clarity on the funding required. The review will be completed as soon as possible this autumn. Once concluded, Parliament will be updated on the next steps for the Programme.

■ **Hospitals: Repairs and Maintenance**

Tom Morrison:

[\[3386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the review into the hospital building programme will include hospitals not placed on the original list but still in urgent need of (a) investment and (b) repair.

Karin Smyth:

We are reviewing the New Hospital Programme (NHP) in order to put it on a sustainable footing, including a realistic timetable for delivery, and clarity on the funding required.

The scope of the review is limited to those schemes already within the NHP. However, we recognise the importance of strategic, value for money investments in capital projects, such as new healthcare facilities, significant upgrades, and other targeted capital investments. The Department is currently reviewing capital requirements in line with the Government's Missions. Any further support for National

Health Service trusts seeking new hospital infrastructure will be considered as part of the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Hyperemesis Gravidarum

Graeme Downie:

[3591]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when NHS England last reviewed guidance for hyperemesis gravidarum; and whether that review was shared with (a) the Scottish Government and (b) NHS Scotland.

Karin Smyth:

We recognise the challenges including the emotional and physical impacts that hyperemesis gravidarum can have on pregnant women and their families. Appropriate and evidence-based guidance is crucial.

NHS England regularly reviews all health guidance, including relevant guidance on managing hyperemesis gravidarum. In its guidance on antenatal care, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence refers to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' guidance on hyperemesis gravidarum which is also available for patients and staff to consider.

We continue to work closely with counterparts in the devolved nations, including the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland.

■ IVF: LGBT+ People

Matt Western:

[3054]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the full implementation of (a) equal access to IVF treatment for LGBTQ+ people and (b) the entire Women's Health Strategy.

Karin Smyth:

Funding decisions for health services in England are made by integrated care boards (ICBs) and are based on the clinical needs of their local population. Organisations are expected to commission fertility services in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines, which are based on the clinical evidence of the most effective treatment. The Department will be working with NHS England to support ICBs to improve the current National Health Service offer for patients.

The Government is committed to prioritising women's health, and we are considering how to take forward the Women's Health Strategy for England. We will prioritise women's health as we build an NHS fit for the future, and women's equality will be at the heart of our missions.

■ Kidney Diseases: Prescriptions

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[2800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of adding medications for (a) chronic kidney disease and (b) recipients of kidney transplants to the NHS prescription charge exemption list.

Karin Smyth:

There are no current plans to review the list of medical conditions that entitle someone to apply for a medical exemption certificate. Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge in the community in England, and there are a wide range of exemptions from prescription charges already in place for which those with chronic kidney disease or in receipt of a kidney transplant may be eligible. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, or whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are also available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with three month and 12-month certificates available. The 12-month PPC can be paid for in instalments.

■ Lecanemab

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[3664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to make Lecanemab available on the NHS to patients with early onset Alzheimer's disease.

Karin Smyth:

We understand how important it is to patients and their families that they are able to benefit from access to innovative treatments that can slow down the effects of this complex disease.

Decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service are made independently by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on the basis of the evidence of costs and benefits. The methods and processes that NICE uses are internationally respected and have been developed through extensive engagement with academics, industry, patients and clinicians, to ensure that they reflect best practice and societal preferences.

NICE is currently developing guidance for the NHS on the use of lecanemab and recently published draft guidance for consultation that does not recommend it as a clinically and cost-effective use of NHS resources. We recognise that NICE's draft decision will be disappointing, but it is right that these decisions are made independently based on the available evidence of their costs and benefits. NICE has not yet published final guidance and stakeholders now have an opportunity to comment on NICE's draft recommendations.

■ Liver Diseases: Screening

Layla Moran:

[3772]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the pilot scheme for the Community Liver Health Check Programme.

Layla Moran:

[3773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of establishing permanent Early Liver Disease Diagnostics centres to deliver non-invasive diagnoses (a) in Oxfordshire and (b) nationally.

Andrew Gwynne:

Early detection of liver disease is vital to enable interventions and encourage behavioural change that can potentially lead to recovery. The Community Liver Health Check programme was established in June 2022 and aims to support the early detection and diagnosis of liver cancer, including hepatocellular carcinomas (HCC), the most common liver cancer. As of the end of July 2024, the programme has delivered over 66,000 FibroScans and referred over 4,700 people into six-monthly liver ultrasound surveillance. Across Thames Valley, which includes Oxfordshire, 1,430 FibroScans have been delivered, with 5% of people identified to be at risk of HCC.

The Community Liver Health Check programme has an evaluation underway, with the final report due in Spring 2025. The results of the evaluation will be considered by NHS England when deciding on next steps.

The Government has not made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing diagnostic centres specifically for the early diagnosis of liver disease, for either Oxfordshire or nationally. However, the National Health Service is continuing to roll out Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs), many of which will have testing capability to support the early diagnosis of liver disease, including some CDCs that offer FibroScans. There are currently plans for 14 CDCs to offer FibroScans by the end of this financial year, 10 of which are currently providing the test, and have delivered 2,144 tests in 2024/25.

■ Lung Cancer: Diagnosis

Rachael Maskell:

[4003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to evaluate the lung cancer diagnostic programme, and if he will roll this programme out to provide greater access for people who present a risk of lung cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Targeted Lung Health Check (TLHC) is aimed at people who are over 55 years old, but younger than 75 years old, and who have a history of smoking, which puts

them at a higher risk of lung cancer. The TLHC will be converted into a national lung cancer screening programme, which will be rolled out nationally by 2030.

The programme is currently being monitored by NHS England who are reviewing data gathered from the programme and quality assuring it. This data includes information on how many checks have been performed, along with invitations sent, and demographic information. Standards for the programme are being developed, for when the programme is fully rolled out.

■ Medical Records: Information Sharing

Julia Buckley:

[3489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of the lack of shared IT systems between primary, secondary and mental healthcare on (a) patients and (b) healthcare professionals.

Karin Smyth:

No specific assessment has been made. Shared care records are in place in all integrated care boards, allowing information from general practice and acute settings to be shared for direct care.

The Frontline Digitisation programme is working to improve the digital maturity of all providers so that they have adequate enabling hardware, robust connectivity, electronic patient record systems, and other core capabilities in place.

The Data Information and Smart Data Bill announced in the King's Speech will include the statutory power to require IT suppliers to adhere to information standards. This will help ensure there is a 'common language' for health and care software systems to talk to each other, across all health and care settings.

■ Medicine: Training

Alistair Strathern:

[3278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that medical students receive adequate training during hospital placements.

Karin Smyth:

The standard of training is the responsibility of the General Medical Council (GMC), who set the outcomes and standards expected at undergraduate level. Medical schools are responsible for their curricula, and for ensuring that they deliver high quality placements that enable their students to meet the GMC's requirements. The GMC have issued guidance on placement quality, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/undergraduate-clinical-placements/guidance-on-undergraduate-clinical-placements>

In addition, placements must meet NHS England's Quality Framework, which is monitored locally in collaboration with medical schools, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/quality>

■ Mental Health Services: Expenditure

Mr Richard Holden:

[3171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1576 on Mental Health Services: Finance, what the total planned expenditure for mental health services was in (a) cash and (b) real terms in each year since 2015-16.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows the planned and real expenditure for National Health Service mental health services, including learning disabilities and dementia, each year since 2016/17, as the information for 2015/16 is not available:

YEAR	PLANNED EXPENDITURE IN CASH TERMS	PLANNED EXPENDITURE IN REAL TERMS
2016/17	£9,490,700,000	£11,983,200,000
2017/18	£11,860,000,000	£14,743,300,000
2018/19	£12,154,900,000	£14,797,600,000
2019/20	£13,055,400,000	£15,527,500,000
2020/21	£14,024,300,000	£15,817,800,000
2021/22	£15,007,700,000	£17,066,900,000
2022/23	£15,555,100,000	£16,572,400,000
2023/24	£16,814,400,000	£16,814,400,00

Source: the NHS mental health dashboard, published by NHS England, and available at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard/>.

Note: the planned expenditure in real terms is at 2023/24 monetary value.

■ Mental Health Services: Gateshead

Mark Ferguson:

[3280]

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

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows the number of referrals for those children aged between 0 and 17 years old at the time of referral to mental health services in Gateshead local authority between 2019/20 and 2023/24:

REPORTING PERIOD	NUMBER OF NEW REFERRALS	NUMBER OF NEW REFERRALS THAT RECEIVED A FIRST CONTACT (CONTACT CAN OCCUR AT ANY POINT WITHIN THE REFERRAL)
2019/20	2,415	1,745
2020/21	2,420	1,755
2021/22	4,130	2,695
2022/23	4,150	2,260
2023/24	6,940	2,225

Source: Mental Health Dataset, NHS England

Notes:

1. The definition of by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the dataset is not clear cut and also the methodology for deriving CAMHS changes over time. As such, the use of age at referral is the most reliable way of defining those referred to CAMHS.
2. The number provided includes all new referrals in each year where the person was a resident of the local authority of Gateshead. In addition, the number of referrals which have had a contact is included to provide context around the numbers of referrals which have been received and subsequently had a care contact.
3. For some referrals it may not be expected that a contact would be recorded. For example, in some circumstances, referrals are received by triage teams. These referrals are subsequently closed without a contact with a new referral opened once triaged.
4. In some scenarios, referral IDs are being re-used. For the purposes of this analysis, the care contact must take place within the same referral for the same person, as such a small number of contacts may not be included within a specific referral but this is a data quality issue.

■ NHS: Aldershot**Alex Baker:**[\[3519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) financial and (b) other steps his Department is taking to tackle workforce shortages in the NHS in Aldershot constituency.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service has been facing chronic workforce shortages for years and we have to be honest that bringing in the staff and investment the NHS needs will take time.

We are determined to fix our NHS and restore it to a service we are proud of. We are committed to training the staff we need to get patients seen on time.

The Government is committed to making sure the NHS has the staff it needs to be there for all of us when we need it and get staff in places where patients and the NHS need them and that will benefit not just Aldershot but the whole of the NHS in England.

Local employers are best placed to understand the diverse needs of their communities and subsequently manage their own recruitment to ensure they have the right number of staff, with the right skill mix, to provide the safe and effective care that their patients need.

■ NHS: Capital Investment**Rachael Maskell:**[\[3988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what process his Department is using to (a) assess the resilience of and (b) schedule future capital projects on the NHS estate.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to building a National Health Service that is fit for the future. This means we need to see world class NHS infrastructure across the entire acute estate, and beyond hospitals into local systems and communities. We know that strategic, value for money investments in capital projects are critical to achieving this mission. This may be in new infrastructure, significant upgrades, or other targeted capital investments.

The Government routinely sets out the selection processes for major capital programmes before bids are invited and decisions are made. The assessment processes for future capital spending on the NHS estate will vary, but will consistently consider factors like deliverability, meeting the needs of patients, and ensuring value for money.

In line with the Government's plans to deliver an NHS fit for the future and as part of our internal Spending Review preparations, the Department is currently reviewing capital requirements. The first phase of the Spending Review will conclude on 30 October 2024, with a multi-year Spending Review concluding in spring 2025. We are

also working closely with NHS England to assess the long-term NHS estate needs across a range of areas. This will highlight where capital investment is best placed to deliver key outcomes, such as the productivity targets set out in the Long-Term Workforce Plan. When concluded, these processes will inform the schedule for future capital projects on the NHS estate.

■ NHS: Fees and Charges

Dr Luke Evans: [\[3809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with NHS England on improving efforts to gather NHS charges from overseas visitors.

Dr Luke Evans: [\[3810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS claims for charges from overseas visitors were processed by the NHS in the last five reported financial years.

Dr Luke Evans: [\[3811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much money has been collected through NHS claims for charges from overseas visitors in the last five reported financial years.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is committed to working with NHS England to ensure effective implementation of The National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015.

The Department publishes data on the income identified from chargeable overseas visitors in England as part of the Department of Health and Social Care Annual Report and Accounts. The cash payments received by the NHS from overseas visitors are also published annually in the consolidated NHS provider accounts. The following table shows the aggregate income identified, and cash payments received by the NHS in England from overseas visitors, over the last five years:

YEAR	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Aggregate income identified	£91,000,000	£93,000,000	£61,000,000	£67,000,000	£100,000,000
Cash payments received in-year	£35,000,000	£39,000,000	£21,000,000	£25,000,000	£32,000,000

Source: the Department of Health and Social Care Annual Report and Accounts and Consolidated NHS provider accounts.

NHS charges can be recovered up to six years from the date of invoice, and therefore the amount recovered in a year does not necessarily mean it was identified in the same financial year.

■ Niche Health and Social Care Consulting: University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

Tim Farron: [\[2790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England spent on (a) fees and (b) other costs for work by Niche Health and Social Care Consulting in relation to urology services at the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust in (a) 2019/20, (b) 2020/21 and (c) 2021/22.

Karin Smyth:

The following table shows how much NHS England spent on fees and other costs for work by Niche Health and Social Care Consulting, in relation to urology services at the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust (UHMB), in 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22:

ACTIVITY	COMMISSIONED 2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
	Fees	VAT	Fees	VAT	Fees	VAT
Independent investigation into urology services at UHMB	£58,870.15	£11,774.04	£541,812.75	£108,362.58	£335,690.66	£67,138.13

■ Nurses: Training

Mary Glendon: [\[2899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to encourage more people to train as nurses.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service has faced chronic workforce shortages for years, but the Government will build a health service fit for the future. We will make sure the NHS has the staff it needs to be there for all of us when we need it.

Training the necessary staff will take time, but we are committed to training more nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals, and will work closely with a range of partners across the health and education sectors to do so, while highlighting the benefits of nursing as a career. We will also ensure there are a range of routes into a nursing career, such as apprenticeships and undergraduate courses.

■ Obesity: Children**Dr Beccy Cooper:**[\[3617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to tackle childhood obesity in the Health Mission Delivery Board.

Andrew Gwynne:

Supporting people to stay healthier for longer is at the heart of this government's Health Mission. We face a childhood obesity crisis and this government will take action to tackle it head on, easing the strain on the National Health Service and creating the healthiest generation of children ever.

The Health Mission has an overall objective to reduce the amount of time spent in ill-health, tackle health inequalities and drive economic growth. This brings together all government departments with an influence over the social determinants of health, to drive forward action in these areas.

We are committed to implementing the Advertising Regulations of less healthy food to children, empowering councils to block the development of new fast-food shops outside schools and banning the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to children under 16 years old.

Further action on obesity under the Government's Health Mission will be set out in due course.

■ Obesity: Young People**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[4183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle rising levels of obesity among people under 25 years old.

Andrew Gwynne:

Supporting people to stay healthier for longer is at the heart of the Government's Health Mission. We face a childhood obesity crisis, and the Government will take action to tackle it head on, easing the strain on our National Health Service and creating the healthiest generation of children ever.

As set out in the King's Speech, we will bring forward the necessary secondary legislation to ban junk food advertising to children and stop the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to under-16-year-olds. The Government is also committed to stop the targeting of school children by fast food outlets by empowering councils to block the development of new fast-food shops outside schools.

The Government recognises that prevention will always be better than a cure. Further action on obesity under the Government's Health Mission will be set out in due course.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Newcastle-under-Lyme

Adam Jogee: [\[3459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of procuring Produodopa via the NHS on the treatment of Parkinson's disease in Newcastle-Under Lyme constituency.

Adam Jogee: [\[3460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to increase the availability of Produodopa for people with Parkinson's disease in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Karin Smyth:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published guidance recommending foslevodopa–foscarbidopa (Produodopa) for patients with Parkinson's disease meeting specified clinical criteria, in November 2023. Produodopa is now available to eligible National Health Service patients in England, including in Newcastle-Under Lyme, in line with the NICE's recommendations.

■ Prescriptions

Sarah Champion: [\[2902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce overprescribing.

Karin Smyth:

Overprescribing can be addressed by taking a shared decision making approach and optimising a person's medicines; ensuring that patients are prescribed the right medicines, at the right time, in the right doses. The National Health Service is responding to the challenge of overprescribing and driving changes in this area by:

- Implementing the National Medicines Optimisation Opportunities for ICBs, more information can be found at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/national-medicines-optimisation-opportunities-2023-24/>
- Addressing problematic polypharmacy
- Delivering Structured Medication Reviews, more information can be found at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/primary-care/pharmacy/smr/>
- Improving repeat prescribing processes
- Optimising personalised care for adults prescribed medicines associated with dependence or withdrawal symptoms, more information can be found at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/optimising-personalised-care-for-adults-prescribed-medicines-associated-with-dependence-or-withdrawal-symptoms/>

Offering treatments that are not medicines is also key to addressing overprescribing. Many other initiatives delivered across the NHS contribute towards this. These

include delivery of personalised care and shared decision-making, NHS Talking Therapies for anxiety and depression, and social prescribing.

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Chris Bloore:

[\[3873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review the list of medical conditions for which a medical exemption certificate for free NHS prescriptions may be issued.

Karin Smyth:

There are no current plans to review the list of medical conditions that entitle someone to apply for a medical exemption certificate. Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge in the community in England, and there are a wide range of exemptions from prescription charges already in place for which those with chronic illnesses may be eligible. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, or whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are also available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with three-month and 12-month certificates available. The 12-month PPC can be paid for in instalments.

■ Prescriptions: Pensioners

Sir John Hayes:

[\[2724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to maintain free prescriptions for pensioners not in receipt of (a) pension credit and (b) other benefits.

Karin Smyth:

In England, people aged 60 years old and over are entitled to free prescriptions. There are currently no plans to change the upper age exemption or criteria for free prescriptions due to pension credit and other qualifying benefits.

Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge in the community in England. For pensioners aged under 60 who are not eligible for exemption from prescription charges help with their health costs may be available through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are also available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with three-month and 12-month certificates available. The 12-month PPC can be paid for in instalments.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Mark Pritchard:

[\[3687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he expects the UK National Screening Committee to conclude the prostate cancer screening evidence review it commissioned in November 2023.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK National Screening Committee's (UK NSC) evidence review for prostate cancer screening is already underway and plans to report within the UK NSC's three-year work plan.

The evidence review includes modelling the clinical cost effectiveness of several approaches to prostate cancer screening, including different potential ways of screening the whole population from 40 years old onwards and targeted screening aimed at groups of people identified as being at higher than average risk, such as black men or men with a family history of cancer.

Mark Pritchard:

[\[3688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve early detection of prostate cancer through screening.

Andrew Gwynne:

Screening for prostate cancer is currently not recommended by the UK National Screening Committees (UK NSC). This is because of the inaccuracy of the current best test Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). A PSA-based screening programme could harm men as some of them would be diagnosed with a cancer that would not have caused them problems during their life. This would lead to additional tests and treatments which can also have harmful side effects.

The UK NSC is currently carrying out an evidence review for prostate cancer screening; this includes different potential ways of screening the whole population from 40 years of age onwards, and targeted screening programme aimed at groups of men identified as being at higher-than-average risk such as those with a family history, carriers of the BRCA2 gene and based on ethnicity.

In addition, we are working with Prostate Cancer UK to launch the TRANSFORM trial. The £42 million nationwide screening study will compare the most promising tests to look for prostate cancer in men that do not have any symptoms.

■ Rare Diseases: Drugs

Nadia Whittome:

[\[3233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence on implementing the commitment in the England Rare Disease Action Plan 2024 to review the criteria for determining whether a medicine should be routed to its Highly Specialised Technologies programme.

Nadia Whittome:

[\[3234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the exercise by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence of its discretionary power to show flexibility in relation to its (a) Standard Technology Appraisal and (b) Highly Specialised Technologies programme routing decisions in circumstances where there is (i) uncertainty on the incidence and prevalence of the disease and (ii) high unmet clinical need to ensure fair and equitable access to innovative new treatments for patients living with rare diseases.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has regular discussions with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) about a range of issues, including about the delivery of public commitments. The NICE will consult on proposed changes to its criteria for highly specialised technology appraisals in 2024/25.

We have made no assessment of the extent to which the NICE has demonstrated flexibility in making decisions on whether new medicines should be routed to its highly specialised technologies (HST) programme. Decisions on whether topics should be routed to the HST programme are taken independently of the Department by the NICE's Prioritisation Board, in line with the routing criteria set out in the NICE's published prioritisation framework, and through engagement with experts and other interested parties. The board's decisions are published on the NICE's website.

This Government is aware of the challenges facing those living with rare diseases, including access to specialist care, treatment, and medicines. The NICE is actively monitoring the impact of the changes that it made to its methods and processes in 2022 on the availability of medicines for rare diseases, and is planning to publish a report by the end of 2024.

■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what criteria he selected the ages for RSV vaccine roll out.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 5 September 2024]: The respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programmes began on 1 September in England. The immunisation offer consists of a maternal programme for pregnant women to protect newborn babies, a routine programme for those turning 75 years old, and a catch-up programme for people already aged 75 to 79 years old. Older adults will remain eligible until the day before they turn 80 years old, except for people who turn 80 years old in the first year, who have until 31 August 2025 to get vaccinated.

When a new vaccination programme is introduced, the Government must make difficult decisions on who to offer the vaccine to. These decisions are based on advice the Department receives from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), and includes evidence of the impact a vaccination has in

different groups, as well as the capacity of the system to deliver the programme alongside all other healthcare priorities.

For the maternal RSV programme, vaccination will be offered to pregnant women from 28 weeks of gestation to provide protection from RSV for babies during the first six months of life, when they are most vulnerable. The JCVI noted in their September 2023 statement that the available data on RSV vaccinations before week 28 of gestation was less compelling.

The JCVI also noted that the burden of RSV in older adults is less well understood and is considered to be underestimated by existing routine surveillance. The committee agreed that more work was required to obtain better estimates of the RSV burden in adults.

There was also less certainty about how well the vaccine works in people aged 80 years old and older. There were not enough people of this age in the clinical trials to be able to see if the vaccines are protective in this age band. The JCVI therefore suggested an initial programme to potentially vaccinate a cohort aged from 75 to 80 years old, and then for those turning 75 years old in subsequent years.

The structure of an immunisation programme is dynamic and the JCVI will continue to review the data available on who should be offered an RSV immunisation. It was noted in the June 2023 JCVI advice that 'an extension to the initial programme would be considered when there is more certainty about protection in the very elderly and the real-world impact of the programme in the 75- to 80-year-olds'. A link to the JCVI statement on the introduction of an RSV vaccination programme is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rsv-immunisation-programme-jcvi-advice-7-june-2023/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv-immunisation-programme-for-infants-and-older-adults-jcvi-full-statement-11-september-2023>

Daisy Cooper:

[3791]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the evidential basis is for not extending the respiratory syncytial virus immunisation programme to all children under the age of one year.

Andrew Gwynne:

There are currently no approved respiratory syncytial virus vaccines for children under the age of one year. This is a dynamic area and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, supported by The UK Health Security Agency, is continuing to keep the evidence and its advice under review.

However, it is important to be aware that the maternal vaccine is now available to pregnant women via the National Health Service, precisely to provide protection to children in the first year of life. We would strongly encourage everyone that is eligible to take up this offer as the most effective way to protect your child.

■ Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors: Sexual Dysfunction

Ian Lavery:

[\[2900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support sufferers of post SSRI sexual dysfunction.

Andrew Gwynne:

Patients can visit either their general practice (GP), or a sexual health clinic, for support with erectile dysfunction. Anyone experiencing mental health issues, including those related to selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) use, is encouraged to seek help by consulting to their GP or by self-referring to their local NHS Talking Therapies service.

The product information for individual SSRI medicines describe a range of side-effects, including potential sexual dysfunction during treatment. Some products specifically note that these symptoms may persist even after discontinuing the medication. Patients are encouraged to discuss the benefits and risks associated with medicines with their prescriber for individual support.

As with all medicines, the evidence available for the safety of antidepressants remains under continual review by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency after they are authorised for use. In response to patient and family feedback, an Expert Working Group under the Commission of Human Medicines has been established. This group is currently considering the risk minimisation measures for antidepressants in relation to suicide and suicidal behaviour. The scope of this review has been expanded to include the risk of persistent sexual dysfunction after stopping the medication for all 30 antidepressants currently marketed in the United Kingdom.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (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.

■ Shingles: Vaccination

Paula Barker:

[\[3211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure people aged between 65 and 70 who turned 65 before 1 September 2023 can access the shingles vaccine.

Andrew Gwynne:

When a vaccination programme is expanded, decisions must be made regarding who to offer the vaccine to first. These decisions are based on advice given by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), and includes evidence of the impact of the vaccine in different age groups as well as the capacity of the National

Health Service to deliver the vaccination programme alongside other important healthcare priorities.

From September 2023, the routine shingles vaccination programme changed from the Zostavax vaccine to the more effective Shingrix vaccine, to better protect individuals from the effects of shingles, provide better clinical outcomes, and reduce pressures on the health system.

A phased expansion of the routinely eligible cohort also began in September 2023. The programme currently includes those aged 50 years old and over who are at increased risk of serious complications, and those turning 65 years old on or after 1 September 2023, as well as those turning 70 years old, as was previously the case. The programme is next due to be expanded on 1 September 2028 to those turning 60 years old. There is no intention to change the planned expansion of the shingles vaccination programme.

Phasing the roll-out of the shingles vaccination over time to everyone aged 60 years old and over is in line with the JCVI's recommendation, maximises cost effectiveness and population benefit, ensures consistent messaging over time to maximise coverage, takes account of NHS capacity, and is consistent with the approach taken by all four parts of the United Kingdom. This phased approach has been used in the effective implementation of previous immunisation programmes and whilst it may mean that some individuals may have to wait until the date that they would have originally been eligible, many others will receive the vaccines sooner and will benefit for longer.

Anyone unsure if they are eligible for the shingles vaccination should check online or should speak to their general practitioner. Further information on shingles vaccine eligibility is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/shingles-vaccine/>

■ Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust

Helen Morgan:

[4057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure stability of management at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust.

Karin Smyth:

The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust (SaTH) is in segment four of the NHS Oversight Framework. This means that the trust is in receipt of national mandated support via NHS England's Recovery Support Programme. The National Recovery Support team is working closely with the trust and region to support the SaTH, and ensure delivery of improvements. A new interim Chief Executive Officer has been appointed, and is joining the trust shortly. We are working closely with NHS England to monitor the situation.

■ Skin Diseases: Research

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[\[3534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to fund research into treatment for vitiligo.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including vitiligo. All research proposals compete for available funding. Applications undergo peer review and are judged based on their importance to patients and health services, value for money, and scientific quality. Funding in any disease area depends on the volume and quality of scientific activity. The NIHR has funded research on various aspects of skin diseases, including specifically on vitiligo home interventions, light therapy, ruxolitinib treatment, and the quality of vitiligo randomised controlled trials. The NIHR has also analysed research evidence on the use of ruxolitinib for treating vitiligo as part of an ongoing National Institute for Health and Care Excellence technology appraisal.

■ Smoking

Rachael Maskell:

[\[4005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that areas which ban smoking are supported by information about smoking cessation programmes.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government will soon introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which stands to be the most significant public health intervention in a generation and will put us on track to a smoke-free United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister supports measures that will create a smokefree environment, helping to reduce 80,000 preventable deaths, reduce the burden on the National Health Service, and reduce the burden on the taxpayer. Any proposed changes to smoke-free legislation would be subject to Parliament as well as a full public consultation and further engagement with relevant organisations. More details will be set out shortly.

The Government provides significant funding to local stop smoking services across the country, and funds marketing campaigns such as Stoptober which sign-posts smokers to quitting support, one of the best things a smoker can do for their health.

■ Smoking: Public Places

Sir John Hayes:

[\[2737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to which outdoor areas he plans to extend restrictions on smoking.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government will soon introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which stands to be the most significant public health intervention in a generation and will put us on track to a smoke-free United Kingdom.

The Government supports measures that will create a smoke-free environment, helping to reduce 80,000 preventable deaths, reduce the burden on the National Health Service, and reduce the burden on the taxpayer. More details will be set out shortly.

Rachael Maskell:**[4004]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to consult relevant organisations on proposals to ban smoking in outdoor spaces.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government will soon introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which stands to be the most significant public health intervention in a generation and will put us on track to a smoke-free United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister supports measures that will create a smokefree environment, helping to reduce 80,000 preventable deaths, reduce the burden on the National Health Service, and reduce the burden on the taxpayer. Any proposed changes to smoke-free legislation would be subject to Parliament as well as a full public consultation and further engagement with relevant organisations. More details will be set out shortly.

The Government provides significant funding to local stop smoking services across the country, and funds marketing campaigns such as Stoptober which sign-posts smokers to quitting support, one of the best things a smoker can do for their health.

Rachael Maskell:**[4006]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of banning smoking in some public places on health outcomes.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government will soon introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which stands to be the most significant public health intervention in a generation and will put us on track to a smoke-free United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister supports measures that will create a smokefree environment, helping to reduce 80,000 preventable deaths, reduce the burden on the National Health Service, and reduce the burden on the taxpayer. Any proposed changes to smoke-free legislation would be subject to Parliament as well as a full public consultation and further engagement with relevant organisations. More details will be set out shortly.

The Government provides significant funding to local stop smoking services across the country, and funds marketing campaigns such as Stoptober which sign-posts smokers to quitting support, one of the best things a smoker can do for their health.

■ Surgery: Aldershot**Alex Baker:** [\[3513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for elective surgeries in Aldershot constituency.

Karin Smyth:

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for the Government, as we get the National Health Service back on its feet. Equality of both access to care and outcomes will be at the heart of building an NHS that is fit for the future.

We have committed to achieving the NHS Constitutional standard that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment by the end of this Parliament. As a first step to achieving this, we will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week across the country, and will increase the number of computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, and other tests, that are needed to reduce elective and cancer waits.

■ Teva: Parkinson's Disease**Alicia Kearns:** [\[3157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the availability of medication for Parkinson's disease produced by Teva Pharmaceuticals.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 4 September 2024]: Teva Pharmaceuticals supply a range of medicines to treat Parkinson's disease. We are not aware of any issues with Teva Pharmaceuticals' supply of these medicines. Teva Pharmaceuticals discontinued amantadine 100 milligram capsules in July 2024, however alternative suppliers remain in stock, and are able to meet patient demand.

■ Trastuzumab Deruxtecan**Daisy Cooper:** [\[3107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make representations to (a) Daiichi Sankyo and (b) AstraZeneca following the decision by NICE not to recommend Enhertu as a cost effective treatment for advanced stage breast cancer.

Karin Smyth:

Decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service in England are taken by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), on the basis of an evaluation of a treatment's costs and benefits. The NICE's methods are internationally respected, and have been developed through extensive work with industry, academics, and the public, to ensure they appropriately capture the costs and benefits, and best reflect social values. These are very difficult

decisions to make, and it is important that they are made independently, and on the basis of the available evidence.

We understand that despite the NICE instigating an exceptional pause in the process to allow for commercial negotiations to take place with the companies Daiichi Sankyo and AstraZeneca, a deal to enable patient access to this treatment on the NHS in England has not been reached.

We know the NICE's announcement has come as a blow to many women and their families. The NICE and NHS England have already sought to apply as much flexibility as they can in their considerations of Enhertu for HER2 LOW breast cancer, and have made it clear to the companies that their pricing of the drug remains the main obstacle to access.

Within 16 weeks of the publication of final guidance, companies can also request a rapid review to consider new patient access scheme proposals, with the aim of establishing a pricing agreement that would improve cost-effectiveness and enable patient access to high-cost medicines. The Government wants to see a deal reached to make Enhertu available. The NICE and NHS England remain open to considering an improved offer from the companies through the rapid review process, and we strongly encourage the companies to come back to the table.

Adam Jogee:

[\[3455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Enhertu in reducing the number of women who lose their lives to breast cancer in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and b) England.

Karin Smyth:

Whilst we have made no specific assessment, the clinical trial evidence considered by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) shows that Enhertu increases how long people live and how long they have before their cancer gets worse compared with chemotherapy treatments used for HER2-negative breast cancer. It is not, however, a curative treatment.

We understand from NICE that it is estimated that approximately 1,000 women in England would have been eligible for treatment with Enhertu, if NICE had been able to recommend it for use in the treatment of HER2-low breast cancer. Information at constituency level is not held.

Rachel Gilmour:

[\[3568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make representations to NICE on their decision to no longer offer Enhertu for women suffering from metastatic HER2-LOW breast cancer.

Karin Smyth:

Decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service in England are taken by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on the basis of an evaluation of a treatment's costs and benefits. NICE's methods are internationally respected, and have been developed through

extensive work with industry, academics and the public to ensure they appropriately capture the costs and benefits, and best reflect social values. These are very difficult decisions to make, and it is important that they are made independently and based on the available evidence.

We understand that despite NICE instigating an exceptional pause in the process to allow for commercial negotiations to take place with the companies, Daiichi Sankyo and AstraZeneca, a deal to enable patient access to this treatment on the NHS in England has not been reached.

We know NICE's announcement has come as a blow to many women and their families. We understand that NICE and NHS England have already sought to apply as much flexibility as they can in their considerations of Enhertu and have made it clear to the companies that their pricing of the drug remains the main obstacle to access.

Within 16 weeks of the publication of final guidance, companies can also request a rapid review to consider new patient access scheme proposals, with the aim of establishing a pricing agreement that would improve cost-effectiveness and enable patient access to high-cost medicines. The Government wants to see a deal reached to make Enhertu available. NICE and NHS England remain open to considering an improved offer from the companies through the rapid review process, and we strongly encourage the companies to come back to the table.

■ Whipps Cross Hospital: Repairs and Maintenance

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[3677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on the Whipps Cross Hospital redevelopment programme.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 5 September 2024]: We are reviewing the New Hospital Programme to put it on a sustainable footing, including a realistic timetable for delivery and clarity on the funding required. The review will be completed as soon as possible this autumn. Once concluded, Parliament will be updated on the next steps for the Programme and individual schemes, including Whipps Cross Hospital.

£1.2 million has been released recently to Barts Health NHS Trust to support them in continuing the development of their Outline Business Case for the main scheme during the review period. Construction has also started on a Multi Storey Car Park on the site.

HOME OFFICE**■ Anti-corruption Champion****Siân Berry:**[\[3629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to appoint a new anti-corruption champion.

Dan Jarvis:

The government is considering a range of appointments following the election. When there are appointments to announce, this will be done in the usual way.

■ Anti-social Behaviour: Urban Areas**Sir John Hayes:**[\[3681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour in town centres.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

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

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

■ Anti-social Behaviour: York Outer**Mr Luke Charters:**[\[3895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to help tackle anti-social behaviour in York Outer constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

We will put thousands of new neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities, and provide residents with a named officer they can turn to when things go wrong.

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

■ Asylum: LGBT+ People**Nadia Whittome:** [\[3230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 454 on Asylum: LGBT+ People, when her Department last reviewed the level of the risk of (a) discrimination, (b) harassment and (c) violence towards LGBTQ+ people seeking asylum in immigration detention centres.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The level of risk for LGBT+ individuals within immigration detention is subject to ongoing monitoring. As set out in Detention Services Order 02/2016 'Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Detainees in the Detention Estate', Immigration Removal Centre suppliers undertake regular equality monitoring and trend analysis for residents with protected characteristics.

■ Asylum: Stroud**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[4280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to house asylum seekers in Tricorn House in Stroud constituency.

Dame Angela Eagle:

For the safety and security of those we accommodate and our staff, the Home Office does not comment publicly on sites which may or may not be utilised to accommodate asylum seekers. Should a decision be made to use a site then the local MP will be notified in writing.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation**Clive Lewis:** [\[2952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans she has to fund accommodation for asylum seekers once the use of hotels is stopped.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly, and is reviewing the current arrangements for accommodation to ensure efficiency and value for money, including reducing the use of hotels.

■ British National (Overseas)**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[3813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her policy is on the citizenship status of individuals with British National (Overseas) visas.

Seema Malhotra:

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

time restrictions for a further year, BN(O) visa holders and their dependent family members may apply for British citizenship.

■ Child Sexual Abuse Independent Panel Inquiry

Shaun Davies:

[\[3304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's planned timetable is for implementing the recommendations of the Final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, published in October 2022; and whether the Government plans not to implement any of the recommendations in that report.

Jess Phillips:

I will be taking robust action on tackling child sexual abuse as a priority. The work of the Inquiry over seven years and its final recommendations marks an important contribution in that regard.

The strength and bravery of the victims and survivors who came forward to share their stories cannot be overstated.

I will be working with ministerial colleagues across government over the coming weeks to revisit the final 20 recommendations of the Inquiry to determine our key priorities going forward.

■ Civil Disorder: Compensation

Mike Wood:

[\[2919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to establish Riot Claims Bureaux to handle claims for recent riots.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The department is working closely with Police and Crime Commissioners to monitor the number of claims and ensure they are sufficiently supported to manage them.

■ Civil Disorder: Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[3951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many officers from Police Scotland were deployed in Northern Ireland to help tackle disorder in August 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Policing is a devolved matter, information may be held by the Scotland Office.

■ Community Policing

John Slinger:

[\[3407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) police forces prioritising community engagement at the neighbourhood level, (b) public meetings, (c) ward walks, (d) strengthening relationships with key stakeholders and (e) deploying specialist (i) youth and (ii) other engagement teams on public confidence in the police.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government has committed to restoring confidence in policing, so it is vital that we rebuild the connection between the police and the communities they serve.

Research shows there is strong evidence that community engagement is important for building trust in the police and that higher visibility of local police increases public confidence, see for example the Home Office *Public perceptions of policing: A review of research and literature*.

That is why the Government has committed to strengthening neighbourhood policing as part of its Safer Streets Mission. We will be working with policing to introduce a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, restoring patrols to town centres, recruiting thousands of extra police officers, PCSOs and Special Constables, and providing every community with a named local officer to turn to.

■ Corruption

Rachel Blake: [\[3571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a new anti-corruption strategy.

Dan Jarvis:

The government takes the issue of corruption extremely seriously and is currently considering its approach towards a future UK Anti-Corruption Strategy.

■ Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

Blair McDougall: [\[3372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to directly incorporate the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings into domestic law.

Jess Phillips:

The UK Government's response to modern slavery and human trafficking is compliant with both domestic and international obligations, including those set out in the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (ECAT).

This response includes the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) which identify and support victims respectively.

This Government is committed to tackling modern slavery and human trafficking, in line with our international and domestic legal obligations. I will update on future policies in due course and am committed to taking an approach that puts victims first.

■ Crimes of Violence

Mrs Elsie Blundell:

[\[3377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to protect (a) workers who support the night time economy, (b) shift workers, (c) NHS workers, (d) people enjoying a night out and (e) other people travelling at night who are at risk of (i) violence and (ii) sexual violence.

Jess Phillips:

This Government will treat tackling violence against women and girls as a national emergency and will use every tool to target perpetrators and address the root causes of violence on our streets.

We want women to feel safe and will use every lever to halve violence against women and girls in the next decade, across the whole of government, with policing and other experts.

To make our streets safe, we must drastically reduce serious violent crime and violence against women and girls, increase confidence in the police, stop young people falling into crime, and make our criminal justice system work for victims.

No one should ever have to face the risk of violence or harassment when travelling. This government is taking action to make sure our transport network is safe for all. The Department for Transport is working closely with transport partners, including the British Transport Police, on a range of initiatives to address the problems faced by different users, including women and girls, on the transport network.

■ Emergency Services Network: Whitehaven and Workington

Josh MacAlister:

[\[3287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans that access to the Croasdale Emergency Services mobile mast in Whitehaven and Workington constituency will be shared with all mobile network operators.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The build of the Croasdale Extended Area Services (EAS) mast was completed in November 2023. Since then work has been underway to complete power and network connections to the mast, and it is now envisaged that all Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), as part of the Shared Rural Network programme, will be able to activate their services by end of July 2025.

■ Firearms: Licensing

Helen Maguire:

[\[3635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the conclusions of the Senior Coroner for Surrey's Prevention of Future Deaths report following the murder of Emma and Ellette Pattison, published on 12 August 2024, whether she plans to review how licensing authorities could obtain details about an applicant's history of coercive controlling behaviour.

Helen Maguire:

[3636]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the conclusions of the Senior Coroner for Surrey's Prevention of Future Deaths report following the murder of Emma and Ellette Pattison, published on 12 August 2024, whether she plans to take steps with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to ensure licensing authorities are made aware of online GP consultations as a further safeguard.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Secretary, alongside others, has received a Prevention of Future Deaths report from the Senior Coroner for Surrey regarding the deaths at Epsom College in February 2023. The Government will be responding to the Coroner's recommendations in due course.

■ Forced Labour: Supply Chains

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[2707]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero on the adequacy of section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act in preventing the use of forced labour products in net zero supply chains.

Jess Phillips:

The Home Office works across government to tackle modern slavery in supply chains and holds regular discussions with other government departments on legislative and non-legislative measures to enhance our approach.

The Home Office is currently updating the Section 54 statutory guidance to support businesses with more practical guidance on how to tackle modern slavery in their supply chains. We are setting up the Forced Labour Forum, which will include representatives from government, civil society organisations, businesses and academics to ensure the guidance is fit for purpose and is applicable across sectors.

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

■ Home Office: Redundancy Pay

Wera Hobhouse:

[3041]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 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 in that period; and how much each Minister received.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The details of any ministerial severance payments can be found in our Annual Report & Accounts ., there were no severance payments made between December 2019 and 6th July 2022.

[Home Office annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

■ Independent Inquiry Into Child Sexual Exploitation in Telford

Shaun Davies:

[\[3305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the independent report into child sexual exploitation in Telford, published on 12 July 2022.

Jess Phillips:

The findings of the independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Telford exposed shocking cases of the most vulnerable in our society being abused and let down by adults who were supposed to protect them. The Government recognises the important role local inquiries like this, and others in Rotherham, Oldham and elsewhere, play in improving our response to child sexual abuse and exploitation.

The report of the independent inquiry in Telford did not make any direct recommendations for national government. However, we review the findings of all local inquiries, and other reports such as the Final Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and HMICFRS' inspection of policing's response to group-based child sexual exploitation, to ensure we are constantly reviewing and updating national policies.

At a national level, the Government continues to drive national action to better safeguard children, provide support and care to victims and survivors, and ensure perpetrators face the full force of the law. This includes funding the Child Sexual Exploitation Police Taskforce, which is giving practical, expert, on the ground support for local forces investigating child sexual abuse, with a focus on complex and organised child sexual exploitation; and the Tackling Organised Exploitation programme, which is helping forces to uncover more of this offending.

As you know, I have had contact with Telford survivors and will ensure that their voices are part of any future progress.

■ Internet: Safety

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[3815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology on Ofcom's advice entitled Categorisation - research and advice, in the context of the Online Safety Act 2023.

Dan Jarvis:

The Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology is carefully considering Ofcom's research and advice and will make Regulations as soon as reasonably practicable.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department meets regularly with the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology to discuss a range of topics, including on online safety. Officials also meet regularly and are working closely together.

■ Knives: Advertising and Sales**Alex Mayer:**[\[3426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will establish a review of knife (a) advertising and (b) sales including the strengthening of (i) ID and (ii) age checks by delivery services.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Tackling the illegal sales of knives online is a very important part of the Government's mission to make our streets safer and reduce knife crime we will make further announcements in due course about our review into this area.

■ Migrant Workers: Vacancies**Paula Barker:**[\[3194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will reduce the cost of visas for overseas graduates who are able to fill gaps in the labour market.

Paula Barker:[\[3195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to incentivise recruitment of (a) domestic graduates from overseas and (b) overseas graduates to fill shortages in the labour market.

Seema Malhotra:

Overseas students who successfully complete an eligible course in the UK are entitled to remain on a graduate visa for two years after their studies end, or three for PhDs, to work, live and contribute to society.

The Home Office keeps visa fees under review but has no current plans to reduce fees for overseas graduates. The Home Office does not make a profit from fees and any income from fees set above the cost of processing are utilised for the purpose of running the Migration and Borders system. Taking this approach helps to meet the costs of maintaining an effective Migration and Borders system which benefits everyone.

The Government have also been clear that net migration is too high and must be reduced. Employers are encouraged to look to the domestic labour market to nurture and develop the skills they need where they can.

■ Non-crime Hate Incidents: Databases**Sir John Hayes:**[\[2739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to take steps to amend the statutory guidance entitled Non-crime hate incidents: code of practice, published on 3 June 2023, on only recording personal data relating to non-crime hate incidents if it is deemed proportionate and necessary to do so in order to mitigate a real risk of harm.

Dame Diana Johnson:

It is vital that the police can capture data relating to non-crime hate incidents when it is proportionate and necessary to help prevent serious crimes which may later occur.

We are carefully considering how best to protect individuals and communities from hate whilst balancing the need to protect the fundamental right to free speech, and ensuring the police can spend their time dealing with issues that matter most to communities.

We will set out next steps in due course.

■ Passports: Republic of Ireland**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[4179]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what documentation is required to obtain a UK passport for people born in the Irish Republic who are living in Northern Ireland.

Seema Malhotra:

His Majesty's Passport Office must satisfactorily complete its checks upon an applicant's nationality, identity, and eligibility before a passport can be issued, and will request additional evidence as necessary to support the completion of these checks.

The evidence required will change depending upon individual circumstances, and whether it is an application for a first passport or a renewal. Further information about the information needed when applying for a first passport can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-first-adult-passport/what-documents-you-need-to-apply>

■ Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022**Siân Berry:****[3626]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to repeal the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

Dame Diana Johnson:

Certain sections of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 are currently being reviewed by the Government in line with commitments made in Parliament when the Act was passed. In addition, the entirety of the Act will be subject to post-legislative parliamentary scrutiny. This usually occurs between 3 and 5 years after Royal Assent.

■ Police: Cambridgeshire**Ben Obese-Jecty:****[3381]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of the proposed 13,000 new neighbourhood police officers will be (a) warranted police officers, (b) Police Community Support Officers and (c) Special Constables; and how many of each such officer will be allocated to the Cambridgeshire constabulary.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee is supported by a commitment to introduce additional 13,000 police personnel into neighbourhood policing. This will be achieved through the recruitment of thousands of additional Police Constables, Police Community Support Officers, and Special Constables, as well as the redeployment of thousands of current Police Constables, into neighbourhood policing roles across England and Wales.

This will provide every community a named local officer to turn to and ensure that there is appropriate resource to tackle the crimes that most impact communities, including anti-social behaviour and shoplifting.

We want to deliver this additional support as quickly as possible and are working at pace alongside policing partners to devise the right model for implementation. We will set out further plans shortly.

■ Police: First Aid

Dan Norris: [\[2719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to support the availability of bleed kits.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The use of bleed control kits is determined at the local level and the Government does not provide specific funding for bleed control kits.

Where decisions have been made by police forces to deploy bleed control kits, these would have been done as part of their operational decision making, including how to allocate resources based on their local knowledge and experience.

Alex Mayer: [\[3422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to support the availability of bleed control kits in (a) Central Bedfordshire and (b) the UK.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The use of bleed control kits is determined at the local level and the Government does not provide specific funding for bleed control kits.

Where decisions have been made by police forces to deploy bleed control kits, these would have been done as part of their operational decision making, including how to allocate resources based on their local knowledge and experience.

■ Police: Technology

Chris Philp: [\[3733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to paragraph 5.6 of the Spring Budget 2024 red book, whether it is her Department's policy to continue with the commitment of £230 million to spend on new Police technology over the next four years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government will continue to invest in improving productivity and efficiency with new technology for policing.

Funding for future financial years will be agreed as part of the ongoing Spending Review.

Refugees: Homelessness**Nadia Whittome:**[\[3236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that people who have recently acquired refugee status do not experience homelessness after leaving asylum accommodation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Individuals granted asylum have access to the labour market and to mainstream services that support their integration, including benefits and healthcare. We are working across Government to ensure these services meet the needs of all newly granted refugees.

Migrant Help or their partner organisation support all individuals when they receive a decision on their asylum claim. This support includes providing advice on accessing the labour market, on applying for Universal Credit and signposting to local authorities for assistance with housing.

We continue to work with colleagues at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to understand rough sleeping and homelessness pressures within local authorities (LAs). In our continued commitment to supporting LAs and statutory partners in planning for move on, we have shared enhanced data sets (The Place Based Visibility tool - PBVT) which we are continuing to develop further. The PBVT is complimented by the Discontinuation Prediction Tool (DPT) which is shared weekly; this data provides real time view of discontinuation notices likely to be served in the next following 4-6 weeks and the volume of people (including whether it is families, single males or single females) who may seek LA assistance following a positive decision.

Where a decision is made on an individual's asylum claim, the Asylum Accommodation Support Contract (AASC) provider notifies the relevant local authority within 2 days of notification by the Home Office.

Riot Control Weapons**Mark Garnier:**[\[2883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to review the Government's guidance on police use of water cannons.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office does not issue guidance on police use of water cannons.

■ Sexual Offences**Charlotte Nichols:****[3152]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help protect workers travelling home late at night who are at risk of sexual violence.

Jess Phillips:

This Government will treat tackling violence against women and girls as a national emergency and will use every tool to target perpetrators and address the root causes of violence on our streets.

We want women to feel safe and will use every lever to halve violence against women and girls in the next decade, across the whole of government, with policing and other experts.

To make our streets safe, we must drastically reduce serious violent crime and violence against women and girls, increase confidence in the police, stop young people falling into crime, and make our criminal justice system work for victims.

No one should ever have to face the risk of violence or harassment when travelling. This government is taking action to make sure our transport network is safe for all. The Department for Transport is working closely with transport partners, including the British Transport Police, on a range of initiatives to address the problems faced by different users, including women and girls, on the transport network.

Antonia Bance:**[3325]**

To ask Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect workers travelling home late at night who are at risk of sexual violence.

Jess Phillips:

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Abtisam Mohamed:

[3439]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help protect workers travelling home late at night who are at risk of sexual violence.

Jess Phillips:

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■ Slavery: Victims

Blair McDougall:

[3373]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help ensure that survivors of modern slavery feel safe to report exploitation and abuse regardless of their immigration status.

Jess Phillips:

The Government is committed to tackling all forms of modern slavery; ensuring that victims, regardless of their nationality and immigration status, are provided with the support they need to begin rebuilding their lives and that those responsible are prosecuted.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK's framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery, of all nationalities, and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. If a First Responder thinks that modern slavery has taken place, the individual should be referred to the NRM so that the relevant competent authority can fully consider the case in line with the published Statutory Guidance. If an adult potential victim does not consent to entering the NRM, the first responder must notify the Home Office (in England and Wales) via a Duty to Notify (DtN) report.

The statistics for the NRM are published quarterly here: [National Referral Mechanism statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-referral-mechanism-statistics)

■ Terrorism: Victim Support Schemes

Phil Brickell: [\[4095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of support provided to terrorism victims.

Dan Jarvis:

This government understands the devastating impact terrorism has on individuals and their families and is determined to make sure victims and survivors receive the support they deserve

Since October 2020, the government has funded support services to provide practical and emotional support to victims and survivors of attacks. The services include a 24/7 support line, mental health assessments and referrals and access to long-term peer support networks.

The Home Office has reviewed the support provisions and is considering options for future improvements.

■ Undocumented Migrants

Mark Pritchard: [\[2781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the activities of hostile states on levels of illegal immigration.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Government's first duty is to protect our national security and keep our country safe. We keep potential threats to the UK under constant review and, where necessary, we use all the tools at our disposal to mitigate these threats including at the border and those seeking to enter the UK through irregular means.

As a matter of long-standing policy, we do not comment on the detail of security and intelligence issues.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Sir Julian Lewis: [\[4165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many migrants attempting to enter the United Kingdom illegally in small boats have died in the English Channel in each of the last five years: how many such fatalities were children; and how many occurred in (a) UK and (b) French territorial waters.

Dame Angela Eagle:

There have been 31 tragedies, since August 2019, where 97 people are confirmed to have died and at least 14 people have been reported as missing at sea, presumed dead, as a result of or linked to attempting these dangerous crossings.

Numbers of fatalities

DATE	CONFIRMED FATALITIES
2024 (to 05/09/24)	37
2023	12
2022	4
2021	34
2020	6
2019	4
TOTAL	97

A total of eight minors are reported to have died in the fatal incidents that have occurred this year. Prior to this, the only known minor fatalities occurred as a result of an incident in October 2020 when an entire family group, including 3 children, died following the capsizing of a migrant vessel.

Almost all fatalities have occurred in French Territorial Waters (TTW). There has been one incident (on 14 December 2022), involving the deaths of 4 people, which undoubtedly took place within UK TTW. However, an earlier tragedy – the loss of 27 people in a single incident in November 2021 – was proven after investigation to have partially occurred within UK TTW. It is subject to an ongoing Art.2 Human Rights Inquiry led by Sir Ross Cranston.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Great Yarmouth**

Rupert Lowe:

[3444]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many irregular migrants are housed in the Great Yarmouth Borough Council area; what accommodation is used to house those migrants; and what the cost is of housing those migrants.

Dame Angela Eagle:

In accordance with the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, the Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide destitute asylum seekers with accommodation and subsistence support whilst their application for asylum is being considered.

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in different areas is routinely 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)

The Home Office does not publish asylum support data disaggregated by method of arrival.

■ Vetting**Helen Morgan:****[3276]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the time taken for DBS checks to be carried out for employers in England.

Jess Phillips:

The DBS measures its progress using a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets agreed by its Board. The KPIs are grouped into four themes: quality, timeliness, value for money, and people. There is a strong focus on the quality and timeliness of its products and services as these are the issues that customers tell DBS are important to them and it is these that ensure the DBS supports the safeguarding of vulnerable groups including children, as effectively as possible. The 2024/25 DBS Business Plan can be viewed at: DBS business plan: 2024-25 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The most recent quarterly datasets showing statistics against internal performance standards can be viewed at: DBS dataset 1: DBS checks, the DBS Update Service, and disputes - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). The data applies to DBS checks, the Update Service, and disputes.

Helen Morgan:**[3277]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what is the (a) average and (b) target time taken for a DBS check to be completed in England.

Jess Phillips:

The Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) target is to issue 85% of Basic checks within 2 days, 85% of Standard checks within 3 days, and 80% of Enhanced checks within 14 days.

DBS publishes its performance data every quarter. The most recent data for April to June 2024 records the following performance for all applications processed within England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man:

Basic check target attained with an average of 88.1%. The 85% target was met on day 2 and the average turnaround time was 0.7 days.

Standard check target attained with an average of 88.2%. The 85% target was met on day 3 and the average turnaround time was 1.4 days.

Enhanced check target not attained with an average of 75.1%. The 80% target was met on day 21 and the average turnaround time was 12.4 days.

■ Visas: Married People

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[\[4150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of linking the minimum income requirement for spousal visa applications to the National Living Wage.

Seema Malhotra:

The financial requirements for the Family Immigration Rules include the Minimum Income Requirement (MIR) which is currently set at £29,000 and is intended to maintain the economic wellbeing of the UK whilst respecting family life.

The Home Secretary has announced her intention to commission the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to review the financial requirements in the Family Immigration Rules. Conducting a review of the financial requirements across the family routes will ensure we have a clear and consistent system.

There will be no changes to the current threshold of £29,000, or the ways in which the MIR can be met, until the MAC review is complete.

■ West Mercia Police: Public Appointments

Shaun Davies:

[\[3310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of not having a permanent Chief Constable since 2023 on the governance of West Mercia Police; and what discussions she has had with (a) the force and (b) the Police and Crime Commissioner on that matter.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Strong and consistent leadership is essential in ensuring high standards in police forces. In the absence of a permanent Chief Constable, regulations allow for an acting Chief Constable to be in place on an interim basis, in order to provide for consistency in leadership.

The recruitment of Chief Constables is a matter for locally elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). Schedule 8 to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 sets out the requirements that PCCs must follow when appointing a Chief Constable. This includes a requirement for the local Police and Crime Panel to review and report on the proposed appointment, as well as the Panel's right to veto the proposed appointment with a two-thirds majority. PCCs should use the national guidance set out by the College of Policing for appointing chief officers, which includes advice on encouraging applications and generating a strong and diverse pool of applicants.

■ Wildlife: Crime

Vikki Slade:

[\[3633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) making wildlife crimes notifiable and (b) including them in national crime statistics.

Dame Diana Johnson:

There are no plans currently to make all wildlife crimes notifiable and consequentially to include in the national crime statistics. Any non-notifiable wildlife crime reported to police can still be investigated where appropriate, as Chief Constables have operational independence to tackle the crimes that matter most to their communities.

This Government recognises the importance of tackling wildlife crime, which is why, along with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Home Office directly funds the National Wildlife Crime Unit to help tackle these crimes.

The National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) provides intelligence, analysis and investigative assistance to the police and other law enforcement agencies across the UK to support them in investigating wildlife crime. This includes supporting cases referred by Border Force to the National Crime Agency or to individual forces. The NWCU is also the UK policing focal point for EUROPOL and INTERPOL wildlife crime activity. The NWCU uses this information to produce strategic and tactical assessments of wildlife crime across the UK.

■ Youth Centres

Sir John Hayes:

[\[2733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timetable is for publishing details of the locations of youth hubs.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to rolling out a network of Young Futures Hubs which will bring together local services to improve the delivery of support for young people at risk of being drawn into crime or facing mental health challenges.

We will require input and expertise from across the sector to design these hubs and will be engaging with local communities, the police, charities and other key partners over the coming weeks to seek views on the design of the programme and explore options for their delivery. This will include considerations around their location and how best to engage with those young people who would benefit most from the support.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing****David Simmonds:**[\[3265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is her policy to maintain the 10-unit threshold for affordable housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government are not proposing to change Paragraph 65 of the National Planning Policy Framework which makes clear that provision of affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments, other than in designated rural areas (where policies may set out a lower threshold of 5 units or fewer).

■ Affordable Housing: Construction**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[2993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many affordable homes were delivered through the Affordable Homes Programme in England between 2016 and 2023.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:[\[2995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the number of affordable homes that are being delivered through the Affordable Homes Programme 2016-2023 in London; what the original targets were; and what assessment (a) her Department and (b) Homes England have made of the effectiveness of the Greater London Authority at completing new affordable housing under this programme.

Matthew Pennycook:

The previous government set a target for the 2016-23 Affordable Homes Programme to deliver around 250,000 affordable homes, including at least 116,000 homes in London. Around 244,000 new housing starts had been delivered by the 2016-23 Affordable Homes Programme by March 2023. In August 2023, the GLA reported that 116,782 homes were started in London from April 2015 to March 2023.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:[\[2997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the written ministerial statement of 30 July 2024 entitled Building the homes we need, HCWS48, what changes have been made to the (a) estimated number of new affordable units, (b) the tenure, and (c) completion dates, relative to the original targets for the 2021-26 Affordable Housing Programme in London.

Matthew Pennycook:

In 2020, the previous government announced that the 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme would achieve “up to 180,000 homes, should economic conditions allow”. Upon taking office, this Government discovered that the 2021-26 AHP is now

expected to deliver between 110,000 and 130,000 affordable homes, broken down as follows:

- a. At least 40,000 social rent homes
- b. 44,000 – 56,000 affordable homes for ownership
- c. 5% of delivery for supported housing
- d. 5% – 10% of Homes England delivery for rural housing

In July, we announced a year's extension to the completions deadline of homes built in London through the programme, from March 2029 to March 2030.

■ Affordable Housing: York Outer

Mr Luke Charters: [\[3886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will visit proposed housing developments in York Outer constituency to discuss affordable housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

I will happily consider whether a future visit to a housing development in York Outer constituency to discuss affordable housing will be possible.

■ Building Regulations: Windows

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[2989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will amend building regulations to allow new homes to be built with openable sash windows.

Rushanara Ali:

Whilst there could be some situations where, for safety reasons, designers may choose to restrict window opening, the Building Regulations do not preclude the inclusion of openable sash windows in new homes.

■ Change of Use

Jayne Kirkham: [\[4136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to alter planning regulations to require permission for changes from residential use class to a new short term let use class.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer I gave to Question UIN [426](#) on 26 July 2024.

■ Clarion Housing Group: Standards

Uma Kumaran: [\[3607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will request an update from the Regulator for Social Housing on progress it has made on (a) its investigation into the collective complaint against Clarion House Group submitted by Stratford and Bow constituents in September 2023 and (b) steps taken following the meeting with a group of residents in December 2023.

Uma Kumaran: [\[3608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the letter from the then Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to the Chief Executive of Clarion Housing Group of November 2022, regarding maladministration notices and the treatment of its tenants, what steps the then Secretary of State took in response to a petition from tenants of Clarion Housing Group requesting that he ask the Regulator for Social Housing investigate the organisation's poor performance in relation to (a) repairs, (b) services, (c) housing management and (d) value for money.

Uma Kumaran: [\[3609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the letter from the then Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to the Chief Executive of Clarion Housing Group of November 2022, regarding maladministration notices and the treatment of its tenants, what steps her Department took to ensure that the Clarion Housing Group improved the standards of its (a) housing management, (b) repairs services and (c) value for money for (i) its residents and (ii) the Exchequer.

Matthew Pennycook:

All registered providers of social housing must meet the outcomes of the standards set by the independent Regulator of Social Housing and ensure they provide their tenants with safe and decent homes.

In February 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing concluded its review of the issues raised in the complaint submitted by Stratford and Bow constituents and from a subsequent meeting with a group of residents. Following consideration of the issues, the Regulator concluded that Clarion had not breached the consumer standards. The Regulator has subsequently carried out routine engagement with Clarion, and no similar issues relating to Stratford and Bow have been raised during this time. Following the introduction of the proactive regulatory regime on 1 April 2024, Clarion is subject to a regulatory inspection at least every four years. The Regulator can also respond to any further issues brought to its attention.

Following the publication of the Housing Ombudsman's findings relating to Clarion's performance, the previous administration wrote to Clarion to seek assurances that they were taking appropriate action. The Housing Ombudsman Service engaged with Clarion following the findings to ensure that the issues identified were resolved.

The Government intends to monitor closely Clarion's performance.

■ Combined Authorities

Shaun Davies:

[\[3319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what powers combined authorities have to expand; what criteria they need to fulfil to expand; what consent from other public bodies will be required for expansion; and what the timescales are for such expansions.

Jim McMahon:

The process for combined authority expansion is set out in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. A combined authority must apply to the Secretary of State regarding their proposal to expand. There must be a public consultation on that proposal across the whole of the proposed expanded area. The legislation sets out the consent criteria for expansion which will depend on the nature of the proposal. The timescales for expansions are subject to this process, along with Parliamentary timescales for approval of the required secondary legislation and will therefore vary for any combined authority seeking to expand. We will consider all aspects of devolution and Combined Authorities in the landmark English Devolution Bill.

■ Community Assets

David Simmonds:

[\[3256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, who would be responsible for determining the sale price of a property under Community Right to Buy.

Alex Norris:

The government recognises the vital importance of high streets and community spaces and is committed to supporting them to thrive across the country. As part of this, we are developing proposals to introduce a Community Right to Buy which will empower local people to preserve the places and spaces important to them.

My department is working hard to consider the most effective and balanced valuation method as part of these proposals and will provide more detail on how this will work in due course.

■ Community Ownership Fund

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[4016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what was the outcome of applications to the Community Ownership Fund, Round 3.

Alex Norris:

Announcements were made on Round 3 Window 1 of the Community Ownership Fund on 25 September 2023, Window 2 on 22 December 2023 and Window 3 on 23 March 2024. A full list of successful bidders can be found [here](#).

■ Community Relations**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:****[2987]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to promote integration, in the context of the public disorder in August 2024.

Alex Norris:

The Government and justice system have taken decisive steps to address the disgraceful violent disorder that was seen in a number of towns and cities in August and we have now seen 1,280 people arrested and over 570 appearances in court which has provided a strong deterrent and demonstrated our determination to keep people safe and restore order.

The Government is determined that we now support the recovery of the towns and cities affected, and also invest in community cohesion. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is leading cross-Government efforts to help places recover – working in partnership with communities and local stakeholders to rebuild, renew and address deep-seated issues. Alongside this the Home Secretary has ordered a rapid review of extremism to ensure the strongest possible response to ideologies that erode community cohesion and our democracy.

■ Compulsory Purchase**Munira Wilson:****[3108]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page 17 of the Kings Speech 2024 background briefing notes, published on 17 July 2024, what her planned timetable is for delivering proposed reforms to compulsory purchase compensation rules.

Matthew Pennycook:

Announcements on the timing of the introduction of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill will be made in the normal way in due course.

■ Council Tax**Shaun Davies:****[R] [3312]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will allow upper tier councils to increase council tax by a set cash amount.

Jim McMahon:

Council tax levels are decided by individual local authorities. Decisions on future local authority funding will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement.

■ Council Tax: Single People**Mark Garnier:**[\[4202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on the single-person discounts on council tax for single (a) pension and (b) working households; and what the forecast discount is for the next five financial years.

Jim McMahon:

For both pension-age and working-age households, where there is only one liable adult resident in a property, the council tax bill is reduced by 25%. The Government will carefully consider the impact on councils and taxpayers, before making any future decisions on council tax. The Government is committed to keeping taxes on working people as low as possible.

■ Devolution: East of England**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[2991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the status is of the (a) Suffolk and (b) Norfolk devolution deal; and what type of local elections will take place in those local authorities in May 2025.

Jim McMahon:

English devolution underpins this government's national mission to deliver economic growth for everyone, everywhere, raising living standards across the UK. We are determined to push power out of Whitehall and into the hands of local people who have skin in the game. Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council agreed outline devolution deals with the previous government, which were put on hold over the general election. My department is reviewing existing programmes of work, including the Norfolk and Suffolk devolution deals, and will work closely with local stakeholders.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[3145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of abolishing the requirement for identification at polling stations.

Charlotte Nichols:[\[3150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people were turned away from polling stations due to lack of voter identification on 4 July 2024.

Charlotte Nichols:[\[3154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to remove the requirement for photo ID at elections.

Blair McDougall:[\[3368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to investigate the causes of delays to the delivery of postal votes during the 2024 General Election.

Melanie Ward:[\[3560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to commission a lessons learned review with local authorities following the late arrival of postal votes in the 2024 General Election.

Alex Norris:

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

In line with our manifesto commitments, we will carefully review the voter ID rules and evaluate how they impacted citizens during the General Election before bringing forward firm proposals for reform in due course. This will of course include full consideration of the Electoral Commission's findings.

With regard to postal voting at the 2024 General Election, I refer my Hon Friend to the answer given to Question UIN [199](#) on 26 July 2024.

■ Energy: Infrastructure**David Simmonds:**[\[3259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate her Department has made of the number of planning officers needed to manage Development Consent Orders for energy infrastructure under the 2030 decarbonisation target.

Matthew Pennycook:

Examining Development Consent Orders for energy projects is one of a range of workstreams which the Planning Inspectorate will need to undertake. As part of the Spending Review, the Planning Inspectorate is considering the overall funding and resources it will require over the spending review period and will work closely with MHCLG on priorities and available funding.

■ Facilities: Business Premises

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[2932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to (a) support and (b) promote the adoption of larger (i) changing room and (ii) toilet facilities on private business premises.

Rushanara Ali:

[Regulation 24](#) in the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 states that where facilities are provided in the workplace to change clothing, that these facilities are easily accessible and of sufficient capacity. Additional guidance for changing facilities in specific settings is provided by Sport England ([Accessible and inclusive sports facilities](#)) and NHS England ([Health Building Note 00-02: Sanitary spaces](#)). To meet Part M (the access to and use of buildings) of the [Building Regulations 2010](#), guidance on providing wheelchair-accessible changing and showering facilities is provided in [Approved Document M](#), Volume 2.

[Legislation](#) was laid in Parliament in May 2024 to update the Building Regulations 2010 by setting out toilet requirements in new non-domestic buildings in England. These changes will come into force on 1 October 2024. This followed an extensive [public consultation](#) as well as commissioned research on the inclusive design of toilet facilities. The guidance ([Approved Document T](#)) accompanying the update to the regulations sets out the dimensions and layouts of toilet arrangements that are considered appropriate to meet a range of needs. Toilets for disabled people and Changing Places toilet guidance remains in Approved Document, Volume 2.

Both the department and the Building Safety Regulator are always open to feedback on how any regulations are operating in practice.

■ Floods: Government Assistance

Helen Morgan: [\[3835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to reform the eligibility criteria for the Flood Recovery Framework to include more (a) households and (b) businesses that have experienced flooding.

Alex Norris:

A post activation review of the Flood Recovery Framework is underway and I expect this to report in the Autumn.

■ Garages and Petrol Stations and Parking: Land Use

David Simmonds: [\[3266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance her Department has issued on the planning classification of a disused (a) petrol station and (b) car park as (i) brownfield and (ii) greenfield land.

Matthew Pennycook:

The definition of previously developed land is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The definition sets out some specific exceptions, including residential gardens in built up areas. The Government's proposed reforms to the NPPF include relaxing the restrictions that are currently applied to Previously Developed Land (PDL) and limited infilling in the Green Belt in paragraph 154g of the current NPPF, to make clear that development is 'not inappropriate' where it would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The requirements of our golden rules are intended to apply to release of PDL.

■ **Green Belt****Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[2982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's open consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 2 August 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of setting benchmark land values for greenbelt land on land prices.

Matthew Pennycook:

We will carefully analyse responses to the consultation in question, which is open until 24 September 2024.

■ **Health****Munira Wilson:**[\[3109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's open consultation entitled proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 2 August 2024, what steps she plans to take to help local authorities promote healthy living.

Matthew Pennycook:

As part of the consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, we are seeking views on how national planning policy could better support local authorities in promoting healthy communities, and specifically, in tackling childhood obesity.

The Framework already expects policies at the local level to aim to achieve healthy places. We are considering how to ensure a more consistent approach is taken, for example, in relation to controlling hot food takeaways near schools.

The consultation is open until 24 September and we will use the responses we receive to inform future steps.

■ Help to Buy Scheme**Sir Christopher Chope:****[4169]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many Help to Buy loan repayment applications are being processed; and how many and what proportion of these applications have been outstanding for more than (a) three and (b) six months.

Matthew Pennycook:

Data is publicly available in the Homes England annual report on the total redemptions for each year:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a76e0808eaf43b50d887/Homes_England_Annual_Report_and_Financial_Statements_2023_to_2024.pdf pg 79

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention**Mike Amesbury:****[3068]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department is taking steps to accelerate Government-funded remediation schemes in the context of the major fire incident in Dagenham on 26 August 2024; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including non-cladding internal life-critical fire safety defects within the scope of Government-funded remediation schemes.

Rushanara Ali:

Speeding up the remediation of buildings is absolutely critical. Seven years on from Grenfell, action has been far too slow and the fire in Dagenham is a horrific reminder of the risk unsafe cladding still poses to far too many people. This Government will expect more from regulators to make sure action is being taken now to make homes safe, speed up remediation and ensure that buildings in the process of being remediated are managed safely for residents. Alongside taking action to increase the pace of remediation, we are also committed to better protect leaseholders from the costs of remediation. Following consideration of the phase 2 report of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, we will announce further measures to accelerate remediation and protect leaseholders.

Torsten Bell:**[3355]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the remedial work on buildings with (a) faulty cladding systems and (b) defects in compartmentalisation (i) includes independent verification of the (A) suitability and (B) longevity of the solutions and (ii) is otherwise effectively quality assured.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government is committed to ensuring that historic, life-critical fire safety defects in affected buildings are addressed. Our remediation programmes have processes in place to ensure that work is done to the appropriate standard and is remedied if not.

While the specific controls and assurances of remediation programmes differ, both developers and applicants to government remediation funds must provide a Fire Risk Appraisal of the External Walls (FRAEW), which will assess risks and recommend remedial works to address these risks where necessary. These are carried out by independent Fire Risk Assessors and robust processes are in place to assess the FRAEWs submitted.

All remedial works must also obtain Building Control approval which provides independent assurance that the works comply with Building Regulations.

■ Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Bob Blackman:

[2853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to update the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Mary Glendon:

[2897]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to support local authorities to provide temporary accommodation services alongside local authorities' efforts to increase housing supply in line with mandatory house building targets.

Mary Glendon:

[2898]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment her Department has made of the sustainability of the homelessness sector.

Rushanara Ali:

Homelessness levels are far too high. We must address this and deliver long term solutions. The Government will look at these issues carefully and will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with mayors, councils and key stakeholders 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. This includes delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation, building 1.5 million new homes over the next parliament, and abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions which will prevent private renters being exploited and discriminated against and empower people to challenge unreasonable rent increases. The Government has also confirmed £450 million for a third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund which will support local authorities to obtain better quality temporary accommodation for homeless families. The Government continues to support councils to deliver the Homelessness Reduction Act, including through the £440 million Homelessness Prevention Grant in 2024/25.

■ Housing

Alex Mayer:

[3412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data her Department holds on the (a) number of units of housing stock, (b) population and (c) area in square miles in each local planning authority area.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Ministry publishes an annual release entitled 'Dwelling Stock Estimates, England', with estimates of the number of dwellings in each local authority, as at 31 March in each year since 2001, shown in Live Table 125 at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

The statistics use the Census as a baseline and apply annual net changes to the dwelling stock as measured by the related Housing supply: net additional dwellings statistics (which is collected for each local authority district, resulting in complete coverage for England).

The Ministry does not collect or hold dwelling stock estimates for those Local Planning Authorities that are National Parks or development corporations.

The Office for National Statistics hold and publish data on population and area in various administrative geographies at the following links.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>

<https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/>

■ Housing: Construction

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[2996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the written ministerial statement of 30 July 2024 entitled Building the homes we need, HCWS48, if she will publish a list of the numerical reduction in the local housing target over this Parliament as a result of the abolition of the urban uplift in each relevant local authority area.

Matthew Pennycook:

The proposed changes to local housing need figures for each local authority are set out in the 'Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system' consultation documents. These can be found at gov.uk.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[3007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the impact of current building regulations on the feasibility of high density, new build, terraced housing in urban areas.

Matthew Pennycook:

Building Regulations set out the standards to which new homes must be built. They do not prescribe density or form of housing.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:[\[3011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will commence the street votes programme through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is still reviewing its policy inheritance from the last Government, including in relation to street votes.

David Simmonds:[\[3249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on the protection of residential gardens from development.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government expects local planning authorities to consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area.

David Simmonds:[\[3252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what metrics she plans to use to monitor the building of 1.5 million homes in this Parliament; and whether she will monitor housing (a) starts and (b) completions.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to building 1.5 million homes over the duration of the parliament. We will update Parliament on our progress in the usual manner. The Ministry publishes a quarterly release entitled 'Housing supply: Indicators of New Supply, England', which includes estimates of new build starts and completions, by local authority, in each financial year since 1980-81, shown in Live Table 253 at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building>. Live tables on housing supply: net additional dwellings. The latest data tables on housing supply: net additional dwellings.

■ Housing: Cornwall**Ben Maguire:**[\[3644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions her Department has held with Natural England on the effect of nutrient neutrality rules on new housebuilding projects in the River Camel catchment Special Area of Conservation.

Matthew Pennycook:

MHCLG continues to work closely with Natural England on the issue of nutrient neutrality across England. Engagement takes place regularly with Natural England

and affected local authorities through the Planning Advisory Service - Nutrient Network.

The Government will implement solutions to unlock the building of homes affected by nutrient neutrality without weakening environmental protections. We will work with nature delivery organisations, stakeholders and the sector to determine the best way forward. We will only act in legislation where we can confirm to Parliament that the steps we are taking will deliver positive environmental outcomes.

■ Housing: Greater London

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[3005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the number of new homes that were built in London in the last five years.

Matthew Pennycook:

Overall housing delivery in London is currently averaging 37,200 net additions a year (2019-2023).

This is below existing London Plan targets of 52k per year. Under the Government's proposed new method for calculating housing need, London would have a target of delivering 80,693 homes a year (an increase of 117%).

The Government is committed to working in partnership with the Mayor of London, boroughs, and the sector to significantly increase housing delivery in the capital.

■ Internal Drainage Boards: Finance

Sir John Hayes: [\[2740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to include long-term funding for internal drainage boards as part of the local government finance settlement for the 2025-2026 financial year.

Jim McMahon:

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

■ Leasehold: Older People

Gregory Stafford: [\[3655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to financially protect leaseholding pensioners in independent retirement living facilities from (a) maintenance and (b) ground rents.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government will act quickly to provide leasehold homeowners, including where relevant those living in retirement housing, with greater rights, powers and protections over their homes by implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold

Reform Act 2024. We will also take action to tackle unregulated and unaffordable ground rent charges.

■ Leasehold: Property Management Companies

Andrew Rosindell: [\[2767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to regulate services provided by management agencies to leaseholders.

Mr Richard Holden: [\[3163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has to reform the leasehold system for residential property; and whether she has a planned timetable for such reforms.

Andrew Cooper: [\[3526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of abolishing leaseholds for existing homeowners.

Matthew Pennycook:

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

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

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

■ Levelling Up Fund

Graham Leadbitter: [\[3603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is her policy to keep the allocations of funding set out in her Department's guidance on Levelling Up Fund Round 3: explanatory and methodology note on the decision-making process, published on 20 November 2023.

Alex Norris:

The Chancellor's July 'Public Spending: Inheritance' speech forecasted an overspend of £21.9 billion above limits set by the Treasury in the Spring. We understand that will have caused uncertainty about the status of some projects and the challenge that presents locally. We must, however, ensure that we are making responsible decisions on public spending. Decisions that have fallen on this government to take. 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.

Local Development Orders**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[3010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on promoting the use of Local Development Orders by local planning authorities.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local development orders are an important tool to enable local planning authorities to proactively grant planning permission for specific developments or classes of development.

The National Planning Policy Framework encourages local planning authorities to use local development orders for particular areas or categories of development where the impacts would be acceptable, and in particular where this development would promote economic, social or environmental gains for the area.

The Planning Advisory Service has also published best practice guidance on the use of local development orders and we encourage local planning authorities to take advantage of this guidance.

Local Government Finance**Shaun Davies:**[\[R\]](#) [\[3303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ensure that up to date population data is used to determine (a) local government, (b) police and (c) fire authority grant funding.

Jim McMahon:

We understand that improving how local government is funded is crucial to enabling councils to deliver for local residents and ensuring we can deliver our missions. We are committed to delivering a multiyear settlement in this Parliament giving certainty on allocations going forward. The department will work with local government leaders to ensure they are better able to fulfil their statutory duties.

Graham Leadbitter:[\[3602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the policy paper entitled Our Long-Term Plan for Towns, published on 1 October 2023, whether it is her policy to continue the £20 million endowment-style fund for each town.

Alex Norris:

This Government is committed to delivering growth in every corner of the country, by empowering communities to find local solutions to national priorities. However, as you will appreciate, the Government has inherited an extremely difficult fiscal environment and has a responsibility to fix the foundations of our economy, to ensure economic stability.

The department will set out further details on funding, next steps, and confirmation of the revised timelines in due course.

Local Government: Devolution**David Simmonds:**[\[3261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she will publish the new devolution framework for England.

Jim McMahon:

The Secretary of State wrote to local leaders on 16 July 2024 to confirm that the government will publish a new devolution framework. The King's Speech confirmed on 17 July that the English Devolution Bill will put the new framework into legislation. MHCLG is now working across Whitehall and with Mayors to develop the content of the new framework. The new framework will be developed in co-operation with the sector and will be published in due course.

Local Housing Allowance**Ayoub Khan:**[\[4159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on levels of local housing allowance.

Rushanara Ali:

Ministers and officials in the department have regular conversations with counterparts in the DWP on a range of issues.

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) was restored to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024 for one year.

Any future decisions on LHA will be taken in the context of the Government's housing priorities and the fiscal situation.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Environment Protection**David Simmonds:**[\[3250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 26 July 2024, to Question 1315, on Environmental protection, what her planned timetable is for replacing legacy legislation on environmental assessment with the new outcome reporting regime.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [1315](#) on 26 July 2024.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Flags**David Simmonds:**[\[3254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what flags she plans to fly outside her Department other than the Union flag in the next 12 months; and on which days each flag will be flown.

Alex Norris:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is a minor tenant in the buildings it occupies. At only one, the Department's second HQ at Wolverhampton, does it control of what flags are flown. In the next 12 months at the Wolverhampton HQ, the Ministry will fly flags in addition to the Union flag to mark events of national and international significance, as directed by the Department of Culture, Media and Sports Ceremonial Team.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Marketing**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[2975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much was spent on (a) communications, (b) stationery and business cards, (c) IT and websites and (d) new signage when her Department changed its name to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by each item of spend; and whether her Department made an assessment of the potential merits of re-using previous MHCLG signage and materials.

Alex Norris:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer give to Question UIN [1329](#) on 31 July 2024.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Consultation**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[3001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which of her Department's closed consultations have not received a formal Government response.

Alex Norris:

No consultations issued by this department since the new government was formed have yet closed. We are committed to responding in a timely manner to all consultations, as a mark of respect to those who take the time to contribute to the development of policy in this way.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Remote Working

David Simmonds:

[\[3260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether civil servants in her Department are required to be in the office for at least 60% of their work time.

Alex Norris:

The department expects staff to work toward attending the office or other premises for official business for 60% of their working time. Some of our offices cannot currently accommodate this level of attendance and lower expectations are therefore in place.

■ National Security

Phil Brickell:

[\[3408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether (a) the sprint review of security threats and (b) the Defending Democracy Task Force will consider risks created by weaknesses in (i) the UK's laws on political finance laws and (ii) their enforcement.

Alex Norris:

Effective regulation and enforcement of political finance are crucial for maintaining public trust in our electoral systems and combatting the threat of foreign interference in our democracy. Which is why, as set out in our manifesto, the Government is committed to strengthening our democracy and upholding the integrity of elections. As part of this, the Government intends to strengthen the rules around donations to political parties to protect our democracy. My department is developing proposals to give effect to this commitment, and we will continue to work closely with the Defending Democracy Taskforce, of which MHCLG is a member, and the national security community on this.

■ New Towns Taskforce

David Simmonds:

[\[3243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Expert taskforce to spearhead a new generation of new towns, published on 31 July 2024, what the remuneration for (a) Dame Kate Barker and (b) Sir Michael Lyons is; what the terms of reference were for their appointment; if she will publish any declaration of interests; and whether they have made any declaration of political activity.

David Simmonds:

[\[3244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's policy statement on new towns, published on 31 July 2024, what her target is for the number of new homes that will be completed in this Parliament under the New Towns programme.

David Simmonds:

[\[3245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's policy statement on new towns, published on 31 July 2024, whether the support of (a) the local planning authority and (b) local MPs will be a requirement for a new town proposal being taken forward.

Matthew Pennycook:

We are committed to delivering a new generation of new towns, with locations informed by the recommendations of an independent, expert New Towns Taskforce. New towns will include large-scale new communities built on greenfield land and separated from other nearby settlements, but also a larger number of urban extensions and urban regeneration schemes. Each new settlement will contain at least 10,000 homes, although we expect a number to be far larger in size. Collectively, we expect they could provide hundreds of thousands more homes in the decades to come, with some homes delivered within this Parliament. Any assessment of how many homes will be delivered within this Parliament will need to be informed by the locations selected, in line with the recommendations of the Taskforce.

In relation to engaging local communities, we have been clear that the Taskforce will work in partnership with local leaders and communities wherever possible, but its selection of sites will be made in the national interest. New towns will be delivered in partnership with local leaders and communities. We will set out further details of the Taskforce in the coming weeks, ahead of the appointment of the other Taskforce members and its first meeting in the autumn.

■ **New Towns: Disclosure of Information**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[3008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release on new towns, published on 31 July 2024, at what time the press release was issued by her Department under embargo to the media; and for what reason the announcement was made online and not to Parliament.

Matthew Pennycook:

It has always been the Government's intention to provide an update to the House on the New Towns Taskforce. However, the House was not sitting on 31 July. We will provide an update in the usual manner in due course.

■ **Parish and Town Councils**

David Simmonds:

[\[3258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating more (a) town and (b) parish councils.

Alex Norris:

The Government is committed to promoting local democracy and community empowerment. Parish and town councils are the first tier of local government, often playing a vital role in community engagement and delivering local services. The power to create parish councils is devolved to local authorities and the communities they serve through the community governance review process.

■ **Park Homes: Sales****Mr Joshua Reynolds:**[\[3641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's report entitled The impact of a change in the maximum park home sale commission, published on 16 June 2022, whether her Department has taken steps to review the efficacy of local authority enforcement for parks; and whether she plans to introduce a national enforcement body.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [1177](#) on 31 July 2024.

■ **Parking: Private Sector****Blair McDougall:**[\[3360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing regulatory scrutiny of private parking companies.

Julia Buckley:[\[3493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to reintroduce a statutory Private Parking Code of Practice.

Alex Norris:

The Government will set out its plans for regulation of the private parking industry in due course.

■ **Permitted Development Rights****Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[2983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to update the guidance note published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, entitled Permitted development rights for householders: technical guidance, updated on 10 September 2019.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government will continue to keep the 'Permitted development rights for householders: technical guidance' under review.

■ Planning Authorities: Staff**David Simmonds:** [\[3264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the recruitment of 300 new planning officers will begin.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [1007](#) on 25 July 2024.

■ Planning Permission**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[2992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to make the reuse and recycling of materials a material consideration in the granting of planning permission for a replacement building; and what her policy is on local authorities adopting such regulatory requirements.

Matthew Pennycook:

The National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW), which is a material consideration in planning decisions, already includes policies on the reuse and recycling of materials when considering development proposals.

Paragraph 8 sets out that when determining planning applications for non-waste development, local planning authorities should, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities, ensure that the handling of waste arising from the construction and operation of development maximises reuse and recovery opportunities, and minimises off-site disposal.

The planning practice guidance for waste include further advice on this matter.

In addition, chapter 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines further policy to support the consideration and use of recycled materials.

■ Planning Permission: Fees and Charges**David Simmonds:** [\[3253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 30 July 2024, what (a) changes she plans to make to planning fees and (b) the total planning fees would be for a (i) lawful development certificate and (ii) retrospective planning application for a householder development.

Matthew Pennycook:

The consultation in question includes proposals to increase householder fees and other planning fees. We will consider the responses received and use them to inform continued policy development.

■ Planning: Equality

David Simmonds:

[\[3247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to issue guidance on equality, diversity and inclusion in planning.

Matthew Pennycook:

This Government is committed to ensuring that planning decisions reflect the diverse needs of local communities. National planning policy already sets out the need to assess and meet the requirements of different groups, and we are consulting on proposed changes that will strengthen this, such as requiring stronger consideration of those in need of social housing. Any changes to the NPPF also undergo Equalities Impact Assessments in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010.

■ Private Education: Business Rates and VAT

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[2980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page eight of HM Treasury's technical note entitled Applying VAT to Private School Fees and Removing the Business Rates Charitable Rates Relief for Private Schools, what provisions will be included in the Local Government Finance Bill.

Jim McMahon:

The business rates policy change will be legislated for through a Local Government Finance Bill led by the Ministry of 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. As set out in the technical note, the VAT policy change will be legislated for in the Finance Bill, which will be introduced following the Budget.

■ Private Rented Housing

David Simmonds:

[\[3263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of her proposed regulatory changes on the private rented sector in relation to (a) the level of rents for new tenancies and (b) the supply of homes available on the market for private rent.

Matthew Pennycook:

An impact assessment for the regulatory changes proposed in the forthcoming Renters' Rights Bill will be published in the usual way.

Carla Denyer:

[\[3388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to bring forward legislative proposals on renters' rights.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Bill will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time allows.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Construction****Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[2994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on build to rent; and what assessment she has made of the impact of her policies on private rented sector regulation on future investment in the build to rent sector.

Matthew Pennycook:

This government is supportive of the Build to Rent sector and wants it to grow further. We do not expect our forthcoming Renters' Rights Bill to have a destabilising effect on the rental market and will continue to work with good landlords and their representative associations throughout implementation.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Evictions****Mike Amesbury:**[\[3064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of recent trends in the number of Section 21 notices that have been issued in (a) the UK, (b) the North West and (c) Runcorn and Helsby Constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

Figures relating to Section 21 eviction proceedings in individual constituencies in England are not held by the department, but we know that chronic insecurity in the private rented sector in the North West have real-life consequences for individuals and families. Tenants across England will benefit from the measures in the forthcoming Renters' Rights Bill, including the abolition of Section 21 evictions.

Housing policy is devolved in Scotland and Wales.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Licensing****Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[2985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to amend the guidance by her Department entitled Selective licensing in the private rented sector: a guide for local authorities, published on 20 June 2023.

Matthew Pennycook:

The non-statutory guidance in question is currently up to date. The Government will update it should we decide to make any changes to the use of selective licensing.

■ Private Rented Housing: Pets

Bob Blackman:

[2850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Renter's Rights Bill, what guidance she plans to issue landlords on ensuring tenants obtain insurance against damage by a pet.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government will issue appropriate guidance to landlords and tenants to ensure they understand how to comply with the forthcoming legislation in question in due course.

■ Railway Stations: Cheadle

Tom Morrison:

[R] [3385]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the proposed train station in Cheadle will continue.

Alex Norris:

The proposed train station in Cheadle forms part of the £13.9 million Cheadle Town Deal agreed by the previous government. All Town Deal business cases have been approved and all funding is fully committed, with the expectation that funding recipients will have invested the entirety of their allocation by March 2026. The Chancellor has set out a path to confirming plans for this year and next at the forthcoming Budget on October 30th. We understand that this will have caused uncertainty about the status of some projects and the challenge that it presents locally; however, this Government must be sure to make responsible decisions on public spending. During this time my officials will continue to work with local authorities and across government to help resolve any delivery issues that may arise, including with the Stockport Council and the Department for Transport (DfT).

■ Recreation Spaces

Munira Wilson:

[3110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's open consultation entitled proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 2 August 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending compulsory purchase compensation rules to allow local authorities to procure land for use as (a) parks and (b) playing fields.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities have powers under the Local Government Act 1972, Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Education Act 1996 to compulsory purchase land for parks and playing fields providing there is a compelling case in the public interest. Compensation paid will reflect open market value. Under compensation rules, any increase or decrease in value caused by the compulsory purchase must be discounted from the open market value of the land taken.

Local authorities acquiring land under the Education Act 1996 can seek directions from the Secretary of State to remove 'hope value' from compensation where justified in the public interest. They can also seek directions to remove hope value when acquiring land under the Local Government Act 1972 or Town and Country Planning Act 1990 providing the use of the land will include provision of affordable housing. For example, a mixed-use scheme including mixed tenure housing, parks, open spaces.

Further reform of compulsory purchase compensation rules will be included in the forthcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill. Announcements on the timing of that Bill will be made in the normal way in due course.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[2986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of re-introducing (a) regional planning guidance and (b) regional spatial strategies.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has not made a recent assessment of the potential merits of re-introducing regional planning guidance or regional spatial strategies.

David Simmonds: [\[3262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she will publish the consultation on the scope and content of National Development Management Policies.

Matthew Pennycook:

A consultation on National Development Management Policies is under development and it will be launched in due course.

■ Road Signs and Markings

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[3012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to bring forward secondary legislation on street naming under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023; and whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing people to vote on changes to the name of their street.

Matthew Pennycook:

Section 81 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 replaced the previously inconsistent arrangements for the renaming of streets. It enables local authorities to make changes to street names if they determine they command 'sufficient local support' and sets an expectation of local engagement prior to any change. The Government intends to monitor the operation of these arrangements with a view to assessing the case for secondary legislation.

■ Social Rented Housing

Andrew Rosindell: [2772]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ensure that British citizens are prioritised in social housing allocation.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [2988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 2 August 2023 to Question 1758 on Social Rented Housing, what assessment she made of the potential merits of implementing the proposed changes on requiring a (a) local and (b) UK connection for social housing.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [2990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 2 August 2023 to Question 1758, on Social Rented Housing, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of restricting access to social housing for people connected with (a) terrorism and (b) criminality.

David Simmonds: [3255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 2 August 2024 to Question 1758 on Social Rented Housing, whether she made an assessment of the potential merits of restricting social housing allocations for people convicted of (a) anti-social behaviour and (b) terrorism.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government published a response to the consultation on reforms to social housing allocations on 2 September. It is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-reforms-to-social-housing-allocations/outcome/government-response-to-the-consultation-on-changes-to-social-housing-allocation-tests>

Mr Peter Bedford: [3634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to increase the supply of social rented homes.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. Our aspiration is to ensure that, in the first full financial year of this Parliament (2025-26), the number of Social Rent homes is rising rather than falling.

Our proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework include setting a clear expectation that housing needs assessments must consider the needs of those requiring Social Rent homes, and that local authorities should specify their expectations on Social Rent delivery as part of broader affordable housing policies.

We have asked Homes England and the Greater London Authority to maximise the number of Social Rent homes in allocating the remaining Affordable Homes

Programme funding. The Government has started to review the increased Right to Buy discounts introduced in 2012, on which we will bring forward more details and secondary legislation to implement changes in the autumn. We have also announced new flexibilities for how councils can use their Right to Buy receipts to deliver replacement homes; these flexibilities will be in place for an initial 24 months, subject to review.

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

Andrew Griffith: [4051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her oral contribution of 30 July 2024, Official Report, column 1194, what steps she (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to amend social housing allocation policy to give priority to local residents.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local councils already have necessary powers to give priority to local residents, and most are doing so. In March 2023, 89% of councils had a local connection test and/or a residency test in place.

Responses to the recent consultation on changes to social housing allocation tests made it clear that mandating a local connection test would not add to existing powers that councils have in any meaningful way and would only serve to remove vital flexibility to design and operate qualification tests in a way that best meets the needs of individual local areas.

The response is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-reforms-to-social-housing-allocations/outcome/government-response-to-the-consultation-on-changes-to-social-housing-allocation-tests>.

■ Social Rented Housing: Domestic Abuse

Paula Barker: [2148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department will take to help protect victims of domestic abuse who have joint tenancies in social housing.

Paula Barker: [2150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to ensure that local authorities do not apply local connection tests to victims of domestic abuse.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to ensuring that, where appropriate, barriers preventing vulnerable groups in need from accessing social housing are removed. We will continue to work with stakeholders to support victims of domestic abuse to access social housing, including those who have joint tenancies.

Local housing authorities can adopt local connections tests to determine who qualifies for an allocation of social housing and manage demand within their area. Statutory social housing allocations guidance is clear that local authorities have the power to exempt victims of domestic abuse from any such test. This includes those living in a refuge or other forms of safe temporary accommodation in their district having escaped domestic abuse in another local authority area.

Guidance also encourages local authorities to give priority for social housing to victims and their families who have escaped abuse and are being accommodated in a refuge or temporary accommodation under the reasonable preference (priority) categories. Further, allocations guidance encourages local authorities to give additional preference (high priority) to people who are homeless and require urgent rehousing due to domestic abuse.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Mould**

Bob Blackman:

[\[2851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to avoid duplicating the provisions of the Decent Homes Standard in the application of Awaab's law.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Decent Homes Standard sets minimum quality standards that all social homes should meet. Awaab's Law will not set a new standard for rented homes to meet. Instead, it will set new requirements for landlords to inspect and repair hazards such as damp and mould within a fixed time period, providing tenants with a new route to redress if their landlords fail to take timely action.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Repairs and Maintenance**

Alex Mayer:

[\[3418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of capping tenant contributions to qualifying works set out in section 6 of the Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003.

Matthew Pennycook:

By law all variable service charges, which includes charges to pay for major works under section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, must be reasonable and, where costs relate to works or services, the works or services must be of a reasonable standard. Leaseholders may challenge them at the property tribunal.

Rachel Blake:

[\[3575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will commission independent research into the extent to which repairs to (a) lifts, (b) door entry systems and (c) other communal elements covered by social landlord's annual service charges are being re-charged directly to tenants.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government's policy statement on social housing rents states that Registered Providers of social housing are expected to set reasonable and transparent service charges for tenants that reflect the service being provided. Registered Providers are expected to supply tenants with clear information about how service charges are set, and to consult with tenants if any new or extended services are introduced.

Where there are concerns about the calculation, collection or communication of service charges, tenants may ask the Housing Ombudsman to investigate their complaint.

■ Solar Power: Land Use**Sir John Hayes:**[\[2736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the potential impact of locating large solar farms on agricultural land.

Matthew Pennycook:

I regularly engage with my Ministerial colleagues in Defra and other Government departments about land use change.

The Government are committed to maintaining the existing strong protections that apply to agricultural land to ensure that our mission to deliver clean power by 2030 does not put current levels of food production at risk.

Our plans to boost solar deployment do not endanger the UK's food security. The total area of agricultural land used for solar is very small, and even in the most ambitious scenarios would still occupy less than 1% of the UK's agricultural land.

Each development proposal will continue to be subject to thorough scrutiny, including consideration of land quality and food production.

■ Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023**Bob Blackman:**[\[2852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to implement the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.

Bob Blackman:[\[2854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to implement the provisions of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.

Rushanara Ali:

The government is committed to implementing the measures set out in the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 (the Act) and to ensuring that supported housing residents across England can be certain their housing is good quality, that

the support services they receive are effective and compliant with nationally-set standards, and that schemes provide good value for money for taxpayers.

However it is essential that we get the details right which is why we will consult on the measures including supported housing licencing and national standards, as required by the Act. The government intends to publish a consultation document as soon as possible.

■ **Tower Hamlets Council: Inspections**

Uma Kumaran:

[\[3610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 22 February 2024 on Local Government Stewardship Update, HCWS280, what progress has been made on the Best Value Inspection of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets; and when he expects that inspection to conclude.

Jim McMahon:

The Secretary of State has received the independent Best Value inspection team's report. This is being considered carefully and any next steps will be set out in due course.

■ **Travellers: Caravan Sites**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[2999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 30 July 2024, if the proposed changes to Green Belt policy on traveller sites will be a material consideration for decision-making for (a) planning applications and (b) planning enforcement appeals on unauthorised traveller sites.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[3000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 30 July 2024, whether the proposed changes to traveller planning policy on decision making will be material consideration when a council considers a Temporary Stop Notice.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[3002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 30 July 2024, whether unmet need for traveller sites would constitute grounds for traveller site development in (a) the green belt and (b) open countryside.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[3003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 30 July 2024, whether the absence of a five-year land supply for traveller sites would constitute grounds for traveller site development in the green belt in the context of (a) a local plan and (b) an individual planning decision.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[3004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 30 July 2024, whether increased demand due to the presence of travellers on an unauthorised traveller site would be counted as unmet need.

Matthew Pennycook:

Without changing its purposes or general extent, the Government will take a more strategic approach to Green Belt land designation and release, so that we can build more homes in the right places. Land released in the Green Belt will be subject to new “golden rules” to ensure it delivers in the public interest.

The Government is currently consulting on a number of reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). These include proposals to release low-quality grey belt land within the Green Belt to meet housing and other development needs. We are seeking views on how the proposals under the NPPF would apply to traveller sites, particularly concerning the sequential test to guide release, the definition of grey belt and previously developed land, and proposals that are considered not to be inappropriate development.

The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites sets out that local authorities should produce their own assessment of need and plan to meet this need through their Local Plan.

Local planning authorities have a wide range of enforcement powers, with strong penalties for non-compliance, which they can use to tackle all types of unauthorised development. Our proposals do not impact on these and we will keep the use of them under review.

David Simmonds:

[3248]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planning policy is on (a) authorised and (b) unauthorised traveller sites in the Green Belt.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is currently consulting on a number of reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework. These include proposals to release low-quality grey belt land within the Green Belt to meet housing and other development needs. We are seeking views on how the proposals under the NPPF would apply to traveller sites, particularly concerning the sequential test to guide release, the definition of grey belt

and previously developed land, and proposals that are considered not to be inappropriate development.

The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites sets out that local authorities should produce their own assessment of need and plan to meet this need through their Local Plan.

Local planning authorities have a wide range of enforcement powers, with strong penalties for non-compliance, which they can use to tackle all types of unauthorised development. Our proposals do not impact on these and we will keep the use of them under review.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

David Simmonds:

[\[3257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to hold further rounds of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Alex Norris:

Decisions on funding post March 2025 are a matter for the Budget on October 30th.

We recognise the challenges this brings for some projects. 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. In the meantime, officials remain available to discuss any issues impacting delivery.

JUSTICE

■ **Coroners**

Mark Garnier:

[\[2068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will have discussions with representatives of the Inquest charity on the potential merits of a national oversight mechanism to follow up on the conclusions of (a) inquests and (b) other official investigations into the deaths of people in (i) police custody, (ii) prison custody, (iii) mental health settings, (iv) disasters and (v) other state-related deaths.

Alex Davies-Jones:

We are grateful to INQUEST for their proposal on a National Oversight Mechanism, and will be meeting with them, on this and wider issues, as soon as is practicable.

■ **Hindley Prison: Construction**

Josh Simons:

[\[3329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what her planned timetable is for the expansion of HMP Hindley.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The expansion at HMP Hindley will deliver c.500 places through two new houseblocks, as part of our wider prison build programme. The contract is being finalised and once concluded we expect the construction period to take c.3 years.

Legal Aid Scheme**Mohammad Yasin:**[\[3013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department plans to (a) review and (b) reform civil legal aid.

Heidi Alexander:

We are committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the civil legal aid sector and are keen to work closely with practitioners and their representative bodies to look at how best we can address this.

We want to understand the different ways in which the justice system can be improved and will be carefully considering our options on the way forward. This includes considering the evidence on civil legal aid gathered over the past year.

Ministry of Justice: Communication**Neil O'Brien:**[\[3078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much her Department spent on communications in the last 12 months for which data is available.

Heidi Alexander:

The spend in 2023/24 for the Ministry of Justice's Core Communications team 2023/24 was £8,903,437. This spend covers the staff and non-staff costs for internal communications, strategic communications, campaigns, marketing, external affairs, insight & evaluation, digital communications and our press office. It is worth noting that 2023/24 accounts are still to be audited, so may be subject to change.

Prison Service: Contracts**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[3151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the financial impact of outsourcing within prisons.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

In June 2019, the Ministry of Justice put in place the Prison Operator Services Framework to manage a pipeline of operator competitions for new build prisons, and existing private prisons as they expire. To date, nine operator competitions have been launched via the Framework, with seven contracts awarded. One further contract is due to be awarded in 2024 before the final contract is awarded in 2025.

The aim of all operator competitions is to secure an operator to provide high quality, sustainable, and value for money custodial and maintenance services that are safe, decent, secure, and rehabilitative.

In each competition, bidders are required to set out detailed, high quality, value for money prison specific proposals that must meet minimum quality and financial thresholds. Bids are evaluated against clearly defined quality and financial criteria and a public sector comparator.

All operator competitions to date have delivered savings and provided additional added value when compared against the public sector comparator.

■ Prisoners

Afzal Khan:

[\[3071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners are being held under Imprisonment for the Public Protection sentences in HMP (a) Buckley Hall, (b) Forest Bank, (c) Hindley and (d) Manchester.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The number of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) in HMP Buckley, HMP Hindley, HMP Forest Bank and HMP Manchester, as at 30 June 2024, are set out in the table below.

PRISON	NUMBER OF IPP PRISONERS
Buckley Hall	49
Forest Bank	27
Hindley	18
Manchester	24

Please note:

(1) Figures for the IPP population include both unreleased and recalled IPP prisoners.

(2) The figures in this table have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large-scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

This Government believes it is right that these sentences were abolished and is determined to make further progress towards a safe and sustainable release for those serving the IPP sentence, but not in a way that impacts public protection.

■ Prisoners: Per Capita Costs

Caroline Voaden:

[\[3546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average cost was of (a) a prison place, (b) the supervision of a person on licence following release from prison and (c) the delivery of a community order by the Probation Service in the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Information on the average annual cost per prisoner, cost per prison place and overall prison unit cost for each private and public sector prison in England and Wales is published by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) after the end of each financial year on the gov.uk website.

The overall average cost for running a prison place for a year (*per prison place*) in 2022-23 was £51,724. This information can also be found through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-performance-data-2022-to-2023>.

The Ministry of Justice expects the 2023-24 Prison Unit Cost data to be published in December 2024, once the 2023-24 HMPPS Annual Report & Accounts have been published.

The average cost to the Probation Service in 2023-24 of an additional person on the probation licence caseload (including probation pre-release costs) was estimated at c.£4,500 compared with c.£3,150 for an additional person on the probation court order caseload (community orders and suspended sentence orders). This can be found through the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65537c7d50475b000dc5b590/Sentencing_Bill_-_IA_-_HDC.pdf.

Note that the costs presented exclude some costs to the Ministry of Justice, such as the costs of building prisons, costs not directly tied to changes in probation caseload and MoJ HQ costs.

■ Prisons: Religious Practice**Sarah Owen:****[3802]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure faith and pastoral care guidance for prisoners is being upheld.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government recognises the importance that faith and belief can have in someone's rehabilitation, and the role it can play in reducing re-offending. That is why we have been clear that we should include this in planning and work across prisons and probation, and with communities, to strengthen support available.

Faith and belief services, together with pastoral care in prison in England and Wales, are delivered by multi-faith Chaplaincy teams in all prisons and young offender institutions in the secure state, in accordance with the requirements of the Prison Act 1952, the Prison Rules 1999, the Young Offender Rules 2000 and Prison Service Instruction 05/2016 *Faith and Pastoral Care of Prisoners*.

The delivery of these services is monitored through Quality, Assurance and Development visits to prisons, inspections by HM Inspectorate of Prisons, and the annual reports of prison Independent Monitoring Boards.

■ Probation

Caroline Voaden:

[3547]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the scope will be of her Department's strategic review of probation governance.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Probation Service has a crucial role in protecting the public and providing a path of reintegration into the community to break the cycle of reoffending. The Service delivers these goals by working closely with local partners – such as police forces, local authorities, and third sector organisations, amongst others. The Government is committed to learning from successful examples of local partnerships and support the whole service to improve join-up and deliver better outcomes.

■ Sentencing: Reform

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[2927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the need for reform of sentence progression for prisoners who remain in custody on historic Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences who have served their minimum terms.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Government is determined to make further progress towards a safe and sustainable release for those serving the IPP sentence. We believe that it is right that these sentences were abolished, and in Opposition we supported changes made in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 to the IPP licence period and the introduction of a statutory requirement for the Government to publish an IPP annual report on the steps taken to support rehabilitation and progress towards release from prison or licence termination.

We are committed to working with all organisations who seek to ensure the appropriate course of action is taken to enhance support for those still serving IPP sentences.

■ Trials: Telford

Shaun Davies:

[3842]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average waiting time is for a trial to be heard at Telford Magistrates' Court.

Heidi Alexander:

We do not publish a 'waiting time' measure for Magistrates' courts. The Magistrates' courts timeliness tool contains published estimates of timeliness from offence to case completion at the Magistrates' courts. It is available down to Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) level, not to court level:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66040ea791a320001a82b079/time_mags_tool.xlsx

More than 90 per cent of all criminal cases are dealt with at the magistrates' courts, where cases continue to be completed swiftly. However, in the last year, the magistrates' courts outstanding caseload has begun to increase, following an increase in the number of cases coming before the criminal courts.

■ Young Offenders: Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme

Phil Brickell: [\[3410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing young people in the secure estate to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We value the contribution that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme can make in enabling young people in custody to develop essential skills and discover new talents. In this way, they can learn to take responsibility for themselves and others. Those who gain the award will be able to point to a widely-respected achievement that can help them fulfil their potential after release. The scheme is currently available in HMYOI Wetherby, HMYOI Feltham A, HMYOI Parc and HMYOI Werrington, and management information shows that 36 young people from those establishments are currently enrolled on the scheme. Five children in one of our secure children's homes are also taking part, and a number of other secure children's homes, as well as Oakhill Secure Training Centre, are in the process of joining the scheme. The new Secure School in Kent also plans to offer the award, as part of a varied enrichment and education offer.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ Leader of the House: Redundancy Pay

Wera Hobhouse: [\[3046\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, 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.

Lucy Powell:

The Office of the Leader of the House of Commons is part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. member to the response to be provided by the Cabinet Office ([3029](#)).

NORTHERN IRELAND**Patrick Finucane****Alex Burghart:****[3049]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will publish his request to the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland for extra time to consider the ruling in the case of Geraldine Finucane v Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

I met with Mrs Finucane on 25 July to hear firsthand her views, during which I explained that I would likely be required to seek an extension to the timetable set by the Court. I then wrote to Mrs Finucane and the Court of Appeal setting out in detail the rationale for the extension request, most notably that, in light of the recent change in government, the requirement for cross-government consultation, the need for officials across government to provide new Ministers with a full briefing on the case, and the parliamentary summer recess period during August, it would not be possible to reach a government decision on a process for investigation of the relevant aspects of Patrick Finucane's death, that would be compliant with Article 2 of the European Court of Human Rights, within the timescale set by the Court (ie. by 22 August 2024).

Mrs Finucane did not object to the Government's request and the Court has granted the Government an extension to 27 September 2024 to respond to its judgement of 11 July 2024.

I want to ensure that the Government makes a decision on this case as soon as possible and that this decision takes account of the views of Mrs Finucane.

I will update the House on the Government's position in due course.

Terrorism: Northern Ireland**Sorcha Eastwood:****[3406]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1169 on Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery, how many times he has requested a review of (a) a Troubles-related death under section 9(3) of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 and (b) harmful conduct under section 10(2) of that Act since 1 May 2024.

Hilary Benn:

To date, I have not requested a review of (a) a Troubles-related death under section 9(3) of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023, or of (b) harmful conduct under section 10(2) of that Act. This was also the case for my predecessor.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Artificial Intelligence****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[2765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to support artificial intelligence projects.

Feryal Clark:

The DSIT Secretary of State is committed to enabling the public sector to better adopt AI safely and in a way that saves people time, and the department's role as the Digital Centre of Government is critical to that. There is a range of expertise within DSIT to support this ambition, including the Incubator for AI (i.AI), the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO), and Government Digital Service (GDS). The Secretary of State also asked Matt Clifford to draft an AI Action Plan to grow the AI sector and ensure AI can be deployed across the economy to improve people's lives.

Julia Buckley:[\[3494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to update the National AI Strategy.

Feryal Clark:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at the heart of the Government's plan to kickstart an era of economic growth, transform how we deliver public services, and boost living standards for working people across the country. We will be ensuring that AI is used to drive the government's missions and priorities. We are committed to building an AI sector that can scale and win globally, through the AI Opportunities Action Plan which will be published this Autumn. It will outline an approach to delivering the opportunities AI can bring across the system, setting out our government's ambition.

■ Broadband: Infrastructure**Patrick Hurley:**[\[3326\]](#)

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

Chris Bryant:

We understand concerns about the deployment of telegraph poles. We want operators to share infrastructure and use existing underground ducts, wherever possible.

Where the original infrastructure was buried without ducts, or existing infrastructure is not useable, new infrastructure must be built, and underground ducts are significantly more expensive than poles.

On 16 August, I wrote to broadband operators asking them to share infrastructure wherever possible and expressing support for their work revising the Cabinet and Pole Siting Code of Practice. I will shortly be meeting them to understand their

infrastructure sharing plan, to express our concerns and to ensure community views are taken into account.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Ministers

Kit Malthouse:

[2400]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what (a) statutory and (b) non-statutory direct ministerial appointments excluding special advisers he 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.

Feryal Clark:

The Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology has made two statutory and one non-statutory direct ministerial appointments.

Matt Clifford was appointed through a direct ministerial appointment in July 2024.

Matt is the Lead Reviewer of the Artificial Intelligence Opportunities Action Plan and is not remunerated for his role. The terms of reference for the action plan are available on GOV.UK.

Hazel Hobbs was appointed as interim Chair of Building Digital UK (BDUK) in August, starting on 1 September 2024 for a period of 6 months and remuneration of £80,000 p.a. pro rata. An announcement containing further details is published [here](#). Hazel will serve as interim Chair whilst an exercise is launched to recruit a permanent Chair. Hazel has also been reappointed in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments as a non-executive director of BDUK, having been a member of the Board since the organisation became an executive agency in March 2022.

Stella Peace was appointed as interim Executive Chair at Innovate UK (IUK) in August, starting on 30 September 2024 for an initial period of six months with remuneration of £149,000 p.a. pro rata. An announcement containing further details is published [here](#). Stella will serve as interim Executive Chair whilst an exercise is completed to recruit a permanent Executive Chair.

As regulated Public Appointments, the interim Chair of BDUK and interim Executive Chair of IUK were both appointed in accordance with paragraph 3.3 of the Governance Code on Public Appointments, which states that: "In exceptional cases, Ministers may decide to appoint a candidate without a competition. They must make this decision public alongside their reasons for doing so. They must consult the Commissioner for Public Appointments in good time before the appointment is publicly announced".

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Redundancy Pay

Wera Hobhouse:

[3035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the cost to his 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.

Feryal Clark:

The details of any ministerial severance payments can be found in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts.

The 2023/2024 Annual Report and Accounts for the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology are to be published in due course.

■ Digital Security by Design Programme**Saqib Bhatti:**[\[4036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to support the Digital Security by Design programme.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is funding the Digital Security by Design programme with over £80 million, alongside a £200 million from the private sector, to foster collaboration among academia, industry and government to develop CHERI (Capability Hardware Enhanced RISC Instructions). CHERI enhances memory-safe in semiconductor chips. Memory safety issues cause 70% of critical vulnerabilities that can be exploited by cyber criminals as well as being responsible for unintended, and widespread, economic disruption. The Government works with international partners to promote memory-safe principles and continues to fund academic and industry programmes to make CHERI more widely available for commercial implementation.

■ Internet: Disinformation**Dan Carden:**[\[3059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to tackle online (a) disinformation and (b) misinformation.

Feryal Clark:

The Online Safety Act (OSA) will be the Government's key tool in combatting online mis- and disinformation. It sets out a clear regulatory framework to tackle both mis- and disinformation where it constitutes illegal content or harmful content to children.

In addition, we are educating and empowering users through our work on media literacy to increase society's resilience to mis- and disinformation.

Officials also regularly meet with major platforms, about disinformation activity, emerging risks and platforms' responses.

■ Mobile Phones: Leicestershire**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[3122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help improve mobile phone coverage in (a) Hinckley and Bosworth constituency and (b) Leicestershire.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is committed to improving mobile coverage across the UK. Ofcom's most recent coverage data for the former constituency of Bosworth shows 97% 4G geographic coverage from all four mobile network operators and that 5G is available from at least one mobile network operator outside 88% of premises.

I am aware that Ofcom's coverage data does not always reflect consumers' experience of mobile networks at a local level, and I am intent on ensuring Ofcom takes all necessary steps to improve the accuracy of its coverage data.

Alongside this, the Government intends to reform the planning system in a way that will make it easier to build digital infrastructure.

■ Online Safety Act 2023**Nadia Whittome:**[\[3232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to implement the Online Safety Act 2023 to protect young people from (a) harmful content and (b) AI-deepfakes.

Feryal Clark:

The government is focused on implementing the Online Safety Act as quickly as possible working with Ofcom. Ofcom has consulted on its draft Children's Safety codes of practice which set out the steps companies must take to protect children on their platforms under the Online Safety Act. Ofcom will publish the finalised codes and guidance in Spring 2025 and the government will work to ensure these codes are in effect as soon as possible.

Deepfakes and other forms of manipulated media are captured by the Online Safety Act where they constitute user generated content that is illegal content, or content which is harmful to children. Services that are likely to be accessed by children will need to take steps to protect children from harmful content and behaviour on their services, including AI-generated or enabled content.

■ Patents**Saqib Bhatti:**[\[4035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to support the growth of UK international patent families.

Feryal Clark:

One of the Government's five missions is to grow the UK economy, including by providing an Intellectual Property (IP) system that encourages investment in creativity and innovation for the benefit of society. The Intellectual Property Office's strategy sets out how it will shape an IP system that supports UK and global innovation and ensure that intellectual property rights are respected nationally and internationally. Greater confidence in global IP systems will make it worthwhile for UK businesses to patent their inventions internationally.

■ Semiconductors

Saqib Bhatti: [\[4266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what plans he has to support the National Semiconductor Institute.

Feryal Clark:

This government recognises the strategic importance of semiconductors as a critical technology for the future of the UK and a significant enabler of the government's growth and clean energy missions. The Department recognises a number of challenges to growth of the UK semiconductor sector, including industry fragmentation and a lack of long-term innovation strategy. We are currently reviewing a range of options to address this and unlock growth in the sector, including the National Semiconductor Institute. We will announce further details in due course.

■ Semiconductors: Manufacturing Industries

Saqib Bhatti: [\[4262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to support the Compound Semiconductor Applications Catapult.

Feryal Clark:

The Compound Semiconductor Applications Catapult plays a vital role in accelerating the development of compound semiconductor technology and applications. In 2023/24, it received a core grant of £17 million from Innovate UK. It is a strong example of government, industry and academia working together and will continue to play a central part in delivering our commitment to accelerate innovation, investment and productivity through world-class science and research.

Saqib Bhatti: [\[4264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to have discussions with the Secretary of State for Education on the expansion of skills in the (a) design, (b) fabrication and (c) packaging of semiconductors.

Feryal Clark:

This Government recognises skills as an essential lever to maximise the potential of our semiconductor sector, drive growth and create high-quality jobs across the whole of the UK. I regularly meet with my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and our departments will work together to secure our future talent pipeline for the UK's priority technology sectors, including in semiconductors. The recently announced Skills England will play a vital role in uniting government, business, training providers, and unions to address the skills needs of the next decade.

■ Semiconductors: Research

Saqib Bhatti: [\[4263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to expand the UK's semiconductor research base.

Feryal Clark:

UK semiconductor research is exceptional and is a driving force for growth in the wider semiconductor sector. The government will support semiconductor innovation and commercialisation activities from foundational research to enabling sustainable company growth. The Innovation and Knowledge Centres are already helping world-class academics conduct commercially oriented semiconductor research. Our partnerships with the US, Japan, and the Republic of Korea and our participation in the EU Chips Joint Undertaking enable UK researchers to collaborate internationally on cutting-edge semiconductor technology.

■ Social Media: Animal Welfare**Alex Mayer:**[\[3435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the potential link between (a) animal abuse and (b) social media.

Feryal Clark:

Ofcom is the UK's independent regulator for online safety. Social media platforms and search services will have duties to tackle animal abuse content under the Online Safety Act (OSA). Ofcom recently published its proposals for how these providers should tackle animal cruelty content under their (OSA) 'illegal content duties' (<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/illegal-and-harmful-content/illegal-harms-further-consultation-torture-and-animal-cruelty>).

Government ministers and officials regularly discuss online safety matters including the implementation of the Online Safety Act and its protections against animal cruelty.

■ Social Media: Violence**Mark Pritchard:**[\[2780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to introduce fines for social media companies for failure to remove online material which incites violence.

Feryal Clark:

The Online Safety Act 2023 places duties on user to user services to proactively mitigate the risk that their services are used for illegal activity or to share illegal content. This includes content that incites violence and content which stirs up religious or racial hatred. The Act is currently being implemented. Ofcom will have a broad range of powers to assess and enforce compliance with the Act, including issuing fines to services that do not comply of up to £18m or 10% of qualifying worldwide revenue in the relevant year, whichever is higher.

SCOTLAND**■ Engineering: Apprentices****Graeme Downie:****[3592]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what plans he has to work with the Scottish Government to (a) support and (b) increase engineering apprenticeships in Scotland.

Ian Murray:

Scotland has always produced world-class engineers, and this Government is committed to growing the economy and supporting the sector all across the UK.

Scotland is at the forefront of the Government's mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030, which in itself will create a range of new opportunities for engineering apprentices in Scotland. Great British Energy, our new publicly-owned clean energy company, will be headquartered in Scotland; in addition to delivering energy security and lower prices for consumers, it will create thousands of jobs and build supply chains across the UK as new technologies are deployed. In addition to GB Energy, further opportunities for engineering apprentices will arise from the National Wealth Fund, which will unlock further investment opportunities for the local ports, heavy industry and manufacturing companies that have a crucial role to play in creating quality jobs and in our transition to net zero.

■ Ferries and Railways: Scotland**Graeme Downie:****[3594]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what plans he has to work with the Scottish Government to improve (a) rail and (b) ferry provision in (i) Fife and (ii) Scotland.

Ian Murray:

Scotrail run rail services in both Fife and wider Scotland, and responsibility for these services lie with the Scottish Government. Similarly, ferry services are also devolved to the Scottish Government. This Government is, however, working to ensure public ownership across rail services. The Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill will ensure that ScotRail is kept in public hands.

This Government is committed to resetting the relationship with the Scottish Government to ensure we can work together to deliver for the people of Scotland on the things that matter most to communities, including on transport links between Scotland and the rest of the UK. I have already met with the Deputy First Minister on numerous occasions to discuss a variety of issues. My officials regularly engage with their counterparts in the Scottish Government, working with their colleagues in the Department for Transport, to identify opportunities for collaboration on improving transport and other services.

■ Scotland Office: Redundancy Pay

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[3047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the cost to his 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.

Ian Murray:

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.

Details of ministerial severance payments can be found in the Scotland Office and Office of the Advocate General annual report and accounts.

■ Veterans: Scotland

Graeme Downie:

[\[3595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what plans he has to work with the Scottish Government to improve services for veterans in (a) Dunfermline and Dollar constituency and (b) Scotland.

Ian Murray:

The UK Government is committed to supporting those who served and risked their lives for this country - a great number of whom I know live in my honourable Friend's constituency. The Office for Veterans Affairs continues to work closely with the Scottish Government as key areas of policy and support delivered to veterans are devolved. This includes support with employment, mental health, and housing. For example, the veteran employment pathway provides employment and career development support for veterans across the UK, and veterans in Scotland who are homeless can access a UK-wide referral housing pathway.

TRANSPORT

■ A483: Shropshire

Helen Morgan:

[\[4062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 24 July 2024 to Question 836 on A483, what progress she has made on the review into improving safety on the A483 in North Shropshire.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways continues to consider the case for safety improvements to the A483 between Pant and Llanymynech through a route optimisation study. The content and timing of the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) will be considered alongside all transport infrastructure spend.

■ A5: Bedfordshire**Alex Mayer:** [\[3419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential options for providing relief for the trunk A5 road through Hockliffe Village during the next road investment period.

Lilian Greenwood:

As part of their analysis of need on the Strategic Road Network, National Highways identified issues with peak period delays and unreliability on the A5 in Hockliffe. A feasibility study has been undertaken and has identified options for improvements. This scheme is currently being considered as part of the next Roads Investment Strategy, though all future spend by National Highways is subject to the DfT's Capital Review and the cross-government Spending Review.

■ Abnormal Loads**Helen Morgan:** [\[3839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Schedule 12 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, if she will make an assessment of the level of consistency of application of those guidelines by police forces.

Helen Morgan: [\[3840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Schedule 12 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of inconsistent application of those guidelines by police forces on the cost to businesses moving such loads.

Lilian Greenwood:

Application of Schedule 12 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, as amended (C&U), is a policing matter. Any concerns on their application should be raised with the responsible local police force(s) in question. My Department does not have any remit or plans to make an assessment on the impact of the approaches by local police forces to the application of Schedule 12 of C&U.

■ Blue Badge Scheme**Julia Buckley:** [\[3498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions her Department has had with local authorities on reducing processing times for blue badge applications.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport sets the legislation that governs the Blue Badge scheme and provides guidance for local authorities who are solely responsible for administering the scheme, including issuing the badges.

There are no timescales set for administering applications other than a suggested guideline that issuing authorities should aim to complete end to end applications within 12 weeks.

80% of citizens apply for a badge using the Blue Badge Digital Service (BBDS) operated by the Department for Transport. The Department has a programme of continuous improvement of the digital service with the aim of making online badge applications quicker and easier for applicants and local authorities.

■ **Brinnington Station and Heaton Chapel Station: Access**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[3159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to provide funding for step-free access at (a) Brinnington Station and (b) Heaton Chapel Station.

Simon Lightwood:

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 recognise the social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

■ **Bus Services**

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[2842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Better Buses Bill will regulate the prices paid by (a) mayoral, (b) combined and (c) local authorities to purchase bus (i) fleets and (ii) depots from private operators.

Simon Lightwood:

As announced in the King's Speech, the government will introduce a Buses Bill to put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England. The Bill aims to ensure networks can meet the needs of the communities who rely on them and encourage passengers back onto buses. The Department is currently working at pace to consider and determine the exact scope of the Buses Bill.

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[2846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of parked cars causing blockages outside bus stations on levels of delays to regional bus networks.

Simon Lightwood:

98% of local authorities have civil enforcement powers in relation to parking and are responsible for enforcement on the roads within their authority. Local authorities have powers to implement a range of parking restrictions on their networks and are responsible for deciding what restrictions may be necessary.

Greg Smith: [\[3115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve the (a) frequency and (b) quality of bus services.

Simon Lightwood:

The government knows that Britain needs a modern transport network to help kickstart economic growth. Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities, and the government is committed to working at pace with local transport authorities, bus operators and passengers to ensure that our vital bus services truly reflect the needs of the local communities.

As announced in the King's Speech, the government will introduce the Better Buses Bill to put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, to ensure networks can meet the needs to the communities who rely on them, including in Buckinghamshire. We also plan to empower local transport authorities through reforming bus funding. By giving local leaders more control and flexibility over bus funding they can plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities.

Alex Mayer: [\[3438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the Bus Service Improvement Plan on bus patronage.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department for Transport has commissioned a process, impact and value for money evaluation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan Programme, a £1.1 billion tranche of funding allocated to 34 Local Transport Authorities (LTAs). The work will answer questions surrounding how the plans were delivered, the scheme's impact, and its value for money, including an assessment of the scheme's impact on bus patronage. Due to the early stage in the lifetime of the programme, data on patronage levels at an LTA-wide level is not yet available.

■ Bus Services: Concessions

Alex Mayer: [\[3420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 721 on Bus Services: Concessions, what her Department's funding contribution was to Arriva The Shires Ltd under the £2 National Bus Fare Cap scheme?

Alex Mayer: [\[3421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 721 on Bus Services: Concessions, what the average cost per passenger journey to the public purse of the £2 National Bus Fare Cap scheme was in each county in England since 1 January 2023.

Simon Lightwood:

The £2 National Bus Fare Cap is a voluntary scheme for eligible bus operators, who are provided a bespoke funding allocation to reimburse the difference between the cap and the shadow commercial fare.

It is not possible to calculate the average cost per passenger journey in each county, or any designated geographic area, because the fare cap reimbursement is provided directly to bus operators, who do not operate exclusively within geographic boundaries.

The Department is unable to disclose the amounts that specific operators have received under the scheme as contributions are calculated based on commercially sensitive data. The total government investment to cap bus fares at £2 between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2024 is around £600 million.

■ Bus Services: Safety**Sir Alec Shelbrooke:****[2845]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to help protect bus (a) stock, (b) drivers and (c) passengers following the arson attack on a bus in Harehills on 18 July 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department for Transport works closely with the bus and coach sector to advise them on protective security issues, and in 2018 published best practice guidance to advise the sector on security measures to protect against acts of violence. The guidance is available to view on GOV.UK at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875547/bus-and-coach-security-recommended-best-practice.pdf. The

Department is currently in the process of updating this guidance, working in partnership with industry, and expects to publish an enhanced document later this year.

■ Bus Stations: Bradford**Sir Alec Shelbrooke:****[2843]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help West Yorkshire Combined Authority reopen Bradford Interchange's bus station.

Simon Lightwood:

Local authorities, rather than central government, are responsible for the bus stops and shelters in their area. Any decisions regarding the reopening of Bradford Interchange bus station are for West Yorkshire Combined Authority to make.

■ Department for Transport: Communications**Neil O'Brien:****[3083]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much her Department spent on communications in the last year for which data is available.

Mike Kane:

In the last year (August 2023 to July 2024) the Department spent £6,128,135 on paid communications campaigns.

The majority of this spend was for the THINK! campaign, which is a key pillar in the Department's commitment to improving road safety. THINK! aims to reduce deaths and serious injuries on the road through changing attitudes and behaviours among those at most risk. The campaign focuses on priority issues including drink driving and speeding, as well as communicating key policy interventions.

In the past year, the Department ran THINK! Campaigns across paid channels in England and Wales to tackle drink driving, seat belt use and speeding and among high-risk male drivers aged 17-24.

The total spend also includes the 'It's Everyone's Journey' campaign which aims to raise awareness of the needs of disabled people among the general travelling public, and to create a more supportive travelling environment to improve confidence and increase the use of public transport by disabled people.

■ Department for Transport: Redundancy Pay**Wera Hobhouse:****[3036]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

Mike Kane:

Since 19 December 2019 to 30 May 2024 the cost of ministerial severance payments are as follows:

19 December 2019 – 31 December 2019: nil

1 January 2020 – 31 December 2020: nil

1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021: nil

1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022: £41,575

1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023: £7,920

1 January 2024 – 30 May 2024: nil

The following Ministers received a severance payment of the following value:

Grant Shapps MP received a compensation payment of £16,876 when he left Government on 6 September 2022.

Karl McCartney MP received a compensation payment of £5,593 when he left Government on 7 September 2022.

Robert Courts MP received a compensation payment of £5,593 when he left Government on 18 September 2022.

Kevin Foster MP received a compensation payment of £7,920 when he left Government on 25 October 2022.

Katherine Fletcher MP received a compensation payment of £5,593 when she left Government on 26 October 2022.

Jesse Norman MP received a compensation payment of £7,920 when he left Government on 13 November 2023.

■ Driving Tests

Lisa Smart:

[3359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to tackle delays arising from block booking of driving tests; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of ensuring that such tests can only be booked (a) by and (b) on behalf of an individual.

Lilian Greenwood:

It is not possible to block book car practical driving tests. A driving licence number can only be assigned to one car practical driving test at a time. A survey by The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) suggests that only 10% of learner drivers use third parties to book their tests. Most either book appointments themselves or through their approved driving instructor (ADI).

To ensure fairness for everyone wanting to book a practical driving test, DVSA continues to work to combat the unscrupulous practice of reselling tests. Such apps or bots are not approved by DVSA. They make it harder for candidates to get a test and can also result in people paying more for a test. DVSA will continue to take steps to block cancellation services from accessing the booking system, which are having a positive impact.

DVSA operates an online booking service (OBS) for instructors and trainers so that they can book and manage driving and riding tests for their pupils. DVSA has made changes to the OBS by stopping automatic online registrations to use the service, ensuring each company that registers employs an ADI and removing access for any companies not linked to driving instructors.

In January 2023, DVSA changed the terms and conditions for using the booking service to help prevent anyone from selling tests at profit. Since then, DVSA has issued 283 warnings, 746 suspensions, and closed 689 businesses for misuse of its booking service.

Mr Lee Dillon: [3623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help (a) reduce waiting times for driving tests and (b) ensure people can take their driving test locally.

Mr Lee Dillon: [3624]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department is taking steps to stop automated systems from booking driving test slots for financial gain.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) priority is to reduce car practical driving test waiting times, whilst upholding road safety standards. To increase the number of available test slots, it is conducting tests outside of regular hours, including at weekends and on public holidays, and buying back annual leave from driving examiners.

Driving examiners from areas with lower waiting times continue to travel and test in those centres with longer waiting times. This is in addition to DVSA recruiting additional examiners across the country into areas where waiting times are highest.

To ensure fairness for everyone wanting to book a practical driving test, DVSA continues to work hard to combat the unscrupulous practice of reselling tests. Such apps or bots are not approved by DVSA. They make it harder for candidates to get a test and can also result in people paying more for a test. DVSA will continue to take steps to block cancellation services from accessing the booking system, which are having a positive impact.

In January 2023, DVSA changed the terms and conditions for using the booking service to help prevent anyone from selling tests at profit. Since then, DVSA has issued 283 warnings, 746 suspensions, and closed 689 businesses for misuse of its booking service.

To ensure its booking system is used correctly, DVSA has also:

- stopped accepting new automatic online registrations to use its tests booking service – any new applications must be made by email, where they will be thoroughly checked by DVSA.
- stopped accepting any new registrations from companies who do not directly employ a driving instructor.
- removed registrations not linked to driving instructors.
- reduced the number of times a driving test appointment can be changed from 10 to the pre-pandemic limit of 6.

Following these changes, there has been a significant drop in traffic to these services because DVSA is successfully identifying and blocking apps or bots.

■ Driving Tests: North Cornwall

Ben Maguire: [\[3648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help reduce waiting times for practical driving tests at (a) Launceston and (b) Bodmin driving test centres.

Ben Maguire: [\[3649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will have discussions with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency on taking steps to reduce the number of short-notice cancellations of practical driving test appointments at (a) Launceston and (b) Bodmin driving test centres.

Ben Maguire: [\[3650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time was for a practical driving test appointment at test centres in North Cornwall constituency in the latest period for which data is available; and if she will make an estimate of the number of people who are waiting to take a test in that constituency.

Ben Maguire: [\[3651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) average waiting time and (b) longest waiting time for driving tests in Cornwall was in each of the last 10 years.

Ben Maguire: [\[3652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing compensation for loss of (a) income, (b) independence and (c) educational opportunities as a result of delayed or cancelled practical driving test appointments in (i) North Cornwall constituency and (ii) rural areas.

Lilian Greenwood:

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

As of 2 September 2024, there were 552,863 car practical driving tests booked, and 94,169 driving tests available within the 24-week booking window.

The two driving test centres (DTC) within the North Cornwall constituency of Bodmin and Launceston are shown in the table below. The table shows the August 2024 average waiting time, number of booked car practical driving tests, and available tests as of 2 September 2024 at both DTCs.

DTC	AVERAGE CAR PRACTICAL DRIVING TEST WAITING TIME AUG		TESTS AVAILABLE TO BOOK IN 24 WEEK BOOKING WINDOW
	24	BOOKED TESTS	
Launceston	10	818	55
Bodmin	18.3	1,974	422
National	18.4	552,863	94,169

The DVSA understands how disappointing it is when driving tests are cancelled and therefore will only cancel appointments as an absolute last resort. Those affected by cancellations will automatically be offered a new appointment at the original test centre on the next earliest date available. If this is unsuitable, a candidate can check the booking service for alternative appointments.

Measures in place to reduce waiting times for customers in DTCs, include the recruitment of driving examiners, conducting tests outside of regular hours, including at weekends and on public holidays, and buying back annual leave from driving examiners. The DVSA also continues to deploy examiners from areas with lower waiting times into those centres with longer waiting times. This is in addition to the DVSA recruiting additional examiners across the country into areas where waiting times are highest.

The table below shows the average waiting time for driving tests at each of the DTCs in Cornwall. Waiting time information per DTC is only available from April 2015 onwards. It is not possible to know the number of people who are waiting to take a test.

FINANCIAL YEAR	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	APR 24 - AUG 24
Bodmin	8	4.1	3.8	3.6	7.1	7.6	10.9	10.7	9.8	15.4
Camborne	4.5	4.3	5.6	5.9	7.2	9.5	14.5	15.1	12.7	15
Isles of Scilly*	4	18	16.5	Nil	14.6	Nil	7.5	21.7	20.9	21.6
Launceston	6.9	4.2	3	2.4	8.6	11.9	13.5	8.8	11	12
Penzance**	7	6.4	5.8	6.1	7.7	4.9	15.8	21.7	20.4	23.9

*Isles of Scilly DTC is a remote DTC and operates a book-to-hold system. Examiners are deployed once candidates have booked to hold.

** Penzance DTC operates on a part time basis (2 days per week).

■ Driving Tests: Stratford-on-Avon

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[3392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to increase the number of test centres serving Stratford-on-Avon constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is committed to providing its customers with the best service possible. DVSA continually reviews its estate to ensure it represents good value for money and is efficient. It currently has no plans to increase the number of practical driving test centres.

■ East Midlands Railway and West Midlands Trains: Finance

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[3221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to fund (a) rail infrastructure and (b) fleet modernisation projects at (i) East Midlands Railway and (ii) West Midlands Trains (A) during and (B) following their potential transition to public ownership.

Lilian Greenwood:

The process of transitioning railway passenger services into public ownership should not impact investment projects. Existing projects can continue unless there is a good reason for review; with new projects being considered on their merits. The Department will work closely with private sector train operating companies and Network Rail during the transition process to understand the position of any investment programmes, and build these into transition planning if appropriate.

Railway passenger services currently operated by private sector companies under contract to the Secretary of State will transfer into DfT OLR Holdings Ltd (DOHL) when current contracts end, reach their contractual break point, or if they fail. DOHL is tasked with undertaking transfers efficiently and effectively, with no disruption to passengers and employees. It has managed four successful transfers in recent years and is scaling up to ensure the successful transfer of more services into public ownership.

■ Electric Bicycles

Lee Anderson:

[\[3093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps is she taking to ensure the health and safety of (a) pedestrians and (b) motorists, in the context of increases in the use of e-bikes.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government is committed to ensuring the safety of our roads for all road users. Cyclists, whether riding an e-bike or a conventional pedal cycle, have a duty to behave in a safe and responsible manner and follow the rules set out in The Highway

Code. The enforcement of cycling offences, such as cycling on the pavement or cycling without due care or attention, is a matter for the police.

■ **Great Western Main Line: Electrification**

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[3056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to extend the Great Western Main Line upgrade to include electrification to Swansea.

Simon Lightwood:

The decision taken in 2017 to not electrify the railway between Cardiff and Swansea was based on it not delivering significant journey time savings and this remains the case. Enhancements to the railway in Wales that deliver passenger benefits, including proposed electrification, are considered by the Wales Rail Board.

■ **Great Western Railway: Overcrowding**

Rachel Gilmour: [\[3569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the levels of overcrowding on Great Western Railway trains from Tiverton Parkway; and whether she plans to take steps to reduce overcrowding on those trains.

Simon Lightwood:

Officials continually monitor the performance of Great Western Railway services, including instances of overcrowding, and actively hold operators to account through their contracts when they run less capacity than agreed. The Rail Minister additionally meets with Train Operating Companies to review their performance. We work closely with Great Western Railway to match supply to demand within operational and financial constraints including the provision of additional summer services. Great Western Railway is also exploring opportunities to increase the capacity of its rolling stock fleet.

■ **High Speed 2 Line: Euston Station**

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[3222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish her Department's detailed plans for the extension of HS2 to Euston.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is working at pace to review the position it has inherited on HS2, including options for Euston. We will set out a clear plan in due course.

■ **HM Coastguard: Insurance**

Josh MacAlister: [\[R\] \[3291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the cost was of the insurance provided by her Department for members of HM Coastguard in 2023; and how many people that insurance covered.

Mike Kane:

INSURANCE TYPE	JAN-DEC 2023
Travel	£25,511.75
Building	£30,261.73
Vehicle	£121,806.69
	£177,580.17

Average number of employees: 1,229.

Average number of Coastguard Rescue Officers (CROs): 3,080.

Insurance premiums within the MCA cover all employees and CROs as applicable.

Insurance premiums are not split by business activity.

■ M20: Road Traffic Control**Helen Grant:**[\[2860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to take steps to improve traffic management on the M20.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Kent & Medway Resilience Forum (KMRF) is responsible for operational decision making on traffic management measures in response to disruption at Eurotunnel and/or the Port of Dover. The KMRF have well-practised tactical plans in place, including Operation Brock.

While these measures help to mitigate against the worst of any disruption, the Department still recognises the impact disruption has on local residents, businesses, hauliers, and passengers. Therefore, the Department is working with the KMRF and other local stakeholders to continually improve how traffic management plans operate.

■ M54: M6**Shaun Davies:**[\[3307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made on the potential economic impact of linking the M54 and M6 north.

Lilian Greenwood:

The proposed M54 to M6 link road in the Road Investment Strategy was most recently assessed as high value for money and with a benefit to cost ratio of 3.17.

■ Motorways: Safety Measures**Greg Smith:** [\[3111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to review the safety of (a) all-lane running and (b) smart motorways.

Lilian Greenwood:

The safety of everyone travelling on our roads is the Government's priority, which is why we are committed to delivering a new Road Safety Strategy, the first in over a decade. We will set out next steps on smart motorways in due course.

■ National Highways: Pay**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[3149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether civil service pay remit guidance applies to National Highways workers.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways was established in 2015 with a requirement to have regard to the Civil Service Pay Remit Guidance when setting pay awards for its staff. National Highways must also ensure its pay deals are affordable and in line with its budget and pay control envelope agreed with the Department for Transport and His Majesty's Treasury.

■ Public Transport: Rural Areas**Manuela Perteghella:** [\[3393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to help improve the accessibility of (a) bus provision and (b) other public transport in rural areas.

Simon Lightwood:

The government knows that Britain needs a modern transport network to help kickstart economic growth. The government wants everyone to have access to public transport and is committed to improving the system so it is more inclusive and enables disabled people to travel safely, confidently and with dignity.

Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities. As announced in the King's Speech, the Government will introduce a Buses Bill to put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, to ensure networks can meet the needs to the communities who rely on them, including in rural areas.

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

■ Public Transport: Safety Measures

Alex Mayer:

[\[3416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of pedal monitoring cameras on all new (a) buses, (b) trams, (c) coaches and (d) other forms of public transport.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government currently has no plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of pedal monitoring cameras on all new public transport. Some bus service providers have introduced pedal monitoring as part of their ongoing safety strategy and to aid incident investigations.

Pedal errors on other forms of public transport have not been highlighted as a significant issue.

■ Railway Stations: Access

Ellie Chowns:

[\[3565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she is taking steps to (a) ensure that all rail stations are fully accessible and (b) implement step-free access to both platforms at Ledbury station.

Simon Lightwood:

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.

■ Railway Stations: Air Pollution

Alex Sobel:

[\[3063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to introduce air quality targets within train stations.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the railway maintains the highest air quality standards to safeguard the health and well-being of passengers and rail staff. The Department for Transport already requires Network Rail and train operators to develop air quality improvement plans to address issues in stations. The Department is also working with the Rail Safety and Standards Board to explore the option of specific air quality targets for the rail network, including within stations, to ensure rail remains one of the cleanest forms of mass public transport. The Department will confirm its position in due course.

■ Railway Stations: Corsham

Sarah Gibson:

[\[4302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment the Department has made of the merits of the bid for a railway station in Corsham.

Lilian Greenwood:

Aside from Restoring Your Railway (RYR) projects currently at the delivery stage or in construction, all remaining RYR-originated projects, including the Corsham station proposal, will be reviewed as part of preparations for the upcoming Spending Review. Ministers have been clear that not all proposed transport projects will be able to proceed to delivery due to the challenging financial situation facing the Department.

Railway Stations: Leeds

Sir Alec Shelbrooke: [\[2844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the temporary pause in constructing the White Rose railway station in Leeds will end.

Simon Lightwood:

We understand that the scheme promotor is seeking to resolve legal and commercial processes with the Principal Contractor. These processes are expected to be concluded by the end of this calendar year, with a view to re-mobilising site works early 2025.

Railways

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[3224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to support open access operators.

Simon Lightwood:

We are committed to delivering benefits for both passengers and taxpayers, and there will remain a role for open access services where they provide improved connectivity and choice. We will also continue to work to protect access to the network for all operators as we take forward the Railways Bill.

Railways: Conditions of Employment and Technology

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[3227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to tackle (a) variances in employment terms and conditions and (b) the introduction of technological innovations in the rail sector.

Simon Lightwood:

We are committed to delivering the biggest overhaul of our railways in a generation, and ensure that Great British Railways (GBR) can drive innovation across the network.

As we bring a fragmented industry together, we will need to consider a range of options on the right approach for future terms and conditions, taking account of employment law requirements.

On the introduction of technological innovations, we expect a joined up industry to do more and faster in the use of technology for safety, cost reduction, revenue growth

and accessibility, and we expect GBR to take a firm lead in this area. In the meantime, Network rail and train companies are working in this area, including through Shadow Great British Railways.

■ Railways: Contracts

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[3125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of bringing railway contracts into public ownership on outstanding multi year projects that (a) update fleets, (b) improve timetables and (c) support infrastructure improvements.

Simon Lightwood:

The process of transitioning railway passenger services into public ownership will not impact existing multi-year projects to update fleets, improve timetables and support infrastructure improvements. Existing projects can continue unless there is a good reason for review. The continued operation of rolling stock is one of the considerations when taking operators back into public ownership. The Department will work closely with private sector Train Operating Companies and Network Rail during the transition process to understand the position of any such projects and build these into transition planning if appropriate.

Railway passenger services currently operated by private sector companies under contract to the Secretary of State will transfer into DfT OLR Holdings Ltd (DOHL) when current contracts end or reach their contractual break point. DOHL is tasked with undertaking transfers efficiently and effectively, with no disruption to passengers and employees. DOHL has managed four successful transfers in recent years and is scaling up to ensure the successful transfer of more services into public ownership.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[3126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing railway contracts into public ownership in order of operational performance.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government has been clear that passenger train operations will transfer to a public-sector operator as current contracts end or reach their contractual break point, avoiding the need to pay compensation to the current operators. The Secretary of State is continually monitoring performance and will not hesitate to take appropriate action when operators fall short, up to and including termination if the relevant contractual conditions are met.

■ Railways: Greater Manchester and West Midlands

Sir Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[2841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans for the Pay As You Go train ticketing pilots for (a) Greater Manchester and (b) the West Midlands to begin in 2025.

Simon Lightwood:

This Government remains committed to making ticketing simpler and more flexible for passengers and to working with local authorities to support integrated transport plans in their areas. Following the announcement in February that Pay As You Go (PAYG) pilots would be launched in 2025, we have been working closely with Transport for the West Midlands, the West Midlands Rail Executive, Transport for Greater Manchester and train operators to finalise delivery plans for the PAYG pilots including launch dates.

■ Railways: ICT**Sir Alec Shelbrooke:**[\[2840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with train operators on disruption to (a) services and (b) timetables following the worldwide IT outage on 19 July 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

My officials were in touch with ToCs at the time. As the Minister (Ellie Reeves, Minister without Portfolio) said in her statement to the House of Commons on Monday 22 July, the transport sector will review its response and implement any learnings.

The Cabinet Office has led a review of the incident, identifying lessons. The Department has engaged with this process and will implement recommendations with the transport sector, including the rail industry and train operating companies, as appropriate.

■ Railways: Money**Navendu Mishra:**[\[3158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to require train operating companies to accept cash payments for onboard catering purchases.

Simon Lightwood:

Catering services are a commercial matter for each train operating company. Train operators are responsible for considering the equality impacts of operational changes such as to catering payment methods, and are expected by the Department for Transport to take local needs into account.

■ Railways: Nationalisation**Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[3223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when she plans to set specific performance targets for the nationalisation of the railways.

Simon Lightwood:

Railway passenger services currently operated by private sector companies under contract to the Secretary of State will transfer into DfT OLR Holdings Ltd (DOHL) when current contracts reach their end date or contractual break point.

The Government will continue to set targets for public sector train operating companies on a range of measures including punctuality, reliability and quality of service as appropriate, and will continue to hold them to account for performance against these targets. Modern service agreements, currently in development, will come into force for each train operator when operations transition into public ownership.

■ Railways: Safety**Dan Norris:**[\[2721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will hold discussions with the Office of Road and Rail on the potential merits of setting up a new Heritage Rail Safety and Standards Board.

Simon Lightwood:

Officials in my department have had several meetings over the last year with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) about the Heritage Rail Association's (HRA) plans to establish a Heritage Rail Safety and Standards Board. We understand that the HRA is progressing with its plans, and my officials will continue their engagement with the ORR as this develops.

■ Railways: South West and Wales**Sir Alec Shelbrooke:**[\[2838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Office for Rail and Road's annual UK rail industry assessment, published on 19 July, what steps her Department is taking to ensure Network Rail delivers its performance improvement plan for Wales and the Western region by 31 August.

Simon Lightwood:

Improving performance on the railway is a key priority, and the Rail Minister is expecting to meet Network Rail and Great Western Railway this month to discuss performance on these routes. Following the launch of Network Rail's £140m performance improvement plan, we are starting to see improvements in performance, and we expect more in the coming months. We understand Network Rail delivered a final plan to the Office for Rail & Road by 31 August.

■ Railways: Standards**Sir Alec Shelbrooke:**[\[2839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information she holds on the number of train journeys that were cancelled across the rail network as a direct result of crew shortage on 14 July.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department does not hold the requested data concerning journey cancellations on 14 July 2024 directly due to crew shortages.

Railways: Switzerland**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[2756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with her Swiss counterpart on the potential merits of direct rail connections between London and Basel.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government fully supports the growth of international rail passenger services, including potential new direct connections, and recognises the socio-economic benefits that these provide for UK citizens and businesses. DfT officials regularly engage with their Swiss counterparts to discuss the potential merits of direct rail connections between the UK and Switzerland, as well as supporting the work of industry partners to explore their feasibility. The Secretary of State and the Rail Minister hope to discuss this shortly with Swiss counterparts, including exploring plans to formalise our cooperation on this matter.

Railways: Telford**Shaun Davies:**[\[3306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential economic impact of introducing a direct train from Telford to London.

Simon Lightwood:

No assessment has been made of the economic benefit of introducing a direct train from Telford to London. Since June 2024, Telford Central has had a regular fast service every 30 minutes to and from Birmingham New Street that provides good onward connections to and from London Euston, and journey times of as little as 2 hours 20 minutes.

Railways: Timetables**Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[3225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how timetable adjustments will be managed (a) during and (b) after the transition of operations into public ownership.

Simon Lightwood:

There will not be any immediate changes to how timetable adjustments are managed during and immediately after the transition of passenger train operations into public ownership. Railway passenger services currently operated by private sector companies under contract to the Secretary of State will transfer into DfT OLR Holdings Ltd when current contracts end or reach their contractual break point, and timetable adjustments will be managed as they currently are.

As announced in the King's Speech 2024, forthcoming legislation will establish Great British Railways – an arm's length body which will act as a “directing mind”, with a relentless focus on delivering for passengers and freight customers. As outlined in Getting Britain Moving, the Government's vision is that, within the clear strategic direction set by the Secretary of State, Great British Railways will, once established, have operational independence and be responsible for planning timetables.

■ Railways: West Midlands

Shaun Davies:

[3308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential economic impact of electrifying the train track from Telford to (a) Wolverhampton and (b) Shrewsbury.

Simon Lightwood:

With an indicative cost of ~£270m, Midlands Connect, the sub-national transport body which researches, develops and progresses transport projects in the Midlands, view electrification of this route as prohibitively expensive.

However, they are refreshing the Business Case for line speed improvements to this route, and my officials are in regular contact with Midlands Connect to support them in this work. The Minister of State for Rail expects to receive an updated Business Case later this year.

■ Restoring Your Railway Fund

Helen Morgan:

[4061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she made an assessment of the adequacy of each business case submitted to the Restoring Your Railway Fund before deciding to withdraw that funding.

Simon Lightwood:

The Chancellor's statement of 29 July 2024 confirmed that the Restoring Your Railway (RYR) programme will be brought to a close. Aside from RYR projects currently at the delivery stage or in construction, all remaining RYR-originated projects are now being considered as part of preparations for the upcoming Spending Review. This will include reviewing the business cases of these projects. Ministers have been clear that not all proposed transport projects will be able to proceed to delivery due to the challenging financial situation facing the Department.

■ Restoring Your Railway Fund: Weardale Line

Sam Rushworth:

[3389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the decision was taken not to grant Restore Your Railway funding to the Weardale Line; and for what reason that decision was taken.

Lilian Greenwood:

Aside from Restoring Your Railway (RYR) projects currently at the delivery stage or in construction, all remaining RYR-originated projects, including the Darlington to Weardale line, are now being considered as part of preparations for the Spending Review. Ministers have been clear that not all projects will be able to proceed to delivery due to the challenging financial situation facing the Department.

■ Road Works**Helen Grant:**[\[2863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to increase local authorities powers to prevent disruptive works by (a) utility companies and (b) Highways England.

Lilian Greenwood:

Utility companies have a right to access the public road network to repair and maintain the services on which we all rely, as well as to meet the requirements of regulators, for example, to restore services to customers. Utility companies must send a permit to the relevant local highway authority within 2 hours of being on-site and the authority can assess and agree the necessary duration of the works with the company to ensure disruption to road users is minimised. National Highways operate their own arrangements for agreeing access for utility companies to the strategic road network.

■ Road Works: Fees and Charges**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[3804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her policy is on the lane rental scheme.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government generally supports ways of working that incentivise effective co-ordination, planning and delivery of road and street works. The Government is still in its early stages and is carefully considering next steps in this policy area.

■ Roads: Accidents**Sir John Hayes:**[\[3686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many accidents were recorded on the (a) A16, (b) A17 and (c) A151 in each of the last five years.

Lilian Greenwood:

The number of reported personal injury road collisions on the A16, A17 and A151 in the last 5 years for which data is available can be found in the table below.

REPORTED ROAD COLLISIONS ON THE A16, A17, A151, 2018 TO 2022

Road	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
A151	49	40	45	32	46
A16	112	115	87	117	128
A17	74	73	63	75	67

■ Roads: Aldershot**Alex Baker:**[\[4120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that (a) roads are adequately maintained and (b) potholes are fixed in a timely manner in Aldershot constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network. Hampshire County Council (HCC) is the local highway authority for the Aldershot constituency, and it is therefore responsible for the maintenance of the local road network. HCC will receive £37.7 million from this Department during 2024/25 to enable it to carry out its local highway maintenance responsibilities. Funding for future years is a matter for the Spending Review.

■ Roads: Capital Investment**Helen Morgan:**[\[4274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which projects her Department plans to include in the third Road Investment Strategy.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is considering the content and timing of the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) alongside all transport infrastructure spend. We will provide an update in due course.

■ Roads: Construction**Caroline Voaden:**[\[3544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what contractual penalties will be incurred by (a) the A303 Stonehenge tunnel, (b) the A27 bypass project and (c) other major infrastructure projects that have now been cancelled.

Lilian Greenwood:

In the case of the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down (Stonehenge Tunnel), although the contracts were awarded, the construction had not commenced. Following the

announcement to cancel the project National Highways is working with its contractors to bring ontracts to a close in a controlled manner.

In the case of the A27 Arundel bypass, although a design and build contract had been awarded, construction had not commenced and following the deferral announcement in March 2023 the contract was brought to a controlled close with limited liabilities or additional costs.

■ Roads: Finance

Greg Smith: [\[3113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to spend £8.3 billion on local roads.

Lilian Greenwood:

The government is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network, and to enabling local highway authorities to fix up to a million more potholes a year. The previous government made a number of funding commitments, the affordability of each of which is being examined closely as part of the Spending Review.

Greg Smith: [\[3114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to mitigate the impact of population density on the allocation of road safety funding.

Lilian Greenwood:

The allocation of general road safety funding does not take into account population density as a funding requirement unless specified. The majority of our funding for road safety improvements is based on collision data, including killed and seriously injured statistics as well as road length. Targeted road safety improvements are devolved to the local authorities.

■ Roads: Safety

Sarah Champion: [\[3703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has to publish a road safety strategy.

Lilian Greenwood:

Since the general election, the Department has begun work on a new Road Safety Strategy - the first in over a decade. The Department will share more details on this Road Safety Strategy in due course.

■ Speed Limits: Wales

Sir John Hayes: [\[2735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has met Ministers in the Welsh Government to discuss the impact of 20mph zones in Wales.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Secretary of State has not met Ministers in the Welsh Government to discuss the impact of 20mph zones in Wales.

Stockport Station: Repairs and Maintenance**Navendu Mishra:**[\[3160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to refurbish Stockport railway station.

Lilian Greenwood:

Avanti West Coast and Network Rail hold the responsibility for the operations, maintenance, and refurbishment activities at Stockport station. I understand that the lift on platform 0 and the station entrance doors have recently been refurbished. More substantial work is being planned for the underpass in due course.

Taxis: Licensing**Tom Gordon:**[\[3285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has to tackle the issue of taxis licensed by one taxi licensing authority operating in the area of another taxi licensing authority.

Simon Lightwood:

The Secretary of State and I are aware of the concerns about the current legislative and regulatory framework for taxi and private hire vehicle licensing, and are looking at options to improve the current regulatory position.

Transport for London: Staff**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[2766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions her Department has had with Transport for London on staff shortages.

Simon Lightwood:

Transport in London is devolved and is the responsibility of the Mayor of London and TfL. DfT Officials work closely with TfL on a range of issues.

Transport: Aldershot**Alex Baker:**[\[4122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate her Department has made of the level of (a) car ownership, (b) bus usage, (c) light rail usage, (d) train usage and (e) active travel usage in Aldershot constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The information requested regarding (a) car ownership, (b) bus usage (c) light rail usage, (d) train usage and (e) active travel usage in Aldershot constituency is not available. Geographic availability of data differs depending on the data source.

Where possible, information has been provided for the constituency of Aldershot. Otherwise, statistics for the local authority of 'Rushmoor', county of 'Hampshire', or the area of 'Hampshire and Isle of Wight' are provided where relevant.

Car ownership

According to the Department's vehicle statistics, there were 138,805 licensed cars as at end March 2024 in the Aldershot Constituency.

Bus usage

According to the Department's annual bus statistics, in the year ending March 2023 there were 20.8 million local bus journeys taken in Hampshire.

Train usage

The Regional Rail Usage Statistics published by the Office of Rail and Road show that in the year ending March 2023 there were 25.0 million passenger rail journeys within the South East of England that started or ended in Hampshire and Isle of Wight. There were also 15.3 million journeys that started or ended in Hampshire and Isle of Wight that started or ended from regions outside the South East of England.

Active travel usage

According to the Department's annual walking and cycling statistics, between November 2022 and November 2023, 66.4% of adults walked or cycled, for any purpose, at least once per week in Rushmoor (Non-Metropolitan District). The equivalent figure for Hampshire (County) is 73.6%.

■ **Transport: Oswestry**

Helen Morgan:

[4060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve transport links in Oswestry.

Simon Lightwood:

This Government is committed to ensuring that people have access to transport and transport infrastructure that enables them to travel to the destinations they want to reach and meets their needs. As my Right Honourable Friend the Chancellor has set out, decisions must be made based on the assessment of the spending inheritance from the previous Government. The Department has ambitious plans for improving transport connectivity, including through the Buses Bill. The Bill aims to deliver the government's plan for improving the bus network and ending the postcode lottery. This plan includes providing more control and flexibility over bus funding, giving local leaders the freedom to take decisions to deliver their local transport priorities, and removing the ban on the creation of new municipal bus companies.

TREASURY■ **Agriculture: Scotland**

Graeme Downie: [\[3590\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when she will confirm agricultural funding for Scotland beyond March 2025.

Darren Jones:

The 2025-26 Scottish Government block grant funding will be confirmed at phase 1 of Spending Review 2025 on 30 October 2024.

It is for the Scottish Government to allocate their funding in devolved areas, including agriculture.

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse**

Dan Carden: [\[3060\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the Institute of Alcohol Studies' article entitled £27.4 billion cost of alcohol harm in England every year, published on 20 May 2024.

James Murray:

Following the recent alcohol duty reforms, all alcoholic products are now taxed by strength. This reflects public health priorities and helps to address potentially harmful products like 'white' ciders and strong fortified wines, which are often cited by health groups as being abused.

The Chancellor has confirmed that she will set out plans for tax – as well as spending and borrowing – in the usual way at the Budget on 30 October.

HM Treasury welcomes representations as part of this policy making process and Budget submissions will be received through the online portal until 10 September.

■ **Armed Forces: Private Education**

Andrew Bowie: [\[3017\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of removing the VAT exemption on independent school fees on deployed armed forces personnel and their families.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[3666\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to exempt the children of military families from the proposal to apply VAT to 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 education system.

Recognising the enormous sacrifices our military families make, the Ministry of Defence provide the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) to eligible Service Personnel. The government will monitor closely the impact of these policy changes on affected military families and the upcoming Spending Review is the right time to consider any changes to this scheme.

The Government has published a technical Note and draft VAT legislation outlining the changes; a technical consultation will be open until 15 September.

■ Bank of England: Climate Change

Mark Garnier: [\[2879\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to require the Bank of England to (a) take account of climate change in its mandates and (b) publish a timetable for doing this.

Tulip Siddiq:

Tackling climate change is a key part of this Government's agenda, reflected in our Mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower. We recognise the significant risks posed by climate change to the financial system and wider economy, and are committed to transitioning the economy to Net Zero by 2050 and realising the growth potential of doing so.

In opposition, we set out our plans to reverse changes made by the previous Government to downgrade the importance of climate change in the Bank of England's mandates. We remain committed to making this change and will do so in due course – the Government is required to issue new remit letters for the Bank of England's Financial Policy Committee (FPC) and Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) each year.

■ Bank Services: Access

Steve Darling: [\[3339\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a national framework inclusion strategy on accessible and inclusive banking.

Steve Darling: [\[3859\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to help increase financial inclusion of people with learning disabilities.

Tulip Siddiq:

Ensuring all individuals have access to the appropriate financial services and products they need is a key priority for Government and is vital to supporting people's financial resilience and wellbeing. It is also an essential part of achieving inclusive growth and ensuring individuals are able to fully participate in the economy.

As part of prioritising financial inclusion, the Government is working closely with the financial services sector to roll out at least 350 banking hubs which provide

individuals and businesses up and down the country with in-person cash and banking services. I am committed to considering what more can be done to support accessible and inclusive banking for all.

■ Banking Hubs

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2771\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to help ensure that high street banks and building societies are incentivised to provide bank hubs.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK's world-leading financial services sector enables all people to have access to affordable products and services. That's why the Government is working closely with industry to ensure that 350 banking hubs are delivered by the end of this Parliament.

Over 60 banking hubs are already open and Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, expect 100 hubs to be open by the end of the year.

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[4181\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will have discussions with major banking institutions on progress in establishing banking hubs (a) in rural areas, (b) in small towns and (c) nationally.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and high streets, and is committed to championing sufficient access for all as a priority. This is why the Government is working closely with industry to ensure that at least 350 banking hubs are delivered across the UK.

Over 60 banking hubs are already open and Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, expect 100 hubs to be open by the end of the year.

The specific location of these hubs is determined independently by LINK, the operator of the UK's largest ATM network. Criteria that LINK considers includes whether another bank branch remains nearby, population, number of cash-accepting businesses and the financial vulnerability of the community.

■ Banking Hubs: Disability

Steve Darling:

[\[3860\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to ensure access to cash for disabled people through the roll-out of shared-banking hubs in local communities.

Tulip Siddiq:

Access to financial services is key to ensuring all people, including those who are disabled and require in-person services, can participate fully in the economy and in society.

This is why the Government is committed to protecting access to cash withdrawal and deposit services for individuals and businesses, and welcomes the FCA's final regulatory rules for cash access coming into force on 18 September.

The Government is also working closely with industry to roll out at least 350 banking hubs which will provide communities with critical cash and banking services. Over 140 banking hubs have been announced so far, with 100 expected to open by the end of the year. Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, work to ensure that their physical premises are fully accessible, and their services promote an inclusive environment.

■ Business Rates

David Simmonds: [\[3251\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2024 to Question 409 on Business Rates, whether she plans to take steps to review business rate (a) poundage, (b) reliefs, (c) multipliers and (d) valuations.

Gregory Stafford: [\[3658\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to increase business rates.

James Murray:

The government is committed to a business rates system which raises the same revenue but in a fairer way. The government has pledged to level the playing field between the high street and online giants, incentivise investment, tackle empty properties and support entrepreneurship.

The government will work closely with all stakeholders, including those businesses that shoulder the greatest burden from business rates, as it develops the detail of its reforms. The Government will set out further details in due course.

■ Business: VAT

Rupert Lowe: [\[3446\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses have a taxable turnover of (a) £85,000-£89,999 and (b) £90,000-£95,000; and if she will make a cost-benefit analysis of the VAT threshold for businesses.

James Murray:

Data on numbers of businesses with turnover either side of the VAT registration threshold have been published by the Office for Budget Responsibility here: Economic and fiscal outlook - March 2023 - Office for Budget Responsibility (obr.uk), see 'Supporting Documents', 'March 2023 Economic and fiscal outlook – charts and tables: Chapter 3', Chart 3.C. Data on turnover of businesses since the threshold was increased to £90,000 are not yet available.

At £90,000, the UK has a higher VAT registration threshold than any EU Member State and the joint highest in the OECD. The Government keeps all taxes under review and will take decisions across tax and spending at the Budget.

■ Coronavirus: Contracts

John Glen:

[\[2871\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the terms of reference for the appointment of the proposed Covid corruption commissioner are.

Darren Jones:

Detail on the proposed Fraud Commissioner is available via www.gov.uk/public-appointments.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[2926\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential (a) merits, (b) costs and (c) viability of establishing a financial compensation scheme for taxpayers who did not receive government financial support during the covid-19 pandemic.

Darren Jones:

The Government currently has no plans to assess or pursue such a financial compensation scheme.

HM Treasury provided an extensive package of support for individuals, businesses and public services throughout the pandemic, including an estimated £98 billion through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Together the schemes supported approximately 14.6 million employed and self-employed individuals, helping to protect jobs, businesses and livelihoods.

The previous Government provided support through the CJRS and SEISS based on two principles, a) targeting support at those who needed it most and b), guarding against error, fraud and abuse, whilst reaching as many individuals as possible. The SEISS paid out over £28 billion to nearly 3 million self-employed individuals and was one of the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world. Those ineligible for the SEISS may have been eligible for other elements of financial support provided by the previous Government.

■ Energy: Taxation

Paula Barker:

[\[3216\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a windfall tax for energy companies to help support consumers with the cost of energy bills.

James Murray:

The Energy Profits Levy (EPL) was introduced in May 2022 to tax the extraordinary profits of oil and gas companies operating in the UK and on the UK Continental Shelf. The levy is currently set at a rate of 35%, bringing the overall headline tax rate on upstream oil and gas activities to 75%.

In July, the government announced it would deliver on the commitment it made, whilst in opposition, to ensure the oil and gas industry contribute more towards our clean energy transition. This will be achieved by extending the EPL to March 2030, increasing its rate by three percentage points to 38%, and by removing unjustifiably generous investment allowances. Money raised from these changes will support accelerating the transition to clean energy, increasing security and independence while providing sustainable jobs for the future and helping to protect electricity bills against future price shocks.

The EPL changes will be implemented from 1 November, with further details to be announced at Budget.

Andrew Bowie: [\[3674\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her planned timetable is for increasing the rate at which the Energy Profits Levy is charged.

Andrew Bowie: [\[3675\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her planned timetable is for ending the investment allowance within the Energy Profits Levy.

James Murray:

Changes to the Energy Profits Levy (EPL), including increasing the levy by 3 per cent to 38 per cent and removing the levy's 29% investment allowance, will be implemented from 1 November 2024. This was announced by the Chancellor on 29th July and the Government will legislate for these changes in the Autumn Finance Bill.

■ Financial Services

Mr Luke Charters: [\[3900\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has plans to work with the regulatory technology sector to improve sanctions screening in financial services.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) within HM Treasury is responsible for ensuring financial sanctions are properly understood, implemented and enforced. OFSI regularly engages with the financial services sector including through issuing guidance on our compliance and enforcement approach.

While the Treasury is responsible for setting the overall legal framework for financial sanctions, the Financial Conduct Authority is responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry. The FCA works closely with FCA-authorized financial institutions to ensure that their sanctions screening and controls are appropriate for the sanctions risk that firms are exposed to. *In September 2023, the FCA published the outcomes of its work on sanctions systems and controls, including those relating to screening processes.* The FCA also aims to encourage the use of innovation and new technologies, including the development of Regulatory Technology (RegTech) tools within the financial services market as a means to help fight financial crime. OFSI alongside the FCA will continue to undertake engagement

with the financial services sector to raise awareness and compliance of financial sanctions.

■ First Time Buyers

Priti Patel:

[2873]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential (a) merits of extending First Time Buyers' Relief after March 2025 and (b) impact of not extending First Time Buyers' Relief after March 2025 on first time buyers.

James Murray:

The level at which purchasers of residential property start paying Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) is currently £250,000, and this is due to revert to £125,000 on 1 April 2025. For first-time buyers, the nil-rate band is currently £425,000 and the purchase price limit for accessing the relief is currently £625,000. On 1 April 2025, these rates will revert to £300,000 and £500,000 respectively.

SDLT continues to be an important source of Government revenue, raising several billion pounds each year to help pay for the essential services the Government provides.

The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the usual tax policy making process. Tax changes, including changes to SDLT, are announced at fiscal events, where decisions are taken in the round.

■ Heat Batteries

Andrew Rosindell:

[2769]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if her Department will grant heat batteries Energy Saving Material status.

James Murray:

The installation of qualifying energy-saving materials in residential accommodation and buildings used solely for a relevant charitable purpose benefits from a temporary VAT zero rate until March 2027, after which they will revert to the reduced rate of VAT at five per cent. This support aids households and charities in improving the energy efficiency of their buildings, helping to reduce carbon emissions.

Last year, a Call for Evidence (CfE) seeking views on additional technologies to potentially include within this relief was run. Heat batteries were one of the technologies put forwards by respondents. As set out in the Government response to the CfE, at that time, the Government was unable to identify sufficient independent data regarding the efficiency of heat batteries, making it difficult to assess the technology's energy-saving properties objectively.

The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the policy making process. Changes to the tax system are announced at fiscal events in the usual way.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Farms

Mark Pritchard:

[\[2789\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to support farm owners to (a) diversify their businesses and (b) improve their financial security by providing accommodation for furnished holiday lettings on their farms.

James Murray:

The Government is supporting farmers and land managers to adapt their business models and access tailored support to do so through the agricultural transition, including through diversification. For example, farmers can access free business advice through the Farming Resilience Fund.

The Government recognises that many farmers may choose to let out part of their estates as furnished holiday lettings (FHLs). Nevertheless, while the government recognises the important role that FHLs have, including those located on farms, in the visitor economy, tax rules currently privilege short-term lets over long-term rentals. The Government will therefore abolish the FHL tax regime from April 2025, which will equalise the tax treatment of landlords' property income and gains.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Rural Areas

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[3404\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of abolishing the Furnished Holiday Lettings regime on rural areas depending on tourism; and what steps she is taking to support people who let short-term furnished holiday properties.

James Murray:

The Government will abolish the Furnished Holiday Lets tax regime from April 2025. Short-term lets will continue to play an important role in the UK's tourism economy, including in rural communities, without the FHL tax regime.

The changes the Government has announced equalise the tax treatment of landlords' property income and gains.

■ Individual Savings Accounts

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[3876\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make her policy to raise the cap for Lifetime ISAs in line with house price inflation.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government remains of the view that the Lifetime ISA property price cap 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.

■ Inheritance Tax

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[3095\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential implications for her policies of differences in inheritance tax thresholds for people (a) with and (b) without children; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of such thresholds on saving for adult care costs.

James Murray:

The estates of all individuals benefit from a £325,000 nil-rate band for inheritance tax. The residence nil-rate band is a further £175,000 for those passing on a qualifying residence on death to their direct descendants, such as children or grandchildren. Other countries recognise the relationships between parents and children with different thresholds in equivalent systems.

The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the policy making process.

Alex Mayer:

[\[3433\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if her Department will make an (a) estimate of the potential costs and (b) assessment of the potential merits of extending inheritance tax relief to long-term cohabiting and co-dependent siblings.

James Murray:

There is a longstanding inheritance tax exemption for transfers between spouses and civil partners to reflect the formal legal obligations that marriage and civil partnerships involve. As with all taxes, reforms to inheritance tax, such as the potential extension of this exemption to transfers between cohabiting siblings, will be kept under review as part of the normal policy making process and the Chancellor will announce any changes to the tax system at fiscal events in the normal way.

■ Offshore Industry: Licensing

Mark Garnier:

[\[2875\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the potential impact of the ban on new oil and gas licences on taxation revenues to (a) 2030, (b) 2035, (c) 2040, (d) 2045 and (e) 2050.

James Murray:

The government will consult later this year on the implementation of its manifesto position not to issue new oil and gas licences to explore new fields.

Forecasts for oil and gas tax revenues are published by the Office for Budget Responsibility.

■ Offshore Industry: Taxation

Stephen Flynn: [\[3088\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will meet with energy (a) companies and (b) workers in Aberdeen who will be affected by an (i) increase and (ii) extension of the windfall tax on oil and gas.

James Murray:

The government is committed to maintaining an open and constructive dialogue with stakeholders to finalise the changes that were announced in the Chancellor's Statement on July 29 in relation to the Energy Profits Levy, ensuring a phased and responsible transition for the North Sea. Money raised from these changes will support accelerating the transition to clean energy, increasing security and independence while providing sustainable jobs for the future and helping to protect electricity bills against future price shocks.

The Exchequer Secretary met with senior representatives from the oil and gas sector whilst chairing an Oil and Gas Fiscal Forum meeting in Aberdeen on August 12, and he met directly with workers in the sector. In addition, Treasury Ministers and officials continue to engage with the sector and various interested parties ahead of announcing further details of the final policy design at Budget.

■ Performing Arts: VAT

Damian Hinds: [\[2815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether (a) music schools, (b) dance schools and (c) Centres for Advanced Training will be exempt from VAT after January 2025.

Damian Hinds: [\[2816\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether families in receipt of funding for attending a specialist school through the Music and Dance Scheme will be exempt from paying VAT on the remainder of those fees.

Damian Hinds: [\[2829\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the VAT treatment for SEND therapies provided to independent school pupils will be after 1 January 2025 where (a) the therapy is provided by the school and (b) the therapy is provided by an external provider.

Tom Morrison: [\[3387\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the proposed removal of the VAT exemption for private school fees will include tuition centres that provide (a) only after school and weekend services and (b) full time services.

James Murray:

On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

All institutions that meet the definition of a private school set out in the draft legislation are within scope of this policy. The draft legislation can be found online here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a7a1f8a3c2a28abb50d8c1/Private_Schools_Draft_Legislation_-_DIGITAL.pdf

This definition includes music schools, dance schools, Centres for Advanced Training, and tuition centres where they charge fees for full-time education for pupils of compulsory school age. Institutions that charge fees for full-time education suitable for people over compulsory school age but under 19 (such as sixth forms) are also within scope of this policy.

All education services, vocational training, and boarding services provided by institutions that meet this definition of a private school will be subject to VAT, including extracurricular classes. The VAT treatment of Special Educational Needs therapies will depend on the type of therapy and who it is provided by. If the therapy is a means of supporting the education delivered to and is provided by the private school, it will likely be subject to VAT. If it is a type of therapy that qualifies for the health and social care VAT exemptions (for instance, occupational therapy), it will remain exempt from VAT. This policy does not affect the VAT treatment of services provided by an unconnected third-party who carries out their services on a private school's premises.

The full fees of pupils in receipt of funding through the Music and Dance Scheme will be subject to VAT. The right time to consider any changes to schemes such as the Music and Dance Scheme is at the Spending Review.

The Government does not expect fees to go up by 20% as a result of this policy change, and the Government expects private schools to take steps to minimise fee increases.

Further details on this policy can be found in the technical note published alongside the legislation. The technical note can be found online here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a7a1bdce1fd0da7b592eb6/Technical_Note_-_DIGITAL.pdf

HMRC will also be publishing bespoke guidance for schools, and holding support sessions to help them understand their liabilities as a VAT-registered business.

■ Personal Income

Paula Barker: [\[3215\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of wealth inequality.

James Murray:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes the Gini coefficient for aggregate household wealth, which is a measure of wealth inequality, and this is released every few years using the Wealth and Assets survey. The ONS has published the Gini coefficient of wealth since July 2006.

■ Private Education: Business Rates

Damian Hinds: [\[2820\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the average annual cost to independent schools of proposed changes in business rates.

James Murray:

On 29 July 2024, the Government announced that eligibility for business rates charitable rate relief will be removed from private schools in England.

The increased business rates liability will vary from school to school and will be determined by their underlying Rateable Value, set by the Valuation Office Agency independently of central government. The government will confirm the introduction of these tax policy changes at the Budget, at which point the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) will certify the government's costings and impact analysis for these measures.

This was a tough but necessary decision that will help to secure additional funding to support the delivery of 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.

■ Private Education: Fees and Charges

Rachael Maskell: [\[3993\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees on children who (a) attend independent schools and (b) do not have an EHCP and (i) are in care, (ii) experience mental ill-health and (iii) have other SEND challenges.

Dr Neil Hudson: [\[4047\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of pupils moving from independent to state schools as a result of the planned introduction of VAT on independent schools.

Helen Morgan:

[R] [\[4058\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential impact of applying VAT to private school fees on local sports clubs.

Susan Murray:

[\[4098\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of applying VAT to independent school fees on the affordability of those 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

This VAT change will not impact pupils with most acute additional needs where these can only be met in private schools, as determined by an Education and Health Care Plan in England, and equivalent processes in other nations.

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.

The government will publish a Tax Information and Impact Note setting out the impacts of the changes, including the equalities impacts, alongside the Finance Bill.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3995\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees on the financial viability of Steiner schools.

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

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The government will publish a Tax Information and Impact Note setting out the impacts of the changes, including the equalities impacts, alongside the Finance Bill.

■ Private Education: Taxation

Damian Hinds: [\[2809\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has carried out an equality impact assessment of proposed tax changes on independent schools.

Caroline Voaden: [\[3540\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the proposed application of VAT on private school fees on families who are unable to access appropriate SEND support in state schools.

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

This VAT change will not impact pupils with most acute additional needs where these can only be met in private schools, as determined by an Education and Health Care Plan in England, and equivalent processes in other nations.

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The government will publish a Tax Information and Impact Note setting out the impacts of the changes, including the equalities impacts, alongside the Finance Bill.

■ Private Education: VAT

Damian Hinds: [\[2832\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish guidance for independent schools on (a) VAT registration and (b) operation of the new system for VAT on school fees.

Damian Hinds: [\[2833\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what resources her Department plans to provide HMRC to support independent schools become VAT registered by 1 January 2025.

James Murray:

The government recognises that, for many private schools, this will be the first time they have needed to register for VAT.

The government is committed to supporting these schools to ensure that the registration process is as smooth as possible for them, and to ensuring they have the necessary support in order to be able to correctly charge VAT and remit it to HMRC.

Ahead of 1 January 2025, HMRC will be:

- publishing bespoke guidance products on GOV.UK
- updating registration systems, and
- putting additional resource in place to help process applications.

HMRC will also be contacting private schools directly to provide information about support sessions.

Damian Hinds:

[\[2834\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what communications she plans to issue to smaller independent schools on the proposed application of VAT to private school fees.

James Murray:

The government recognises that, for many private schools, this will be the first time they have needed to register for VAT.

The government is committed to supporting these schools to ensure that the registration process is as smooth as possible for them, and to ensuring they have the necessary support in order to be able to correctly charge VAT and remit it to HMRC.

Ahead of 1 January 2025, HMRC will be:

- publishing bespoke guidance products on GOV.UK
- updating registration systems, and
- putting additional resource in place to help process applications.

HMRC will also be contacting private schools directly to provide information about support sessions.

■ Public Works Loan Board

Shaun Davies:

[\[3320\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of reducing the onward interest charge of the Public Works Loan Board to local councils on (a) housing growth, (b) economic growth, (c) job creation and (d) local government viability.

Darren Jones:

The PWLB lending facility exists to provide cost effective loans to local authorities to support investment and service delivery. HM Treasury keeps the interest rates of PWLB loans under review to ensure that PWLB lending remains supportive of prudent investment by local authorities, while meeting the requirement in the National Loans Act 1968 that HM Treasury does not lend at a loss. This includes keeping

under review the discounted rate for investment in social housing through Housing Revenue Accounts that is currently available until June 2025.

■ Railways: Nationalisation

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[3226\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of public ownership of the railways on Government debt in the (a) short and (b) medium term.

Darren Jones:

Both publicly and privately owned DfT-contracted train operating companies are already included in the public sector, classified by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as public non-financial corporations currently. A transfer of these DfT-contracted train operating companies to government ownership will have no immediate impact on public debt statistics. The ONS are responsible for classification decisions affecting the public finances and measurement of public debt.

■ Russia: Sanctions

Adam Jogee: [\[3454\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much tax was taken on the interest accrued on Russian assets frozen in UK banks in each of the last five years.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI)'s, part of HM Treasury, announced in its 2022-2023 Annual Review that between February 2022 and October 2023, £22.7 billion in frozen funds had been reported in relation to the Russia sanctions regime. OFSI does not disclose the value held by particular designated persons and so the figure is provided as a cumulative total of assets reported.

Frozen assets are not transferred to HM Treasury and there is no change of ownership. Interest accrued on frozen assets remains subject to the asset freeze, and are to be frozen immediately by the person in possession or control of them.

There is no obligation for a relevant institution to inform OFSI when it credits an account with interest and therefore OFSI does not hold this information.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Women

Kim Johnson: [\[3185\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman entitled Women's State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues, published on 21 March 2024, HC 638, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on that report.

Darren Jones:

This is a serious report, requiring serious consideration. The Department for Work and Pensions is the lead department for this and need time to carefully review and consider it.

Once this work has been undertaken, the Government will set out their approach.

Stocks and Shares: Taxation**Manuela Perteghella:**[\[3396\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of (a) the impact of share buybacks on economic inequality and (b) the potential impact of a targeted tax on this issue.

Manuela Perteghella:[\[3397\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a share buyback tax.

James Murray:

Share buybacks are already subject to taxation in the form of Stamp Taxes on Shares (STS), which raise important revenue – up to £4.4bn per year – that helps to fund our public services.

There are also rules in place to ensure that any returns that arise to shareholders as part of a buyback are treated consistently with the policies and principles that underpin the broader tax system.

The Government keeps all taxes under review.

Tax Allowances**Adam Thompson:**[\[3323\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the viability of an amendment to section 180(1)(a) of the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003, to increase the maximum value of employer loans in the context of levels of inflation since the last increase.

James Murray:

Within the current benefit in kind tax rules employers are able to provide their employees with a loan, which can be provided tax free, as long as the total value of the loan is below £10,000. This type of loan can be used to make purchases such as train season tickets, most of which are under £10,000, and the employee will then reimburse their employer out of their net salary.

The Government keeps all aspects of the tax system under review. Any decisions on future changes will be taken in the context of the wider public finances.

■ Tax Allowances: Voluntary Work

Graham Leadbitter:

[3600]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential (a) merits of introducing (i) an increased personal tax allowance, (ii) a tax code adjustment and (ii) other tax incentives for charity volunteers and (b) impact of such incentives on the (A) recruitment and (B) retention of such volunteers (1) in rural areas and (2) nationally.

James Murray:

The government recognises the vital role charities play in supporting individuals and communities, delivering a huge range of services up and down the country.

The government continues to support the sector and encourages people to volunteer. However, introducing a new tax code and tax incentives, or increasing the Personal Allowance to incentivise individuals to volunteer would make the system more complicated and difficult for taxpayers to navigate.

The government must prioritise ensuring the tax system supports strong public finances. Given the current state of the public spending inheritance, difficult choices are necessary. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has emphasised that sound fiscal policy is crucial for economic stability and growth, which are essential for keeping taxes as low as possible, while continuing to deliver high-quality public services.

■ Taxation

Sarah Olney:

[2971]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing citizens with a breakdown of what proportion of their tax payments are invested into each sector of the economy.

James Murray:

The government regularly publishes a breakdown of total public tax receipts and total public sector spending. The most recent of these can be found in Annex B of the *Spring Budget 2024* document, which is published on gov.uk here: [Spring Budget 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/124444/Spring_Budget_2024_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf). Citizens can also see how this breakdown applies to their tax contributions via the Annual Tax Summary service which can be accessed here: [Annual Tax Summary - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/124444/Annual_Tax_Summary_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)

A more detailed breakdown of current receipts, public sector current expenditure (PSCE) and public sector gross investment (PSGI), is set out in the Economic and Fiscal Outlook (EFO) published by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). The most recent of these can be found in Tables A5 and A7 in the EFO published in March 2024, alongside the Spring Budget. This can be found on the OBR's website here: [EFOs - Office for Budget Responsibility \(obr.uk\)](https://obr.uk/efo/).

■ Travel: Tax Allowances

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[3272\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has plans to review and update the Overseas Scale Rates.

James Murray:

Employers have a choice about whether to use the Overseas Scale Rates (OSR) or to pay the actual expenses incurred. If an employer pays actual expenses, they must check the employees' receipts, but they do not have to do this if they use the OSR.

There will be occasions where OSR may not reflect the current prices in a particular location. If the employer chooses not to reimburse all of the actual expenses, the employee may claim tax relief on the difference from HMRC. The employee must provide HMRC with evidence such as receipts and what the employer has reimbursed.

The Government keeps all aspects of the tax system under review and any decisions on future changes will be taken in the context of the wider public finances.

■ Treasury: Communications

Neil O'Brien:

[\[3072\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much her Department spent on communications in the latest year for which data is available.

James Murray:

Expenditure on communications staffing was £2,507,000 and non-pay related items/services for the communications team was £869,000, In 2023-24.

HM Treasury's Communications Team is responsible for all communications conducted by HM Treasury and its Ministers to help inform, promote and explain HMT policies through traditional and new media channels.

■ Treasury: Public Appointments

Alex Burghart:

[\[3052\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the appointment of Ian Corfield as Director of Investment was through open competition.

James Murray:

Ian Corfield was appointed on a short-term basis to carry out urgent work in support of the government's International Investment Summit in October. A full recruitment process could not have been completed in the time available. He has since been appointed, unpaid, as a direct ministerial appointment.

Laura Trott:

[\[4258\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish a list of appointments to her Department made by exception since 30 May 2024, by grade.

James Murray:

From 30 May to 5 September 2024, 25 staff were appointed to HM Treasury by exception.

The breakdown of these appointments by grade is as below.

- Student – 16
- AO (Range B) – Fewer than 5
- EO (Range C) – Fewer than 5
- HEO – Fewer than 5
- SEO – Fewer than 5
- G7 (Range E) – Fewer than 5
- G6 (Range E2) – Fewer than 5
- SCS1 – Fewer than 5
- SCS2 – Fewer than 5
- SCS3 - Fewer than 5

Where the number of individuals covered is fewer than five (which could include 0), we consider that to provide an exact figure would constitute the disclosure of personal data.

The 'Student' grade is used for staff appointed to short term roles via cross Civil Service internship schemes.

■ Treasury: Redundancy Pay

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[3040\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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 in that period; and how much each Minister received.

James Murray:

Any severance payments made to former Ministers of HM Treasury are recorded in the Departmental Annual Report and Accounts.

■ UK Infrastructure Bank

Shaun Davies:

[3321]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which schemes the UK Infrastructure Bank has (a) accepted and (b) declined, by local authority area; and how much and what proportion of infrastructure finance available to the bank remained as of 4 July 2024.

Tulip Siddiq:

The UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) sets out financial information in their Annual Reports and Accounts, which are published on their website at <https://www.ukib.org.uk/publications> and provided to the house on a yearly basis. Further UKIB provides factsheets for each deal it enters into via their website, which can be found at <https://www.ukib.org.uk/factsheets>.

■ VAT: Disability Aids and Medical Equipment

Sir John Hayes:

[2730]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of removing Value Added Tax for (a) wheelchairs and (b) defibrillators on access to those devices.

James Murray:

The Government currently provides VAT relief on equipment and appliances that have been designed solely for use by disabled people when purchased for their personal or domestic use, such as wheelchairs, as well as VAT reliefs to aid the purchase of defibrillators. For example, when a defibrillator is purchased with funds provided by a charity and then donated to an eligible body no VAT is charged.

VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption, and exceptions to the standard rate have always been limited and balanced against affordability considerations. Following the spending audit, the Chancellor has been clear that difficult decisions lie ahead on spending, welfare and tax to fix the foundations of our economy and address the £22 billion hole in the public finances left by the last government. Decisions on how to do that will be taken at the Budget in the round.

■ VAT: Registration

Damian Hinds:

[2831]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average time was for an organisation to become VAT registered with HMRC in the last 12 months.

James Murray:

In the last 12 months, from 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024, the average time for an organisation to receive a decision on their VAT registration application was 14 working days.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Conversion Therapy**

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[3613\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what her planned timetable is for bringing forward a draft bill to ban conversion practices.

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government's position is that conversion practices are abuse - such practices have no place in society and must be stopped. We are committed to delivering on our manifesto commitment to bring forward a full, trans-inclusive ban on conversion practices.

We are clear that any ban must not cover legitimate psychological support, treatment, or non-directive counselling. It must also respect the important role that teachers, religious leaders, parents and carers can have in supporting those exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

We will set out our next steps on this work in due course.

■ Government Equalities Office: Departmental Responsibilities

John Glen: [\[1235\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what the responsibilities are of (a) the Minister for Women and Equalities and (b) the Minister of State for Women and Equalities attending Cabinet.

Bridget Phillipson:

Progressing equalities is core to this Government's work, and the Secretary of State and Minister of State with responsibilities for Women and Equalities will work closely together to deliver on the Government's priorities and the relevant legislation set out in the King's Speech.

The Government will no longer work in silos – it will be mission led, working collaboratively across government – with the single aim of realising our ambitions for a decade of national renewal.

■ Women

John Glen: [\[2061\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the Government plans to amend the legal definition of what a woman is.

Anneliese Dodds:

We are proud of the Equality Act and the rights and protections it affords women. The Government does not plan to amend legal definitions in the act.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Business: Occupational Health

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a requirement for large businesses to offer their employees access to occupational health services.

Alison McGovern:

Expert-led impartial advice and interventions such as 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 can play an important role in supporting 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, with 89% of large employers already providing Occupational Health for their employees. We are keen to work closely with employers of all sizes to maintain and promote health and wellbeing in the workplace.

■ Chemicals: Labelling

Adam Jogee:

[\[3450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2023 to Question 138258 on Labelling: Packaging, what the UK's policy has been on matters relating to the meetings of the potential hazards issues working group established by the UN Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals; and whether the UK (a) supported, (b) opposed or (c) did not taken a position in response to EU proposals to introduce new hazard classes on endocrine disruptors and other hazards.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The UK is an active participant of the potential hazard issues informal working group at the United Nations Globally Harmonized System of classification and labelling of chemicals (UN GHS) and supported a mandate issued to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to conduct a state of the science review for endocrine disruptors, persistence and mobility. The mandate includes a review of the existing GHS hazard classes to inform technical discussions on the extent to which the potential hazard issues raised by the European Union (EU) delegation are addressed by existing GHS hazard classes.

There are no plans to consider the suitability of establishing new hazard classes in the Great Britain Classification, Labelling and Packaging (GB CLP) Regulation without consensus at UN GHS. The UK is committed to following the established process at UN GHS and will consider the reviews from the OECD, in addition to input

from a range of policy and technical experts, both within HSE and other UK government departments and agencies, to assist in the development of the UK policy position when a proposal is agreed at working group level.

■ Child Maintenance Service

Melanie Ward: [\[3561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will undertake a review of the Child Maintenance Service.

Andrew Western:

A consultation on proposed reforms to the CMS was published by the previous Government on 8 May 2024. The consultation includes exploration of removing Direct Pay and managing all CMS cases in one service to allow the CMS to tackle non-compliance faster. The consultation also explores how victims and survivors of domestic abuse can be better supported.

The Government extended the consultation to the 30 September 2024 to ensure full stakeholder engagement can take place, we will then consider the next steps for CMS.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Telephone Services

Julia Buckley: [\[3504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce call waiting times to the Child Maintenance Service; and if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of call handling times by that service.

Andrew Western:

CMS are committed to delivering the best possible service to all customers within our growing caseload, though fully recognise that call waiting times are sometimes longer than we would like.

To address this, we are working to improve the efficiency of our customer interactions through both the telephone and Digital channels, and by promoting self-service online. These are freeing up CMS resource to support customers that need to contact us by telephone.

The class leading CMS online service supports customers in understanding options around child maintenance arrangements through to completing applications and the ability to manage their case online. These services are available 24/7, and in July 2024 over 1 million customers were logging on to their online My Child Maintenance Case account and using them. To improve the efficiency of the service, improvements have been made to process simple actions automatically, whilst also improving training and guidance for CMS colleagues.

As a result, call volumes are reducing, and improved customer service being delivered through the combination of Online and Telephone channels.

CMS is working to improve all forms of communication with customers, including greater use of SMS and email as well as improving letter content.

The Department continually seeks to review, evaluate, and enhance tools and training material to support staff in delivering a quality customer service and takes timely action to further train and support staff where further improvements can be made. Additionally, CMS have extended their telephony service to 6pm on weekdays to meet demand.

■ Child Poverty Taskforce

Paula Barker: [\[3212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the child poverty taskforce plans to hold discussions with homelessness organisations.

Paula Barker: [\[3213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the child poverty task force will consider the number of homeless children residing in temporary accommodation.

Alison McGovern:

As set out in its Terms of Reference published on 14th August, the Child Poverty Taskforce will ensure combined action across government departments, exploring all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions to reduce child poverty.

The Taskforce will engage external experts throughout the strategy development process including through a rolling programme of meetings, with sessions built thematically to bring together a broad range of experts on specific topics.

The Government also recognises the importance of capturing the experiences of those living in poverty which is why the Taskforce will also draw on findings from wider external engagement events in all regions and nations of the UK. These events will convene a broader range of voices, including bringing in the perspectives of families and children themselves.

■ Children: Maintenance

Julia Buckley: [\[3500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure gender equality in the work of the Child Maintenance Service.

Andrew Western:

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) aims to provide a high-quality service to all its customers. The CMS treats parents equally as individuals based on their roles within the scheme and makes no reference to gender. The Department has a specific duty to assess the impact of proposed policies and services and any changes to them on equality to ensure the Department meets its Public Sector Equality Duty obligations.

Julia Buckley:

[3501]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the total value of child maintenance arrears was on 30 August 2024.

Andrew Western:

The Department publishes quarterly statistics for the [Child Maintenance Service](#) and the latest statistics are available up to [March 2024](#). The next release covering the statistics to June 2024 is scheduled for Tuesday 24th September 2024 at 09:30am.

The total value of child maintenance that has not been paid and now needs to be collected through 'Collect and Pay' at the end of March 2024 was £634.9 million, as shown in Table 6 of the [National tables](#).

The following information is a summary from the latest publication for data up to March 2024.

- In the 12 months up to March 2024 the child maintenance service arranged £1.4 billion child maintenance, an increase from £1.2 billion during the previous 12 months.
- 61% of all CMS arrangements use Direct Pay, with 37% using Collect and Pay and just over one billion pounds was arranged through the Direct Pay service in the last 12 months (we do not measure the compliance of Paying Parents on the Direct Pay service).
- Since March 2023, the percentage of parents paying something towards their maintenance through collect & pay has increased from 65% to 69%.
- In the period April 2023 to March 2024 £316.8 million was arranged through the Collect & Pay service:
 - o £224.9 million was paid
 - o £91.9 million was unpaid

Julia Buckley:

[3502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Child Maintenance Service in collecting arrears payments.

Andrew Western:

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) always encourages paying parents to pay their maintenance on time, to avoid accrual of arrears. Where a paying parent fails to pay on time or in full, the CMS aims to take immediate action to recover the debt and re-establish compliance. The CMS will initially negotiate a payment that is feasible for the parent to pay. If this is unsuccessful and the paying parent is employed, the CMS will use a Deductions from Earnings Order (DEO) to take payment directly from their wages. The CMS has a range of strong enforcement powers that can be used against those who consistently refuse to meet their obligations to provide financial support to their children. These powers include the ability to deduct directly from the paying parent's bank accounts, forcing the sale of property and disqualifications from holding or obtaining driving licenses and passports. We are committed to making the

most effective use of these strong enforcement powers and have made a number of improvements to our enforcement process to make it quicker and more efficient.

Julia Buckley:

[\[3503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help tackle unpaid child maintenance.

Andrew Western:

The Department plans to bring forward changes to allow the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) to make an administrative liability order against a person who has failed to pay child maintenance and is in arrears. The administrative liability order will replace the current requirement for the CMS to apply to the court for a liability order, which is an outdated process and can take up to 22 weeks. We expect the new liability order process to take around six to eight weeks, meaning the CMS can use its strong enforcement powers more quickly to go after those who wilfully avoid their financial obligations to their children.

We will bring forward the legislation as soon as possible.

Julia Buckley:

[\[3505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many liability orders have been pursued by the Child Maintenance Service since 1 August 2023.

Andrew Western:

A principle of child maintenance is to increase levels of cooperation between separated parents and encourage parents to meet their responsibilities to provide their children with financial support. Where a family-based child maintenance arrangement is not suitable the Child Maintenance Service offers a statutory scheme for those parents who need it.

The Government is dedicated to ensuring parents meet their obligations to children and the Child Maintenance Service will do everything within its powers to make sure parents comply. Where parents fail to pay their child maintenance, the Service will not hesitate to use its enforcement which includes liability orders. The Service is committed to using these powers fairly and in the best interests of children and separated families.

The Department plans to bring forward changes to allow Child Maintenance Service (CMS) to make an administrative liability order against a person who has failed to pay child maintenance and is in arrears. The administrative liability order will replace the current requirement for the CMS to apply to the court for a liability order, which can take up to 22 weeks. We expect the new liability order process to take around six to eight weeks, meaning CMS can use its strong enforcement powers more quickly for those who seek to avoid their financial obligations to their children.

We will bring forward the legislation as soon as possible.

The Department publishes quarterly statistics for the [Child Maintenance Service](#) and the latest statistics are available up to [March 2024](#). The next release to June 2024 is scheduled for Tuesday 24th September 2024 at 09:30am.

The statistics for liability orders are shown in Table 7.1 of the [National tables](#). The relevant data taken from that table, covering the period requested, is shown in the following table:

Liability Orders in process and money collected in Great Britain, and Liability Orders applied for and granted in England and Wales, July 2023 to March 2024

	JUL TO SEP 23	OCT TO DEC 23	JAN TO MAR 24
Liability Orders in process at end of quarter	7,500	6,400	6,200
Liability Orders applied for during quarter (excludes Scotland)	4,100	4,500	5,300
Liability Orders granted during quarter (excludes Scotland)	3,600	3,900	4,400
Liability Orders withdrawn or dismissed during quarter (excludes Scotland)	300	300	400
Money collected during quarter from Paying Parents with a Liability Order in process (£ millions)	2.4	2.1	2.1

Source: Child Maintenance Service Administrative and Clerical Data

Notes:

1. This table includes actions taken to collect both maintenance arranged by the Child Maintenance Service, and Child Support Agency arrears that have been transitioned to Child Maintenance Service systems. This may include actions taken against parents for whom no ongoing maintenance has been arranged under the Child Maintenance Service.
2. Figures are rounded to the nearest 100 or £100,000.
3. "In Process" counts give the number of Paying Parents for which the relevant enforcement action was ongoing at the end of the quarter. "Ongoing" includes the period in which the action was being formally considered, in addition to the period during which the action was actively being progressed.
4. A Paying Parent can be taken to court over unpaid child maintenance. Courts can grant a Liability Order, which is a legal recognition that a debt is owed.

This enables recovery of the debt through further Civil Enforcement Actions, e.g. referral to an enforcement agency.

5. Some Liability Order figures are restricted to England and Wales and exclude Scotland, this is indicated in the row title where relevant.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Communication

Neil O'Brien:

[\[3079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department spent on communications in the last year for which data is available.

Andrew Western:

The Department for Work and Pensions delivers a range of campaigns which are essential in ensuring that vulnerable people and pensioners are aware of the financial support that they are eligible for.

Appropriate advertising is a key government approach to ensure that target audiences receive the correct information and the media channels used are selected based upon their potential impact and cost, ensuring value for money for the taxpayer.

During 2023/24 DWP spent approximately £10m across various media channels for the communications campaigns required.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Equality

Neil O'Brien:

[\[3087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people work in her Department's Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing team.

Andrew Western:

There are 25 people (not all full time) who work in the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing (EDIW) Team.

The EDIW team is vital in supporting DWP in creating a safe, healthy, diverse and inclusive environment that meets our statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act whilst delivering value for the taxpayer. The team is also responsible for the contract management of both DWP's Employee Assistance Programme and its Occupational Health provision for the department.

There are 23.2 FTE equivalent staff in the team, within the HR Directorate. They serve 92,448 DWP employees.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Redundancy Pay

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[3037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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.

Andrew Western:

The details of severance payments made to former ministers can be found in our Annual Report & Accounts.

Information for the 2024/25 financial year will be published in due course.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services**

Graham Leadbitter:

[\[3601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to (a) tackle wait times experienced by (i) vulnerable people who require urgent assistance and (ii) other callers to her Department's helpline, (b) improve the (A) efficiency and (B) accessibility of its customer service and (c) ensure that vulnerable individuals receive timely support.

Andrew Western:

DWP reviews forecasted telephony demand and plans resourcing accordingly to keep wait times down. Wait time performance is frequently reviewed and where DWP's telephony is delivered by an outsourced provider we use the Key Performance Indicator of percentage of calls answered. All DWP customer telephone lines are Freephone numbers.

The Department is investing in a new capability that aims to better route customers to the right offer at the right time. This will help to reduce waiting times by supporting customers to utilise digital alternatives where appropriate, which enables telephony agents to speak to our customers that really need to speak to someone. If a customer indicates they may be at risk of physical or mental harm e.g. suicide, terminal illness, homelessness, and clinical mental health, they will be routed to a telephony agent in as short a journey as possible.

The Department offers a wide range of reasonable adjustments for customers, including production of communications in a range of alternative formats. We are currently testing further digital solutions for British Sign Language interpreter connectivity within our jobcentre environment.

■ **Employment: Disability**

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[4084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring employers to respond to reasonable adjustment requests from disabled workers within two weeks.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) protects disabled people against unlawful direct or indirect discrimination in employment, including by placing a duty on employers to make, on request, reasonable adjustments to any element of a job, job application or

interview process, which may place disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people.

There are no current plans to amend the reasonable adjustments duty in the Act. In most cases, it is fairer to apply a “reasonableness” test which enables each situation to be considered on its merits, rather than impose rigid, universal requirements on employers and service providers. Where an employer takes an unreasonably long time to make a decision on a reasonable adjustment request, this omission could, of itself, potentially be considered a failure to make the adjustment, which could in turn be actionable by the affected person at an employment tribunal.

■ **Employment: Young People**

Paula Barker:

[\[2146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department will take to incentivise young people who live in supported accommodation to work more hours.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We acknowledge the challenge presented by the interaction between Universal Credit and Housing Benefit for those residing in supported housing. However, people in supported housing and in receipt of Housing Benefit are always better off in work than not working at all.

It is the department’s priority to ensure that those who can work are supported to enter the labour market and to sustain employment. DWP is working in conjunction with West Midlands Combined Authority on a Proof of Concept which will test financial support for eligible 18–24-year-olds living in commissioned supported housing who move into work or increase their working hours and cease receiving Universal Credit. We are hopeful that this will provide new insight to inform future policy.

The Government’s Back to Work Plan is critical to growing the economy. This includes implementing a new national jobs and career service to help get more people into work alongside a Youth Guarantee. This will mean more quality opportunities for training, apprenticeships and help to find work for all young people aged 18-21 years old, preventing them from becoming excluded from the world of work at a young age.

■ **Gun Sports: Lead**

Ellie Chowns:

[\[3566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report by R.E. Green, M.A. Taggart and D.J. Pain et al. entitled Outcomes from monitoring the fourth year of a five-year voluntary transition from hunting with lead to non-lead shotgun ammunition in Britain, Conservation Evidence Journal (2024) 21, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the findings in that report on the

proportion of game birds that were shot with lead in 2023; and whether she plans to take steps to ban the use of lead shot in hunting.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The use of lead shot in England and Wales is already prohibited in specific circumstances by existing legislation – including on all foreshores, and in or over specified sites of special scientific interest, predominantly wetlands.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is currently finalising its UK REACH opinion on further action to restrict the use of lead in ammunition. This work has included looking at information submitted to them with regard to possible options to control the use of lead ammunition. The previous study from the paper cited (also known as the SHOT-SWITCH study) has been considered and is referenced in the background document of evidence and opinion with respect to what can be inferred on a voluntary transition from lead shot to alternatives.

HSE expects to issue its final restriction opinions in autumn 2024. The decision to apply any UK REACH restrictions as a further regulatory measure, or not to do so, will subsequently be made by the DEFRA Secretary of State, with the consent of the Scottish and Welsh Ministers.

■ **Household Support Fund**

Paula Barker:

[\[2145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to provide a multi-year funding settlement for the Household Support Fund.

Alison McGovern:

£500 million is being provided to enable the current Household Support Fund, including funding for Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion. This means Local Authorities in England are receiving £421 million to support those in need locally.

The current Household Support Fund will be in place until 30 September 2024.

As a new government, we are reviewing all policies, including the Household Support Fund.

Paula Barker:

[\[3206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the (a) Chancellor of the Exchequer and (b) Local Government Association on future funding for the Household Support Fund.

Alison McGovern:

The Government has announced funding to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

As with previous HSF schemes, the Fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to provide discretionary support to those most in need.

The HSF scheme guidance and individual Local Authority funding allocations for the forthcoming extension will be announced as soon as possible ahead of the scheme beginning on 1 October 2024.

Alex Mayer:

[\[3434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of continuing the Household Support Fund after 30 September 2024.

Alison McGovern:

The Government has announced funding to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

As with previous HSF schemes, the Fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to provide discretionary support to those most in need.

The HSF scheme guidance and individual Local Authority funding allocations for the forthcoming extension will be announced as soon as possible ahead of the scheme beginning on 1 October 2024.

Ellie Chowns:

[\[3562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2024 to Question 971 on Household Support Fund, what criteria she is using for her review of that Fund; and when she plans to (a) complete that review and (b) announce whether that Fund will continue beyond 30 September 2024.

Alison McGovern:

DWP is conducting an evaluation of the fourth iteration of the Household Support Fund. This includes research with a selection of representative Local Authority case study areas, consisting of interviews with Local Authority officials and their delivery partners, and surveys and interviews with recipients of the HSF. This evaluation will provide key evidence on how Local Authorities are delivering the scheme, and their experiences of doing so, as well as the effectiveness of the funding for recipients.

The Government has announced funding to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

As with previous HSF schemes, the Fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to provide discretionary support to those most in need.

The HSF scheme guidance and individual Local Authority funding allocations for the forthcoming extension will be announced as soon as possible ahead of the scheme beginning on 1 October 2024.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[3661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to extend the household support fund after 30 September 2024.

Alison McGovern:

The Government has announced funding to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

As with previous HSF schemes, the Fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to provide discretionary support to those most in need.

The HSF scheme guidance and individual Local Authority funding allocations for the forthcoming extension will be announced as soon as possible ahead of the scheme beginning on 1 October 2024.

Mel Stride: [\[3955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much and what proportion of each round of the Household Support Fund has been spent on (a) energy support, (b) pensioner households and (c) energy support for pensioner households.

Alison McGovern:

There have been five separate iterations of the Household Support Fund (HSF). Since the first iteration was introduced, over £2.5 billion has been allocated to Local Authorities in England to support those most in need through the HSF (October 2021-September 2024).

The Government has announced funding to extend the HSF for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

DWP requires that Local Authorities provide Management Information (MI) returns to the Department, which demonstrate that they are delivering the scheme in accordance with the guidance and grant determination that the Department have set out for the scheme. This includes information on the type of household supported, category of spending, types of support and how support has been accessed.

MI has been published for the first three iterations of HSF following their completion. For HSF2 and HSF3, the information shows the proportion of each round spent on energy and water, essentials linked to energy and water and households with

pensioners. This information is not available for HSF1. It is not possible to determine the proportion spent on energy support for households with pensioners or the total amount spent in any category for any round of the fund due to data limitations.

The information can be found at the following links:

For HSF1: [Household Support Fund management information for 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/household-support-fund-management-information-for-6-october-2021-to-31-march-2022)

For HSF2: [Household Support Fund 2 management information for 1 April to 30 September 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/household-support-fund-2-management-information-for-1-april-to-30-september-2022)

For HSF3: [Household Support Fund 3 management information for 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 - GOV.UK\(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/household-support-fund-3-management-information-for-1-october-2022-to-31-march-2023)

MI for HSF4 is due to be released later this year. MI for HSF5 and HSF6 will be published once the schemes conclude and subject to the usual quality assurance process.

■ Jobcentres: Buildings

Shaun Davies:

[R] [3313]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an estimate of the potential savings generated by selling Jobcentre buildings and co-locating with other public bodies.

Andrew Western:

DWP continually review One Public Estate opportunities, and at any time, a number of these are individually being evaluated. The department's estate is leased rather than owned, so there are no opportunities to sell buildings. However, there can be divestment running cost savings, although these need to be balanced by the material investment costs of re-location to new premises, which are typically substantial.

In each case, a value for money assessment is undertaken, alongside customer and operational considerations.

■ Local Housing Allowance

Ayoub Khan:

[4160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact on levels of homelessness of unfreezing local housing allowance.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Government recognises that homelessness levels are too high and there are a range of contributing factors. We will look carefully at these issues as we develop our strategy for ending homelessness.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have not been frozen for the current year, but were restored to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024 for one year. Any decisions on LHA in 25/26 need to be taken in the context of the Government's missions, housing priorities, and the fiscal context.

For those who need further support, Discretionary Housing Payments are available from local authorities.

■ Long Term Unemployed People

Rachael Maskell: [\[3991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she is taking steps to support community businesses that (a) employ, (b) train and (c) support people who have been unemployed for long periods.

Alison McGovern:

DWP will give local places the responsibility and resources to design a joined-up work, health and skills offer that's right for local people – as a key part of their Local Growth Plans. There will be a fundamental shift in the balance of power and resources to local areas so that our mayors, local councils, the NHS, businesses, colleges and the voluntary sector can work together to deliver real employment opportunities for local people. DWP will support local areas to make a success of this new approach, including through devolving employment support funding to catalyse local action and change. A White Paper to Get Britain working will be produced soon, providing more information on the proposals, plans and the route for people to engage with this critically important work, which we encourage community businesses to input into.

■ Older People: Advocacy

Adam Jogee: [\[3461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of appointing a commissioner for older people.

Alison McGovern:

The Department has no current plans to assess the potential merits of appointing a commissioner for older people in England.

DWP offers employment support for eligible older people through the network of Jobcentres across the UK and through contracted employment programmes. A dedicated offer for older people provides more tailored support.

The government has ambitious plans to improve employment support for people of all ages and will set out more details in a forthcoming White Paper.

■ Pension Credit

Kim Johnson: [\[3187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims for Pension Credit have taken longer than 6 weeks to process in the last 12 months.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department does not routinely capture data aligned to a 6-week clearance rate. However, we do capture data against a 50-day clearance rate, and our performance

is published in the DWP Annual Report and Accounts [DWP annual report and accounts 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK\(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/DWP_annual_report_and_accounts_2023_to_2024.pdf).

Of 248,000 Pension Credit claims cleared in performance year 2023/24, 192,000 were cleared within the planned 50-day timescale, equating to 77.7%. 56,000, 22.3% were cleared outside of the of the 10-week planned timescale.

Mel Stride:

[3956]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of the (a) introduction of means-testing for Winter Fuel Payments and (b) Pension Credit Week of Action campaign on the (i) number of people who claim Pension Credit and (ii) cost to the public purse for (A) Pension Credit and (B) other associated passported benefits in (1) this financial year and (2) each of the next four financial years.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government estimates that linking entitlement to receipt of Pension Credit and other relevant DWP income-related benefits will reduce expenditure by around £1.4 billion in 2024/25 and £1.5 billion in 2025/26, based on the assumption of a 5% increase of Pension Credit take-up.

Winter Fuel Payments are classified as Annual Managed Expenditure (AME). The estimated savings are sensitive to forecasted take up of Pension Credit. The final savings will be certified and published by the Office for Budget responsibility at the Autumn Budget on the 30th October, taking account of any behavioural response.

With regards to the associated passported benefits in this financial year and each of the next four financial years, the DWP does not hold this information.

Ruth Jones:

[4249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when Pension Credit was last (a) reviewed and (b) adjusted.

Emma Reynolds:

The rates of Pension Credit were last reviewed in Autumn 2023 as part of the Secretary of State's annual statutory review of State pension and benefit rates. Following that review, the Pension Credit standard minimum guarantee was increased by 8.5%, in line with the percentage increase in average earnings, to £218.15 a week for a single pensioner and £332.95 a week for a pensioner couple, with effect from 8 April 2024. Other Pension Credit amounts, including the maximum rate of Savings Credit and additional amounts for those with a severe disability or caring responsibilities, were increased by 6.7% in line with price inflation.

The next review will be undertaken this Autumn with the new rates taking effect from 7 April 2025.

■ Pensioners: Poverty

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will establish a taskforce to help tackle pensioner poverty.

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. Our continued commitment to the triple lock means the full new state pension is forecast to increase by a further £1,700 over the course of the parliament.

We are also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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 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.

The government will work with external partners and local authorities to boost the uptake of Pension Credit and to target additional support to the poorest pensioners. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

Our other steps include cutting waiting times in the NHS which will help many pensioners currently waiting in pain and discomfort for treatment, and delivering the economic stability which is so crucial for pensioners.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Adam Jogee:

[\[3456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of claimants known to her Department who applied for personal independence payments but died with six months of making their application.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Table 1 shows the number of claimants who died within 6 months of their PIP application per year up to 2023, the last year for which complete data is available.

Table 1

YEAR OF PIP APPLICATION	NUMBER OF CLAIMANTS WHO DIED WITHIN 6 MONTHS OF PIP APPLICATION
2014	11,800
2015	12,000

YEAR OF PIP APPLICATION	NUMBER OF CLAIMANTS WHO DIED WITHIN 6 MONTHS OF PIP APPLICATION
2016	12,300
2017	12,400
2018	12,200
2019	12,500
2020	12,100
2021	13,000
2022	12,600
2023	11,300

Notes:

- This is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and it may be subject to future revision;
- Figures are for England and Wales only; These figures include claims made under normal rules and special rules for end of life;
- Volumes are rounded to the nearest 100.

■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud**Mary Kelly Foy:****[3096]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to allow the sharing of relevant information with police forces to help identify potentially fraudulent benefit claims.

Andrew Western:

DWP has a close working relationship with the police and other law enforcement agencies to enable the Department to investigate fraud. This joint working allows full exchange of information from the police to DWP and the DWP to police, under data sharing legislation.

■ Universal Credit: Disability**Rachel Blake:****[3573]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made on the managed migration of disabled people from the Employment Support Allowance support group onto Universal Credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department started moving customers who were claiming Employment Support Allowance with Child Tax Credits to Universal Credit from July. From September we will begin moving across customers receiving Employment and Support Allowance only or those with ESA with housing benefit. These plans are informed by learning, which started in June, where 500 ESA customers were invited to claim Universal Credit.

Rachel Blake:[\[3577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure continuity of payments for disabled people who are (a) about to start and (b) mid-way through migrating from legacy benefits to Universal Credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

For DWP customers in receipt of ESA, DWP has agreed to continue to pay customers their legacy benefit for a further two weeks from when their legacy benefit stops to support a seamless continuation of payments. All customers will automatically receive a two-week run on of those benefits.

The DWP continues to learn and iterate its approach as we continue to move people to Universal Credit. We remain committed to ensuring that the transition to Universal Credit works as smoothly as possible for all customers, including the most vulnerable in society.

In June we invited 500 ESA customers to claim Universal Credit. This trial helped us learn and will allow us to start moving across customers receiving Employment and Support Allowance only or those with ESA with housing benefit at scale from September 2024.

In addition, DWP has developed an enhanced support journey for ESA and Income Support customers and remains confident that this provides effective support for our most vulnerable customers.

■ Universal Credit: Disqualification**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[4014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 21 February 2024 to Question 14064 on Universal Credit: Disqualification, if she will direct her Department to begin collecting statistics on the number of children living in households subject to a Universal Credit sanction.

Alison McGovern:

In line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#), the Chief Statistician determines the need for new official statistics, and the development of existing statistics. User engagement is at the heart of our considerations for future statistics. These development priorities are regularly updated and published as part of the [DWP Statistical Work Programme](#).

Whilst a full appraisal of the resources needed to enable the development and publication of statistics on the number of children living in households subject to a Universal Credit sanction has not been made, our data on sanctions is for individuals and it is not possible to identify children in the households of individuals receiving a sanction without significant development of the data we hold.

■ Winter Fuel Payment

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of removing the winter fuel allowance on pensioner poverty.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of removing the winter fuel allowance on pensioner poverty.

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 reduce the number of people who get the Winter Fuel Payment from 10.8 million to 1.5 million (within 1.3m households). This means that an estimated 9.3 million will no longer be able to access Winter Fuel Payments in England and Wales.

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.

The government will work with external partners and local authorities to boost the uptake of Pension Credit and to target additional support to the poorest pensioners. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

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 also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

Our other steps include cutting waiting times in the NHS which will help many pensioners currently waiting in pain and discomfort for treatment, and delivering the economic stability which is so crucial for pensioners.

Rachael Maskell:

[2379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with elderly medical care specialists on the potential impact of stopping winter fuel payments on the health needs of the elderly.

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.

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 Allowance alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

The Government is determined to ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need. As part of the Pension Credit Week of Action, we 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.

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 also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

Our other steps include cutting waiting times in the NHS which will help many pensioners currently waiting in pain and discomfort for treatment, and delivering the economic stability which is so crucial for pensioners.

Ben Maguire:

[\[2693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will run a public consultation on changing eligibility requirements for the Winter Fuel Payment before implementing a change in policy in relation to that payment.

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.

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.

The government will work with external partners and local authorities to boost the uptake of Pension Credit and to target additional support to the poorest pensioners.

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 also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

Our other steps include cutting waiting times in the NHS which will help many pensioners currently waiting in pain and discomfort for treatment, and delivering the economic stability which is so crucial for pensioners.

John McDonnell:

[\[2714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential health impacts of means-testing the winter fuel payment.

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.

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 Allowance alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

Our continued commitment to the triple lock means the full new state pension is forecast to increase by a further £1,700 over the course of the parliament.

We are also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to public health. Keeping people warm and well at home and improving the quality of new and existing homes will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives and reducing pressures on the NHS.

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.

Esther McVey:

[\[2884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of changing the eligibility criteria for the winter fuel payment on the health of pensioners.

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.

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to public health. Keeping people warm and well at home and improving the quality of new and existing homes

will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives and reducing pressures on the NHS.

Our continued commitment to the triple lock means the full new state pension is forecast to increase by a further £1,700 over the course of this parliament.

We are also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

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.

Wendy Morton:

[\[2912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing financial support measures for pensioners who are no longer eligible for 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. 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 also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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 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.

The government will work with external partners and local authorities to boost the uptake of Pension Credit and to target additional support to the poorest pensioners. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion.

Our other steps include cutting waiting times in the NHS which will help many pensioners currently waiting in pain and discomfort for treatment, and delivering the economic stability which is so crucial for pensioners.

Wera Hobhouse:

[3026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of means-testing the winter fuel payment on those no longer eligible for that payment.

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 80 and over.

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.

Over the next five years we expect over 12 million pensioners are likely to 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 also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion.

Mr Richard Holden:

[3165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether (a) a single pensioner aged 90 on £218.16 per week and (b) a pensioner couple aged 90 on £332.96 per week who (i) own their own home, (ii) have no savings and (iii) are in receipt of no other benefits will continue to receive winter fuel payments.

Emma Reynolds:

A single pensioner aged 90 with a weekly income of £218.16 which doesn't fall to be disregarded, for example, it's made up of state pension or a personal pension, would not be entitled to the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit because their non-disregardable income is in excess of the standard minimum guarantee for a single person. However, they would be entitled to the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit and would therefore receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

A pensioner couple both aged 90 with a combined weekly income of £332.96 which, again doesn't fall to be disregarded would not be entitled to the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit because their non-disregardable income is in excess of the standard minimum guarantee for a couple. They would, however, be entitled to the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit and would therefore receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

The Pension Credit calculator on gov.uk provides an estimate as to what Pension Credit, a person may have entitlement to.

Shivani Raja:**[3343]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that changes to Winter Fuel Payments do not disproportionately affect pensioners in colder regions of the UK; and how regional variations in winter heating costs were considered in the decision to make those changes.

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 England and Wales, Cold Weather Payments continue to be paid to pensioners in receipt of Pension Credit (and certain working age qualifying benefits). This is a weekly payment of £25 for every seven-day period when the average temperature has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, 0 degrees C or below over seven consecutive days.

Our continued commitment to the triple lock means the full new state pension is forecast to increase by a further £1,700 over the course of the parliament.

We are also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

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:

[\[4046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the removal of Winter Fuel Payments on pensioners' standards of living.

Emma Reynolds:

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 80 and over.

Over the next five years we expect over 12 million pensioners are likely to see their State Pensions increase by thousands of pounds as a result of our commitment to the Triple Lock.

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.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion.

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.

Our other steps include cutting waiting times in the NHS which will help many pensioners currently waiting in pain and discomfort for treatment, and delivering the economic stability which is so crucial for pensioners.

Paula Barker:

[\[4270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the impact of the removal of Winter Fuel Payments on pensioners in receipt of attendance allowance.

Emma Reynolds:

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.

Pensioners on low incomes and in receipt of Attendance Allowance can qualify for an additional amount in Pension Credit, providing they meet the other eligibility criteria.

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.

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Aldridge-Brownhills**

Wendy Morton:

[\[2910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the financial impact of changes to pensioners' eligibility for the Winter Fuel Allowance on pensioners in (a) Aldridge-Brownhills constituency and (b) the UK.

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.

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to public health. Keeping people warm and well at home and improving the quality of new and existing homes will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives and reducing pressures on the NHS.

The Government is ensuring pensioners are supported through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their State Pension increase by around a thousand pounds over the next five years.

We are also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

Finally, the Household Support Fund is being extended for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion.

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Eligibility**

Wendy Morton:

[\[2911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes to pensioners' eligibility for the Winter Fuel Allowance on the health and well-being of pensioners in (a) Aldridge-Brownhills constituency and (b) the UK.

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.

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to public health. Keeping people warm and well at home and improving the quality of new and existing homes will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives and reducing pressures on the NHS.

The Government is ensuring pensioners are supported through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their State Pension increase by around a thousand pounds over the next five years.

We are also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

Finally, the Household Support Fund is being extended for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion.

Kim Johnson:**[3189]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changing eligibility requirements for the Winter Fuel Payment on the number of people living in fuel poverty.

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.

We are also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

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.

Paula Barker:

[\[3204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of limiting winter fuel allowance on pensioners that are (a) eligible for but not claiming pension credit and (b) just above the eligibility threshold for pension credit.

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.

The department continues to maximise opportunities to promote Pension Credit and to raise awareness of its wider benefits and to encourage pensioners to apply. The department uses a range of creative media including TV, press, radio and social media to boost awareness of the benefit. We engage with stakeholders, including other Government Departments, Councils, and charities, to harness their help and support to raise awareness through their networks and channels.

The Government is ensuring pensioners are supported through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their State Pension increase by around a thousand pounds over the next five years.

Additionally, the Government will invest an extra £6.6 billion over this Parliament in clean heat and energy efficiency through the Warm Homes Plan, upgrading five million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation to reduce emissions and cut bills.

Finally, the Household Support Fund is being extended for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion.

Shivani Raja:

[\[3342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on the (a) financial and (b) physical well-being of pensioners who will be ineligible for Winter Fuel Payments under eligibility criteria to be introduced from winter 2024-25; and what steps she plans to take to mitigate any potential negative impact on those affected.

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.

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to public health. Keeping people warm and well at home and improving the quality of new and existing homes will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives and reducing pressures on the NHS.

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 also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

The Government is also ensuring pensioners are supported through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their State Pension increase by around a thousand pounds over the next five years.

Finally, the Household Support Fund is being extended for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Northern Ireland**Robin Swann:****[4148]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with the Minister of Communities in Northern Ireland on ensuring that Barnett consequential from the Household Support Fund are utilised to support people no longer in receipt of Winter Fuel Payment.

Alison McGovern:

The Government has announced funding to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Household Support Fund operates in England only. It is for the Devolved Governments to allocate their funding in devolved areas as they see fit.

■ Winter Fuel Payments

Wendy Morton:

[\[2914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments on the health and wellbeing of pensioners.

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.

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to public health. Keeping people warm and well at home and improving the quality of new and existing homes will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives and reducing pressures on the NHS.

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 also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This 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.

In making her decision on Winter Fuel Payment eligibility, the Secretary of State had regard to the equality analysis in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements.

■ Work Capability Assessment: Health

John McDonnell:

[\[3678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, If she will collect information on potential links between the fitness for work test and (a) suicides, (b) other deaths and (c) harm.

Sir Stephen Timms:

DWP does not collect or record the cause of a customer's death and will not usually be made aware of how a customer died. Cause of death is determined by a doctor or a coroner. There is no requirement for a Coroner to inform the department of the outcome of an inquest unless they are named as an Interested Person at that inquest - or the coroner decides to issue a Prevention of Future Deaths report to the department. This means the department is not able to collect the information suggested.

Attempted suicides and suicides are tragic and complex issues. The department takes very seriously any suggestion that its actions, including any related to the fitness for work test, may have contributed to one. Where appropriate the department will undertake an Internal Process Review to establish if anything should have been done differently or if there are any lessons the department can learn.

Thematic learning from these serious cases is fed into the departments Serious Case Panel, which has an external chair, and considers a range of evidence from across the department. We are looking at ways to increase the amount of information made public about the work of the Serious Case Panel without jeopardising the privacy of the customers whose cases have been reviewed.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Food Supply

Chris Law:

[\[2941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report entitled The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2024 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, published in August 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the estimate that 582 million people will be chronically food insecure in 2030.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 9 September 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK, the UN, other states, and NGOs use the findings of the annual "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World" report extensively. The persisting high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition outlined in the report are concerning. We remain steadfast in our commitment to address these, working alongside partners to provide immediate humanitarian support, tackle the causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, and leverage UK-funded science and technology expertise for more climate-resilient food systems. We support global initiatives, like the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty and the Child Nutrition Fund, in order to lift ambition, ensure better international coordination, and unlock much-needed finance.

The UK, the UN and other states use the findings of the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report extensively. The persisting high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition are concerning. We are committed to addressing these, working alongside partners to provide immediate humanitarian support, tackle the causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, and leverage UK-funded science and technology expertise for more climate-resilient food systems. At the G20 Development Ministers Meeting in July, I announced the UK would join the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty to lift ambition, ensure better international coordination, and unlock much-needed finance.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Implementation of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act

Minister for Employment Rights, Competition and Markets (Justin Madders): [\[HCWS74\]](#)

The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act (the Act) received Royal Assent on 24 May 2024. The Act will make significant changes to the UK's competition and consumer landscape that will protect small businesses, save consumers money, boost innovation and drive growth.

Part 1 of the Act will establish a pro-competition regime for digital markets that will promote more dynamic markets and ensure the most powerful tech firms treat consumers and business fairly.

Part 2 makes several enhancements to our wider competition regime, to give the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) greater powers in tackling illegal, anti-competitive, behaviours and to focus competition regulation on the areas of greatest potential harm.

Parts 3 and 4 strengthen the enforcement of consumer law and introduce new consumer protections, including tackling fake reviews and drip pricing, new rules for consumer saving schemes and introducing new rights relating to subscription contracts.

Part 5 contains miscellaneous measures including provisions which deal with investigative assistance to overseas regulators, disclosing information overseas, providing for a duty of expedition on the CMA and sectoral regulators, and giving the CMA new information gathering powers to support a function of monitoring competition in the retail motor fuel sector in the UK.

A key focus of the Act is providing greater powers and responsibilities for the CMA, the UK's primary independent competition and consumer protection authority. This will help the CMA meet the challenges of the modern economy.

The Government recognises the importance of implementing the Act as soon as possible so that businesses and consumers can reap its benefits. We also understand those affected by the Act need to know when its changes will come into effect. That is why the Government is publicly setting out its plans for implementation.

Key steps must be taken to implement the Act. Secondary legislation must be laid in Parliament, under powers set out in the Act, before the Act's measures can be commenced and enter into force. The CMA must publish guidance setting out how it will carry out its functions and use its powers. The Secretary of State for Business and Trade must approve CMA digital markets guidance. The Government is working closely with the CMA to ensure these are in place as soon as possible. Of equal importance is the need

for secondary legislation and guidance to be detailed, robust and clear to ensure the Act's changes are understood and can be complied with.

The Government aims to commence Parts 1, 2 and 5 of the Act in December 2024 or January 2025. In the Autumn, secondary legislation will be laid before Parliament for scrutiny before it enters into force. Commencing Part 1 will bring the digital markets regime into effect, and we expect the CMA to launch the first Strategic Market Status investigations shortly afterwards. The reforms to the existing competition regime, the new motor fuels function and other Part 5 measures will take effect on the commencement date.

The commencement order will be made at least 28 days before the commencement date.

In April 2025, the Government expects to commence Part 3 of the Act, which provides for the consumer enforcement regimes, and Part 4, Chapter 1 of the Act, which replaces the unfair trading regulations. Secondary legislation will set out rules for the CMA's new direct enforcement powers, alongside guidance on these new powers. New savings schemes rules will not commence before April 2025, and this timeline is subject to continuing engagement with consumers and industry. Reforms to subscriptions contracts and alternative dispute resolution will follow later, with subscriptions reforms not commencing before Spring 2026, at the earliest. These timelines follow commitments made in the previous Parliament, and reflect the quickest possible delivery of the reforms, while ensuring that the necessary consultation and other steps can take place.

The Government's implementation plans will deliver the Act's benefits as quickly as possible, while ensuring its changes enter into force smoothly, allowing those that will be affected by them adequate time to prepare.

■ **Repeal of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023**

Minister for Employment Rights, Competition and Markets (Justin Madders):

[\[HCWS75\]](#)

Minimum service levels (MSLs) unduly restrict the right to strike and undermine good industrial relations. The introduction of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 ("the 2023 Act") was met with widespread condemnation from employers and trade unions. Many employers across different sectors pointed to its unworkability and impact on the ability of employers and trade unions to negotiate and to resolve disputes.

As such, the Government announced on 6 August that it will repeal the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 to get public services back on track and strengthen the rights of working people. The Deputy Prime Minister and DBT Secretary of State have also written to other Secretaries of State, the First Minister of Scotland and the First Minister of Wales asking them to encourage employers to avoid imposing minimum service levels on their workforce, until the Act is repealed.

We have begun preparations to repeal the 2023 Act as part of the forthcoming Employment Rights Bill. Amendments made by the 2023 Act to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 ("the 1992 Act") will accordingly be reversed

and any minimum service regulations will lapse automatically once the Employment Rights Bill has Royal Assent.

Although the ability of employers to give work notices will legally continue until the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 has been formally repealed and amendments to the 1992 Act are accordingly reversed, in this interim period we have strongly encouraged employers to seek alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution, including voluntary agreements, rather than imposing minimum service levels.

I also wish to make clear that, following the High Court ruling in August 2023 which upheld the judicial review challenge on the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses (Amendment) Regulations 2022, employment businesses are prohibited from providing agency workers to cover the duties normally performed by a worker of an organisation who is taking part in a strike or other industrial action. In light of the High Court ruling, it is not necessary to repeal these regulations.

The upcoming Employment Rights Bill will remove barriers to effective dispute resolution and we will continue to work with businesses as we develop and implement our Plan to Make Work Pay.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Death Certification Reform

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention (Andrew Gwynne): [\[HCWS76\]](#)

My Hon Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Patient Safety, Women's Health and Mental Health (Baroness Merron) has made the following statement:

I wish to inform the House that reforms to the death certification process in England and Wales begin today.

These reforms focus on the experience for bereaved people and seek to support improvements to patient safety. Importantly for bereaved people, the introduction of a statutory medical examiner system provides an opportunity for them to raise questions or concerns with a senior doctor not involved in the care of the deceased. The statutory system will also help deter criminal activity, improve practice and ensure appropriate referrals to coroners for further investigation.

These reforms respond to multiple inquiry recommendations over many years and mark a significant change to processes for medical practitioners, registrars and coroners. Under these reforms all deaths will legally become subject to either a medical examiner's scrutiny or a coroner's investigation irrespective of whether the deceased is to be buried or cremated, delivering a more equal and comprehensive system of assurance. From today, all of the medical examiner system's obligations, duties and responsibilities are enshrined in law.

These reforms are the result of work across a number of government departments including the Department of Health and Social Care, Ministry of Justice, Home

Office/General Register Office, Welsh Government and the Office of National Statistics. The National Medical Examiner in NHS England oversees the medical examiner system. The Royal College of Pathologists, the lead college for medical examiners, provides training for medical examiners and shares relevant communications to all those involved in the death management process.

I wish to share my gratitude to all those involved in delivering this important reform to death certification to provide greater transparency to bereaved people on the circumstances surrounding a death.