



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 10 September 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:43 P.M., 10 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

■ Private Education: VAT

Mr Peter Bedford:

[\[3924\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, whether he has made an assessment of the compatibility of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees with the Government's obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998.

Sarah Sackman:

Paragraph 2.13 of the Ministerial Code states: 'the fact that the Law Officers have advised or have not advised and the content of their advice must not be disclosed outside Government without their authority'. This is known as the Law Officers' Convention. Authority to make such disclosures is rarely given.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Banking Hubs: Broxbourne

Lewis Cocking:

[\[4075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent discussions he has had with the Post Office on opening a banking hub in Broxbourne constituency.

Gareth Thomas:

The Government understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and high streets and is committed to championing sufficient access for all.

We have committed to work closely with banks to roll out at least 350 banking hubs. That rollout is overseen by Cash Access UK (CAUK). LINK (the operator of the UK's largest ATM network) assesses a community's needs for access to cash in the event of the closure of a core cash service or if LINK receives a request directly from a community.

■ Conditions of Employment: Disability

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[4289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of strengthening the right to Disability Leave for disabled workers.

Justin Madders:

The Department for Business has not made an assessment of the merits of creating a new employment right for Disability Leave.

The Government has set out its immediate priorities for reforming employment law in the Plan to Make Work Pay. The Plan includes a number of measures which will help

disabled workers to enter, remain and progress in work - including making flexible working the default and introducing a right to switch off.

■ Horizon IT System: Compensation

Helen Morgan: [\[4276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many individuals have (a) been offered and (b) accepted compensation under the Group Litigation Order Scheme.

Gareth Thomas:

As of 30 August, 253 offers had been made to claimants under the GLO scheme; 207 postmasters had accepted their offer. Data on all Horizon redress schemes are published monthly on gov.uk.

■ Marches Growth Hub: Finance

Helen Morgan: [\[3833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how much funding the Marches Growth Hub received (a) when the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was in place and (b) after the LEP was removed.

Gareth Thomas:

DBT Funding for the Marches Growth Hub for each FY since it was established is set out in the table below:

	Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funded to deliver the Growth Hub									Marches Growth Hub delivered by Shropshire LA
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
The Marches annual allocations (£'000)	250	205	205	205	205	462	462	231	261	261

■ Post Offices

Andrew Cooper:

[\[3533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department is taking steps to help support the Post Office to (a) recruit postmasters and (b) maintain existing post offices.

Gareth Thomas:

While Government recognises the important role postmasters play in our communities and for small businesses across the UK, issues surrounding staffing are an operational matter for the Post Office.

Government protects the branch network by setting minimum access criteria, and protects services by setting minimum services to be provided at post offices across the country. The Post Office network meets the access criteria at a national level.

■ Small Businesses: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[3696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with the Department for the Economy on protecting small businesses in Northern Ireland.

Gareth Thomas:

DBT Ministers have engaged with the Northern Ireland Executive since assuming office, including productive meetings and correspondence at SoS and Minister of State level as well as detailed and ongoing official level dialogue regarding the interests of Northern Ireland Executive and businesses in Northern Ireland in the UK Government growth agenda.

■ Small Businesses: York Outer

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[3897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support small businesses in York Outer constituency.

Gareth Thomas:

The Government is investing £540 million over 30 years in the York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority's local economic priorities, including business support. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is also providing support to York businesses.

For small businesses across the country, we will deliver on commitments to boost exports, improve access to finance, stamp out late payment practices and open up competition for public procurement contracts. The department also provides extensive support through Help to Grow Management, the Business Support Service and network of Growth Hubs.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Civil Servants: Recruitment**

Dame Siobhain McDonagh: [3939]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish a list of exceptions that were used in the recruitment of civil servants (a) at and (b) above Payband 2 level before Civil Service Commission approval, between 2010 and 2018.

Georgia Gould:

Data relating to exceptions for Civil Servants between 2010 and 2018 is no longer held/available in accordance with retention schedules.

■ **National Security Unit for Procurement: Public Appointments**

Alex Burghart: [4406]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his planned timetable is for appointing the Head of the National Security Unit for Procurement.

Georgia Gould:

The Head of the National Security Unit for Procurement has been appointed.

■ **Personal Savings**

Andrew Lewin: [3852]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the number of households with less than £1,000 in savings in (a) Welwyn Hatfield constituency and (b) England.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 2 September 2024 is attached.

Attachments:

1. [UKSA Letter](#) [PQ3852 (1).pdf]

■ **Youth Mobility Scheme: EU Countries**

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [3936]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to negotiate a youth mobility scheme with the EU.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

We will work to reset the relationship with our European friends to strengthen ties, secure a broad-based security pact and tackle barriers to trade.

We have no plans for an EU-wide youth mobility scheme and there will be no return to freedom of movement.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Press: Regulation****Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[3768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the (a) Independent Press Standards Organisation and (b) Royal Charter on press self-regulation.

Stephanie Peacock:

Independent and effective self-regulation of the press empowers the public to have trust in what is reported, which is vital to a strong and functioning democracy.

DEFENCE■ **Armed Forces: Scotland****Gordon McKee:**[\[3522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many dentists his Department employs to provide care to military personnel in Scotland.

Al Carns:

As at 2 September 2024 the Ministry of Defence has nine dentists in permanent posts providing dental care to military personnel in Scotland.

Temporary Healthcare Workers engaged by Defence Primary Healthcare (DPHC) provide additional capacity to meet dental care requirements.

■ **Defence****Mike Martin:**[\[4499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will ensure that the upcoming Strategic Defence Review (a) begins with a statement of Britain's (i) interests, (ii) role in the world and (iii) military ambitions over the next 10 years and (b) matches available or planned military resources to that statement of interest, role and ambition.

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, deliverable and affordable within the resources available to Defence within the trajectory to 2.5%. The Review will ensure that Defence is central both to the security, and to the economic growth and prosperity, of the United Kingdom.

The Review will identify where reprioritisation of roles, capabilities, activities, and support may be made in the current Defence programme, to allow new investment, achieve better value for money, and secure greater economic gain for the UK, and will make recommendations.

■ Royal Engineers: Development Aid and Peacekeeping Operations

Sarah Olney: [\[3761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Royal Engineers have helped to construct road bridges in (a) aid and (b) peacekeeping missions.

Luke Pollard:

The Corps of Royal Engineers primarily builds temporary bridges that enable military road traffic to cross dry and wet gaps during operational deployments. The Corps of Royal Engineers has not recently helped to construct road bridges in aid or peacekeeping missions. Although not deploying or constructing bridges, the Corps has remained heavily involved in overseas peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts over the last decade including in South Sudan, Sierra Leone and the Caribbean.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid

Jim Shannon: [\[3699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) arms and (b) munitions shipments will be offered to Ukraine this winter.

Luke Pollard:

The UK is committed to providing the capabilities Ukraine requires over the winter.

On 7 July 2024, the Defence Secretary announced a new package of support for Ukraine including more ammunition and missiles. This follows the announcement in April that the UK will send our largest-ever package of military equipment which will include more than 1,600 strike and air defence missiles and nearly four million rounds of small arms ammunition to protect Ukraine's citizens, front line, and critical national infrastructure.

The total package of equipment is not released publicly due to operational security.

EDUCATION

■ Alternative Education

Helen Hayes: [\[3734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to respond to the consultation entitled Strengthening protections in unregistered alternative provision, which closed on 9 May 2024.

Catherine McKinnell:

On 9 May, the department published the consultation 'Strengthening Protections in Unregistered Alternative Provision (AP)' which sought views on proposals intended to improve practice and raise standards in unregistered AP. The consultation closed on 5 July.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities or who are in AP, including those in unregistered

AP, receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

Departmental officials are currently analysing the responses of the consultation, and the department will set out the next steps in due course.

■ Care Homes: Children

Mohammad Yasin:

[3014]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to review licensing arrangements for children's homes in densely populated residential areas.

Janet Daby:

It is essential that there are enough children's homes for those vulnerable children who need residential care, and that these homes are in the areas children live so they can stay as part of their wider communities.

All homes must register with Ofsted and in order to register as a children's home, providers are required to undertake a location assessment which must show the steps that have been taken to ensure the location is safe and promotes positive opportunities for children. Ofsted will take a view on whether these requirements have been met.

The department is developing options in regard to planning of children's homes, including considering the location of new homes and registration requirements.

■ Educational Psychology

Daisy Cooper:

[3796]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she had made an assessment of the adequacy of the number of educational psychologists in each local education authority in England.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department understands the critical role educational psychologists play in the support available to children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Data on the number of educational psychologists employed by local authorities is collected by the department within the School Workforce Census, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

Whilst it is the responsibility of local authorities as the employers of educational psychology services to ensure that their services are adequately staffed, the department is taking measures to support local authority educational psychology services by investing in developing the future workforce of educational psychologists.

The department is investing over £21 million to train 400 more educational psychologists from this year. This builds on the £10 million currently being invested in the training of over 200 educational psychologists who began their training in September 2023.

Following graduation, trainees who have had their training funded by the department are required to remain in local authority employment for a minimum period. To support local authority services to recruit and retain their educational psychology workforce, this requirement will increase to three years for those trainees beginning their course this year. This will allow local authority services to benefit from the public investment in educational psychologist training, and support their delivery of statutory assessments and wider work.

■ English Language and Mathematics: GCSE

Jim Shannon:

[3702]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing mandatory re-sits for GCSE English and Maths.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

Having a good standard of English and mathematics is key to a good education, future career options and for ensuring rising standards in literacy and numeracy. The department's focus is on continued study and improving capability in English and mathematics because of the evidenced benefits this brings to students' lives.

The department does not require students who have not yet achieved a GCSE grade 4 or above in mathematics and English to re-sit the qualification. If a student wishes to re-take their Level 2 English and mathematics they should do so when they and their provider think they are ready.

The Curriculum and Assessment Review will seek to deliver an excellent foundation in English and mathematics, including how best to support 16 to 19 year olds who currently do not achieve Level 2 by the age of 16.

■ Natural History: GCSE

Tim Farron:

[3690]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she expects the Natural History GCSE to be made widely available in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government has launched an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering key stages 1 to 5, which will be chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The Review will consider the current qualification pathways available at key stage 4 and key stage 5. A call for evidence will be published in the autumn, which will set out the areas where the review group would particularly welcome input. Further information about the Review is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-curriculum-and-assessment-review>.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism**Sir Desmond Swayne:****[4335]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many fines were issued to parents for taking children on holiday during term time at (a) independent and (b) maintained schools in the last year.

Stephen Morgan:

The department collects information from local authorities on penalty notices issued for unauthorised absence. This is published in the statistical release on Parental Responsibility Measures, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/parental-responsibility-measures>.

Information is not collected on the type of school the penalty notice relates to. Independent schools set their own attendance policies and penalty notices are not issued for pupils in these schools.

In England, in the 2022/23 academic year, 356,181 penalty notices were issued for unauthorised family holiday absence in state funded schools, including academies.

■ Relationships, Sex and Health Education: Endometriosis**Daisy Cooper:****[3785]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including awareness of endometriosis in Relationships, Sex and Health Education in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

Statutory guidance on the current relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum published on GOV.UK states that pupils should be taught key facts about the menstrual cycle, including what is an average period, the range of menstrual products and implications for emotional and physical health. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

While endometriosis is not mentioned specifically in the statutory guidance, it is open to schools to include it as part of this education.

In 2020, the department developed teacher training modules to support schools further, which are freely available to download from GOV.UK. This included working with Endometriosis UK when developing the 'changing adolescent body' module, which references endometriosis.

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. As such, the government will re-engage with stakeholders, look carefully at the consultation responses and consider the relevant evidence before setting out next steps.

■ Schools: Finance**Stuart Anderson:**[\[3778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure the adequacy of funding for rural schools (a) in South Shropshire constituency and (b) nationally.

Catherine McKinnell:

The national funding formula (NFF) accounts for the challenges faced by small schools in rural areas through the lump sum and sparsity factors. The lump sum provides a fixed amount of £134,000 that is unrelated to pupil numbers, and so is particularly beneficial to small rural schools. The department is also providing £98 million in total through the sparsity factor in 2024/25 to support small and remote schools, which typically benefits rural schools. In 2024/25, 75 schools in Shropshire local authority area attract sparsity funding in the NFF, including 40 in the South Shropshire constituency.

In July 2024, the department also announced almost £1.1 billion through the Core Schools Budget Grant to support schools with their overall costs. All schools, including rural schools, will receive funding through this grant in 2024/25.

Andrew Lewin:[\[3853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average funding per pupil was in mainstream schools in (a) Welwyn Hatfield constituency, (b) Hertfordshire and (c) England in over the past five academic years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The tables below set out funding statistics for Welwyn Hatfield constituency, Hertfordshire and England in each of the last five years. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding cycle is on a financial year basis, rather than an academic one, so this is what has been provided in this answer.

For Hertfordshire and England, the figures represent the funding provided through the schools block of the DSG. The figures in table one include premises funding but exclude falling rolls and growth funding (funding for local authorities to support schools with significant increases or decreases in pupil numbers).

The DSG is allocated at local authority level and, as such, the equivalent figures are not available for Welwyn Hatfield constituency. The constituency level data for Welwyn Hatfield is instead calculated based on the notional schools national funding formula (NFF) allocations for all mainstream schools in the constituency. The figures in table two are not comparable to those in table one because DSG funding cannot be broken down to constituency level, so the context of the funding figures are not the same.

The tables below provide average per-pupil funding for the last five years, 2020/21 to 2024/25:

Table one

YEAR	DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK PER-PUPIL FUNDING *	
	Hertfordshire	England
2020/21	£4,642	£5,055
2021/22	£5,024	£5,212
2022/23	£5,330	£5,534
2023/24	£5,634	£5,838
2024/25	£5,764	£5,957

* Additional grants, such as the School Supplementary Grant (SSG) and the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) are included in these figures once they have been incorporated into the DSG.

Table two

NFF SCHOOLS BLOCK PER-PUPIL FUNDING *	
Year	Welwyn Hatfield
2020/21	£4,806
2021/22	£4,981
2022/23	£5,150
2023/24	£5,445
2024/25	£5,755

* The allocations that schools within a constituency actually receive are determined by the local funding formula in their area. Additional grants, such as the SSG and the MSAG are included in these figures once they have been incorporated into the DSG.

■ Schools: Sherwood Forest

Michelle Welsh:

[\[3904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the level of real-terms funding per pupil in (a) primary and (b) secondary school in Sherwood Forest constituency was in each financial year since 2010.

Catherine McKinnell:

The table below provides per pupil funding units from academic years 2020/21 to 2024/25, which represents the funding provided for schools in Sherwood Forest constituency.

The department cannot provide comparable funding data for each of the last 10 years due to the changes in the funding system since that time. The scope of the per-pupil funding before and after academic year 2018/19 are not directly comparable. In particular, funding for the central services provided by local authorities was split out from the schools block funding in 2018/19, and instead funded separately through the central school services block from that year onwards.

The constituency level data for Sherwood Forest is calculated based on the notional schools national funding formula (NFF) allocations for all mainstream schools in the constituency.

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

YEAR	NFF SCHOOLS BLOCK PER-PUPIL FUNDING *	
	Primary	Secondary
2020-21	£4,458	£5,575
2021-22	£4,598	£5,749
2022-23	£4,712	£5,949
2023-24	£4,934	£6,300
2024-25	£5,179	£6,605

* The allocations that schools within a constituency actually receive are determined by the local funding formula in their area. Additional grants, such as the School Supplementary grant (SSG) and the Mainstream Schools Additional grant (MSAG) are included in these figures once they have been incorporated into the Dedicated Schools Grant.

For the 2020/21 to 2023/24 academic years, Sherwood constituency has been used. 2024/25 uses the new constituency boundaries which formed Sherwood Forest.

■ Skills England

Mr Luke Charters:

[3893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has a planned timetable for the establishment of Skills England.

Janet Daby:

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education announced the establishment of Skills England on 22 July 2024,

launching it in shadow form with immediate effect. Since then, it has made important progress towards becoming a fully-formed Arm's Length Body, appointing Richard Pennycook as interim chair and beginning the process for appointing Board members, and forging early relationships with key partners across government and the skills system. Skills England will continue to be established in phases over the next 9 to 12 months, expanding its work and taking on its additional functions as its staffing is built up.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Dorset**

Tom Hayes:

[\[4492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of SEND provision in (a) Bournemouth, (b) Christchurch and (c) Poole.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department has been working closely with all statutory partners involved in delivering special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole since their local area SEND inspection in June 2021.

The department holds regular formal monitoring meetings with the local authority and partners as part of holding the local area to account for making the necessary improvements in services. The latest monitoring meeting highlighted that the local authority and partners are taking positive steps to improve services, with some evidence of early impact, but that there are still ways to go to ensure that all children and families receive the service they require and deserve.

The department has put in place robust support for the local authority and partners through the appointment of a Sector Led Improvement Partner and SEND advisor support, and the department will continue with its work with the local area to ensure they deliver further improvements in services.

It is also important that we have a fair education funding system that directs funding to where it is needed. However, budgets for the 2025/26 financial year have not been set which means that decisions on high needs funding for children and young people with complex SEND, and the publication of allocations to local authorities for that year, will not be to the usual timescales.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Surrey**

Helen Maguire:

[\[3637\]](#)

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

Catherine McKinnell:

Surrey had their Ofsted and Care Quality Commission Local Area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection in September 2023 which identified

inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The report, published on 24 November 2023, included four areas for improvement.

The department's regional team has put in place systems to track outcomes against the areas for improvement found by inspectors and the progress made by children and young people with SEND. Surrey County Council are committed to working closely with the department to improve services.

Surrey County Council entered into a Safety Valve agreement with the department in March 2022 with a view to addressing the effectiveness and financial sustainability of the local high needs system.

■ Teachers: Pay

Siân Berry: [\[3627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the 2024-25 pay award does not apply to teachers in (a) sixth form and (b) further education colleges; and if she will make it her policy to apply the award to those teachers.

Janet Daby:

Further education (FE) providers are not in scope of the School Teacher Review Body's remit. The government neither sets nor makes recommendations about FE teacher pay, and it is instead the responsibility of individual colleges to make awards in line with their own local circumstances.

The fiscal situation that the government has inherited means that it has had to take incredibly difficult decisions about how to allocate scarce resources. However, I can assure you that this government knows the very important contribution of sectors where pay is not currently set by a Pay Review Body, including FE.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer will announce a Budget on 30 October, to be followed by a multi-year spending review in Spring 2025. Decisions about future post-16 funding and capital programmes will be subject to the outcomes of these fiscal events.

The department will continue with plans to invest in FE teachers, as part of the c.£600 million funding across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years that was announced last autumn. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas. We will also work with the FE sector to recruit 6,500 additional teachers across schools and colleges to raise standards for children and young people.

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Helen Morgan: [\[3838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of spending by schools on using recruitment agencies to fill teaching vacancies in the 2023-24 financial year.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold or collect the data to provide the requested estimate.

For state-funded schools wishing to recruit teachers on a permanent or fixed term basis, Teaching Vacancies is a free national listing service which removes the cost for schools to list vacancies. 87% of schools are signed up to use the service.

Schools have the autonomy to decide whether to use private supply agencies to fill temporary posts or cover teacher absence and are best placed to make decisions on their approach to recruitment. The department, in conjunction with the Crown Commercial Service, has established the agency supply deal, which supports schools to obtain value for money when hiring agency supply teachers and other temporary school staff. For more information, please visit the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deal-for-schools-hiring-supply-teachers-and-agency-workers>.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Carbon Emissions: Housing****Jim Shannon:****[3971]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to help make decarbonisation (a) affordable and (b) feasible for consumers who are not connected to the mains gas grid.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Our Warm Homes Plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation, low carbon heating and other home improvements to cut bills. It will be focused on making it economically worthwhile for people to transition to clean sources of heating, including for those living in properties off the gas-grid.

We will announce further policy detail of the Warm Homes Plan in due course.

Currently, alongside consumer advice sites, the Home Upgrade Grant and Boiler Upgrade Scheme are in place to support those not connected to the gas grid to decarbonise.

■ Climate Change Convention**Ayoub Khan:****[4324]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help prepare for COP29.

Kerry McCarthy:

COP29 is a crucial moment for global action on climate change. The UK is working closely with the incoming COP29 Presidency and other partners to make it a success. Shared priorities include agreeing a new global climate finance goal, encouraging ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and delivering on the outcomes from the Global Stocktake at COP28.

■ Drax Power Station**Daisy Cooper:****[4019]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to hold a substantive debate in the House of Commons on future subsidy arrangements for Drax power station.

Michael Shanks:

No decision has been taken on whether transitional support arrangements should be introduced for biomass generators when their current arrangements end. The Government will consider a range of factors, including a robust assessment of potential value for money for consumers, to inform its decision. This will be subject to appropriate Parliamentary engagement.

■ Energy: Billing**Rachael Maskell:****[3725]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to enable people on a prepayment meter to move onto an energy contract.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

It is a commercial matter for energy suppliers and their customers to determine which payment method customers should use. Any consumer who wishes to change their payment method or amend their contract should speak to their supplier. It is worth noting that some consumers may choose to have a prepayment meter as it can help them to budget their energy more effectively.

Last year, Ofgem introduced stringent rules for the installation of involuntary prepayment meters, to improve protections for vulnerable consumers. The Government will continue to work with Ofgem to ensure that suppliers only install involuntary prepayment meters as a last resort.

■ Energy: Business Premises and Private Rented Housing**Wera Hobhouse:****[3764]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to respond to the consultation entitled Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes in England and Wales, which closed on 8 January 2021; and whether he plans to increase the minimum energy efficiency standards required for (a) rented and (b) leased non-residential buildings.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

We will require private landlords to make improvements to their properties by 2030. Ensuring warmer, healthier private rented homes will lift many families out of fuel poverty and reduce energy bills. We will consider the evidence gathered as part of the 2020 consultation as we design the policy around increased Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.

The Government is committed to decarbonising non domestic buildings and is exploring the most appropriate way to do so, including through Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards where evidence gathered as part of the 2019 and 2021 consultations will continue to inform policy development.

■ Energy: Disability and Older People

Rachael Maskell:

[3724]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to prioritise his Department's housing retrofit programme to target (a) older and (b) disabled people.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government's current energy efficiency schemes are targeted at consumers with low incomes and those in the least efficient households in the UK.

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

Rachael Maskell:

[3726]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to ensure that people on a prepayment meter pay no more for energy than those on a contract.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The setting of prices for customers on a prepayment meter or on a fixed contract is a commercial matter for energy suppliers. The Ofgem price cap for the period 1 October 2024 to 31 December was published in August, and the price cap level for prepayment meter customers is £1,669 compared to the level set for direct debit customers which is £1,717 for an average household.

More information can be found on the Ofgem webpage -

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-policy-and-regulation/policy-and-regulatory-programmes/energy-price-cap-default-tariff-policy/energy-price-cap-default-tariff-levels>.

■ Energy: Older People

Rachael Maskell:

[3723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to ensure that energy companies have a legal responsibility to ensure that homes belonging to people in receipt of the State Pension are (a) warm and (b) damp-free.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Government is supporting households through our Warm Homes Plan, including energy efficiency schemes such as ECO4 and GBIS, which are legal obligations placed on energy suppliers to deliver energy efficiency measures to eligible households, making homes warmer and cheaper to heat.

Whilst State Pension is not an eligible benefit, households may still qualify where a member of the household receives a means-tested benefit, or through the Flexible Eligibility element of both schemes.

I intend to meet regularly with energy suppliers to outline my expectations for the standard of service that should be provided, including supporting vulnerable consumers and those struggling to pay their bills.

Energy: Social Tariffs**Rachael Maskell:**[\[4380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will hold discussions with energy producers on the potential merits of using profits to create an energy social tariff.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is committed to supporting those who are struggling to pay their energy bills, including the most vulnerable households. We are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills for eligible low-income households. Last month I met with energy suppliers to urge them to do everything they can to support consumers struggling to pay their bills, and to sign up to an ambitious set of commitments to take proactive steps to stop further households from getting into debt.

Tax is a matter for HM Treasury.

Fuel Poverty**Rachael Maskell:**[\[3727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that people (a) who use a prepayment meter and (b) in fuel poverty are able to heat their homes in Winter 2024-2025.

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.

The setting of prices for customers on a prepayment meter or on a fixed contract is a commercial matter for energy suppliers. The Ofgem price cap for the period 1 October 2024 to 31 December was published in August, and the price cap level for prepayment meter customers is £1,669 compared to the level set for direct debit customers which is £1,717 for an average household.

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.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to establish a Fuel Poverty Strategy to end fuel poverty.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The fuel poverty strategy, *Sustainable Warmth*, was published in 2021 and lays out a plan for how to meet the fuel poverty target.

Given that in 2023 an estimated 3.17m households remained in fuel poverty in England, we are conducting a review of the 2021 fuel poverty strategy.

The review, and conclusions with respect to developing an updated fuel poverty strategy, will be published shortly.

■ Gas Fired Power Stations

Joy Morrissey:

[\[3780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his policy is on the potential creation of new unabated gas power plants.

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. Unabated gas will increasingly move to a backup role as low carbon alternatives deploy. We will continue to develop our strategy to enable a transition away from unabated gas whilst maintaining security of supply.

■ Great British Energy

Joy Morrissey:

[\[3781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to provide trade unions with a role on the board of GB Energy.

Michael Shanks:

As stated in Great British Energy's Founding Statement, trade unions will have a voice and representation within Great British Energy. When deciding upon the composition of the board, GBE will follow best practice in its governance and structures, including around its relationships and engagement with trade unions and its workforce.

■ Heating: Housing**Jim Shannon:**[\[3973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using renewable liquid fuels in the decarbonisation of home heating for households that are not connected to the mains gas grid.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes that renewable liquid fuels could play a limited role in heating. As sustainable biomass is a limited resource, we expect to prioritise the use of renewable liquid fuels in sectors like aviation, and potentially homes that are not readily suitable for heat pumps, as these offer the greatest opportunity to reduce emissions and have fewest options to decarbonise through alternative low carbon technologies.

■ Hitachi: Oldbury Power Station and Wylfa Power Station**Llinos Medi:**[\[4472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 3867 on Hitachi: Wylfa Power Station, if he will provide a breakdown of how much of the £160 million total was spent on the site at (a) Wylfa and (b) Oldbury.

Michael Shanks:

Great British Nuclear agreed to pay £115m for the Wylfa site and up to £45m for the Oldbury site, excluding taxes.

■ National Grid: Costs**James Cartlidge:**[\[4389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact on consumer energy bills of the total lifetime cost of delivering (a) the Western Link and (b) all current and future stages of the Eastern Green Link offshore cabling.

Michael Shanks:

Electricity network reinforcements are only approved where they are in the interests of consumers and help reduce overall system costs. For both the Western Link and the Eastern Green Link projects, decisions to proceed were based on robust cost-benefit analyses, approved by Ofgem. Ofgem review proposed project costs and ensure that network companies spend efficiently, protecting consumers from unduly high costs.

These reinforcements are designed to help balance the GB grid, bringing renewable generation in Scotland to demand centres further south. While they have significant build costs, they will help reduce balancing costs, bringing overall savings to consumers.

■ North Sea Transition Authority: Supply Chains

Olivia Blake: [4448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to review the North Sea Transition Authority's Supply Chain Action Plans.

Michael Shanks:

We have no current plans to review the North Sea Transition Authority's (NSTA) Supply Chain Action Plans. These are a matter for the NSTA.

■ Plastics: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Alex Sobel: [3776]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the contribution of the plastic production industry to the level of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the UK in (a) 2024 and (b) in the next ten years.

Michael Shanks:

The department does not produce specific emissions estimates for the plastic production industry, however our greenhouse gas (GHG) territorial (i.e. occurring within the UK's borders) emissions statistics by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) includes a category for plastics products. The latest year for which data is available is 2022, when GHG emissions from manufacture of plastic products was 2,266 kilotonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (kt CO₂e).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/final-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-1990-to-2022>

The department publishes Energy & Emissions Projections however these do not include an emissions split for plastic products.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/energy-and-emissions-projections>

■ Small Modular Reactors

Jerome Mayhew: [3777]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to announce the results of the Small Modular Reactor (SMR) competition; and what assessment he has made of the contribution of SMRs to net zero energy generation targets in 2030.

Michael Shanks:

Great British Nuclear was established in 2023 as an expert nuclear delivery. It is currently running a small modular reactor technology selection process. This is a live procurement and is ongoing; the window for submitting tenders has now closed and Great British Nuclear is now evaluating bids, with further updates to follow in due course.

■ Solar Power: Housing**Daisy Cooper:**[\[3784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to ensure that households with solar panels and battery storage receive the rate of wholesale electricity as payment for excess electricity exported to the grid.

Michael Shanks:

Both rooftop solar and batteries are important for getting to net zero. Households and businesses with solar panels can benefit through significantly reduced electricity bills. They can also export the excess energy they generate to the grid via the Smart Export Guarantee (SEG). This is a market led mechanism where electricity supply companies set their own export tariffs. As the SEG is market led, those with solar panels can shop around for the best prices.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Algae: Lough Neagh****Robin Swann:**[\[3921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has received a request for assistance with algal bloom pollution in Lough Neagh from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State and the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland recently discussed the shared priority of improving water quality in the UK. There was agreement to collaborate further by enhancing joint scientific research and exchanging best practice methods to tackle pollution of culturally and economically important water bodies such as Lough Neagh.

■ Badgers: Disease Control**Daisy Cooper:**[\[3800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on vaccinating badgers to help tackle the spread of bovine tuberculosis.

Daniel Zeichner:

Over the past few years, several initiatives have been introduced to encourage take up of badger vaccination over larger, more contiguous areas.

- Bolstering APHA field teams to deliver badger vaccination in several areas where licensed badger culling had ended.
- Government funded community-led badger vaccination project in East Sussex.
- Improved guidance to increase efficiency of vaccination.

- The 'Train the Trainer' (TtT) scheme, which enables experienced cage-trappers and lay vaccinators to qualify as trainers and form their own local training hubs, creates more training capacity to enable more people to be trained.
- A simplified badger vaccination licence and registration process, alongside a smartphone reporting app making it easier to report activity in the field
- Streamlined cage-trapping and vaccination training courses to make them less time-consuming and more accessible.

As a result of these steps, more than 3,000 badgers were vaccinated in England in 2023. This is the highest number ever vaccinated annually in England to date

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, a new Badger Vaccinator Field Force will be established. This will increase badger vaccination to drive down TB rates and protect badgers. A badger vaccination study will also be carried out. This will supplement the Field Force. The Government will rapidly analyse the effect of badger vaccination on the incidence of TB in cattle to encourage farmers to take part and provide greater confidence that doing so will have a positive effect on their cattle.

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>.

■ Bluetongue Disease: East Anglia

Dr Neil Hudson:

[3819]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help manage recent cases of bluetongue virus in East Anglia.

Daniel Zeichner:

Following the initial findings of cases of bluetongue serotype 3 (BTV-3) virus in August 2024, Defra implemented a Temporary Control Zone (TCZ) around the affected premises and humanely culled infected animals to prevent potential spread.

Following confirmation of BTV-3 on further premises and evidence of local transmission of bluetongue virus, in accordance with the bluetongue disease control framework we replaced the TCZ with a Restricted Zone and are no longer culling animals. This Restricted Zone prevents all ruminants, camelids and their germinal products moving outside the zone, potentially spreading disease. The Restricted Zone initially covered Norfolk and Suffolk and was subsequently extended to Essex.

Defra has also permitted the use of vaccines for BTV-3, under certain circumstances, in the high-risk counties of south east England.

■ Countryside Stewardship Scheme: South Holland and the Deepings**Sir John Hayes:** [\[3684\]](#)

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

Daniel Zeichner:

As of 03 September, there are **63** farm businesses with a Countryside Stewardship Agreement for the South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

■ Flood Control: Finance**Shaun Davies:** [\[3845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what weighting (a) his Department and (b) the Environment Agency give to world heritage site status when determining funding for flood defences.

Emma Hardy:

The impacts of coastal erosion and flooding on heritage assets are included in the economic impacts assessment for flood and coastal erosion schemes. Last year, the Environment Agency published the [Environment and Historic Environment Outcomes Valuation Guidance](#) which contains specific arrangements for the valuation of heritage assets such as religious buildings.

Flood schemes protecting world heritage sites attract funding through the Government's Partnership Funding Policy. The amount of funding a project can attract will depend on the damages it will avoid and the benefits it will deliver, including those to heritage assets.

■ Fly-tipping: Fixed Penalties**Shaun Davies:** [\[3846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will provide councils with powers to recover the full cost of (a) investigations, (b) prosecutions, (c) clean up and (d) prevention of fly tipping when issuing fixed penalty notices for fly-tipping.

Mary Creagh:

Local authorities can issue fixed penalty notices of up to £1,000 to fly-tippers. The income from these fixed penalty notices must be spent on enforcement and clean-up specifically. The department has not yet made an assessment of this policy, which was introduced under the previous Government, or how it might be changed.

■ National Wildlife Crime Unit: Finance**Mark Pritchard:** [\[3689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will increase his Department's funding to the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

Mary Creagh:

The National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) helps prevent and detect wildlife crime by obtaining and disseminating intelligence, undertaking analysis which highlights local or national threats and directly assisting law enforcers in their investigations.

Defra supports the valuable work of the NWCU. Defra is providing £424,000 for it in financial year 2024-2025. Budgets for 2025-2026 and beyond have not yet been set.

Swine Fever: Africa**Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[3820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of African swine fever on the pig industry.

Daniel Zeichner:

Whilst we have never had an outbreak of African swine fever (ASF) in the UK, the risk level for an incursion of ASF is currently assessed as medium and we continue to prepare for an outbreak.

The practical impacts of a reasonable worst-case scenario outbreak of ASF were assessed in 2023 for the [National Risk Register](#) which is available on gov.uk.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) monitors the spread of ASF internationally and regularly publishes assessments of the risk posed to Great Britain. The latest assessment (published in June 2024) can be found as part of APHA's [Animal diseases: international and UK monitoring collection](#) on gov.uk. These assessments are used to review, and strengthen where necessary, measures to prevent ASF reaching the UK.

Water Treatment**Sarah Olney:**[\[3762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing of mandatory quaternary water treatment of wastewater.

Emma Hardy:

Defra currently has no plans to introduce and make quaternary treatment mandatory for domestic wastewater treatment. Where it is deemed necessary as an additional wastewater treatment process, costs and benefits will be assessed, and stakeholder consultations will be performed through the normal routes.

Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations**Jim Allister:**[\[3930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, (a) how many and (b) what directions he has issued under Regulation 3 of the Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer given by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 22 July ([UIN 322](#)).

■ Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme: Plant and Animal Health (Amendment etc) Regulations**Jim Allister:****[3934]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which business organisations his Department had discussions with in (a) England, (b) Wales and (c) Scotland on the Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme: Plant and Animal Health (Amendment etc) Regulations 2024 (i) before the development of those regulations and (ii) before those regulations were laid before Parliament.

Daniel Zeichner:

Departmental officials engaged with businesses operating in Great Britain and Northern Ireland to ensure that Northern Ireland consumers have access to the same products as consumers in Great Britain whilst formulating this policy. Trade bodies representing retailers in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland were also consulted.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Asylum: British Indian Ocean Territory****Andrew Rosindell:****[2763]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many people claiming asylum in the UK are being detained on the British Indian Ocean Territory as of 30 August 2024.

Stephen Doughty:

64 migrants remain under the care of the BIOT Administration. The BIOT Administration is considering their claims for protection i.e. non-refoulement back to Sri Lanka.

■ Development Aid: Food Supply**Ellie Chowns:****[3913]**

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, published by the FAO in August 2024, if his Department will take steps to adopt (a) a common definition of and (b) measurement guidelines for financing for food security and nutrition.

Anneliese Dodds:

Tracking and reporting financing for food security and nutrition consistently is important, and we welcome the proposals in the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report. The UK reports on food security and nutrition finance

using the G7 Elmau methodology. We are an active member of the G7 subgroup that seeks to update and improve this methodology.

■ **Economic Crime: International Cooperation**

Lloyd Hatton: [\[3902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his interview with the *i* newspaper, published on 3 June 2024, what recent progress he has made on establishing a summit of allies and international financial centres to tackle dirty money.

Anneliese Dodds:

This government will drive a powerful agenda to tackle corruption and kleptocracy both at home and internationally. Working in partnership with international financial centres to tackle illicit finance is a priority. The FCDO is working across HMG to explore a range of options to deliver on this agenda and is actively considering different ways to increase the leadership of the UK in this area.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Communications**

Neil O'Brien: [\[3074\]](#)

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

Catherine West:

The Government develops wide-ranging national and international campaigns which are delivered through tailored communication strategies aimed at reaching target audiences. The total FCDO Communication Directorate's communication campaign activity for FY23-24 was £6,435,000. We remain committed to scrutiny, transparency, and best value for taxpayer money. Please note that the majority of campaign expenditure is covered by other relevant Departments.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**

Emily Thornberry: [\[4342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's planned timetable is for publishing its monthly transparency data for (a) spending over £25,000 from June 2022 to July 2024 inclusive and (b) spending over £500 using a government procurement card from November 2022 to July 2024 inclusive.

Catherine West:

The FCDO is targeting the end of September for publication of the historic £500 (period November-2022 to July-2024) and historic £25,000 (period June-2022 to July-2024) spend files.

■ Humanitarian Aid: Nutrition

Ellie Chowns: [\[3912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken steps to integrate nutrition into wider humanitarian and development programming to maximise positive outcomes for nutrition.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK has made progress toward its 2021 Nutrition for Growth commitment to integrate nutrition objectives and interventions into multiple sectors across its Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme portfolio. 12 per cent of FCDO programmes integrated nutrition in 2022, up from 10.7 per cent in 2021. This meant that in 2022 the FCDO spent £336.4 million of bilateral ODA on nutrition, an increase of 8.9 per cent from 2021. The UK is committed to tackling malnutrition; prevention and treatment of malnutrition is vital for the UK's work on global health, humanitarian response and in empowering women and girls. 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.

■ Somalia: Politics and Government

Afzal Khan: [\[3070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the role of the SSC-Khaatumo region in supporting stability, development and growth in Somalia.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK has not made a specific assessment of the role of the SSC-Khatumo area in supporting stability, development and growth in Somalia. We engage closely with all parties in Somalia and are a core security and development partner to the country.

■ Venezuela: Elections

Daisy Cooper: [\[3797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the contested elections in Venezuela.

Catherine West:

The UN was clear that the outcome of Venezuela's elections cannot be deemed credible without the regime publishing full results. The Foreign Secretary has publicly called for the swift and transparent publication of full, detailed results to ensure that the outcome reflects the votes and the will of the Venezuelan people; this was echoed in a G7 statement on 31 July. The UK also joined a coalition of countries in signing a Dominican Republic-led regional statement on 16 August demanding an end to repression and respect for human rights. The UK approach is to work with international partners to achieve a peaceful solution that respects the will of all Venezuelans.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Anorexia****Alex Mayer:**[\[3879\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is committed to working closely with NHS England to ensure that people with anorexia and other eating disorders get the care and treatment they need, when they need it.

We will focus on improving the performance of the existing waiting time standards for children and young people's eating disorder services. This will be supported by recruiting 8,500 additional mental health staff across children and adult mental health services.

■ Bladder Cancer: Newcastle-under-Lyme**Adam Jogee:**[\[3451\]](#)

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

Karin Smyth:

We will get the National Health Service catching cancer on time, diagnosing it earlier and treating it faster so more patients survive this horrible set of diseases, including bladder cancer, and we will improve patients' experience across the system.

Nationally, there is a focus on innovation and a move to develop new cancer tests. University Hospitals of North Midlands (UHNM) NHS Trust has been part of the Galleri trial of blood tests to identify cancer at the earliest stage. The trust is supporting the development of these trials and their adoptions as they are made available.

UHNM is working with primary care networks and other primary care stakeholders to outline a clear set of actions and milestones to improve referral practice, particularly for bowel, gynaecology and urology patients.

■ Community Hospitals: Rural Areas**Manuela Perteghella:**[\[3399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of community hospitals with (a) in-patient wards and (b) other integrated healthcare facilities on healthcare provision in rural areas.

Stephen Kinnock:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for arranging healthcare services that meet the needs of their population, including those provided for by community

hospitals in rural areas. ICBs are best placed to use local autonomy to determine the needs of their respective populations and how best to address them.

As part of the Government's five missions, the Department will launch a 10-year plan for change and modernisation, to make the National Health Service fit for the future. The plan will set out a bold agenda to deliver on the three big shifts needed to move healthcare from hospital to the community, analogue to digital, sickness to prevention.

■ Dementia

Saqib Bhatti: [\[4033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a dementia strategy.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: Everyone should have access to high quality care that supports choice and control, and enables people to live independent, dignified lives. This includes people living with dementia. We know that the health and social care system faces significant challenges, and that long-term reform is needed. This is why we plan to create a National Care Service and are developing a 10-year plan to radically reform the National Health Service and build a health service that is fit for the future. As part of this work, we will consider how best to meet the needs of people with dementia, including whether it is appropriate to develop a dementia strategy.

■ Dementia: Health Services

Helen Grant: [\[2861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve dementia care in England.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Dementia Training Standards Framework sets out the required essential knowledge and skills, as well as the expected learning outcomes applicable across the health and care spectrum. To support the quality of dementia care planning by primary care providers, the Dementia: Good Personalised Care and Support Planning guide promotes consistent personalised care and support planning. To further improve care, NHS England has refreshed the RightCare Dementia Scenario. This sets out best practice for supporting people with dementia, from diagnosis to dying well.

To enhance an integrated approach to hospital discharge, six national discharge frontrunner pilots are testing improved dementia care. This includes dementia hubs, which aim to improve care and support for dementia patients waiting for discharge, so that their needs are at the centre of every decision.

■ Dementia: Reviews

Helen Morgan:

[\[4277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) improve and (b) standardise the quality of annual dementia reviews.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: The Dementia: Good Personalised Care and Support Planning guide sets out how primary care providers can ensure personalised care and support planning is undertaken consistently and reliably. This includes annual dementia reviews. The guide offers a quality assurance framework to ensure care planning is responsive to needs and preferences.

To improve care for patients with dementia, NHS England's RightCare team has refreshed the RightCare Dementia Scenario, which works through the Well Pathway for Dementia, detailing optimal and suboptimal approaches. The RightCare team has developed a model dementia pathway based on data for each component of the pathway, to provide a high-level view of what dementia care activity looks like for local areas, and to aid targeted support where appropriate.

■ Dementia: Social Services

Dame Caroline Dineneage:

[\[2856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of dementia training in the adult social care workforce.

Stephen Kinnock:

The adult social care workforce provides vital care and support to people of all ages and with diverse needs, including those with dementia. Care workers are essential to those who draw on care and support, helping them maintain their quality of life, independence, and connection to the things that matter to them.

No specific assessment has been made of the adequacy of dementia training for the adult social care workforce, but as we develop a long-term plan for social care, those working in social care will be at the heart of our reforms. We will outline further plans for social care workforce reform in due course.

Nadia Whittome:

[\[3228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendation in the report entitled A Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England, published by Skills for Care's on 18 July 2024, that all social care workers should have dementia training aligned to the Dementia Training Standards Framework

Stephen Kinnock:

National training, including the Department's Care Workforce Pathway and new Level 2 Adult Care Certificate qualification, has been developed using current standards and competency frameworks to support people with dementia. This includes the Dementia Training Standards Framework.

As we develop a long-term plan for social care, those working in social care will be at the heart of our reforms. We will outline further plans for social care workforce reform in due course.

Nadia Whittome: [\[3229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to expand access to dementia training for adult social care workers

Stephen Kinnock:

The adult social care workforce provides vital care and support to people of all ages and with diverse needs, including those with dementia. Care workers are essential to those who draw on care and support, helping them maintain their quality of life, independence, and connection to the things that matter to them.

Enhancing skills for staff working in social care is of critical importance. As such, we will continue to develop the Care Workforce Pathway, the new national career structure for adult social care, and linked to this, a new Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification has already been developed and launched.

We will develop a long-term plan for social care, with those working in social care being at the heart of our reforms. We will outline our further plans for workforce reform in due course.

■ Dental Services

Graham Stuart: [\[2773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1642 on Dental Services, if he will make it his policy to implement the plans to reform dental services set out in the document published by his Department on 7 February 2024 entitled *Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry*.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are currently reviewing the Dental Recovery Plan, and what elements of it can be taken forward effectively and within National Health Service budgets. It is also clear that the plan did not go far enough, and so we are also working on our Dental Rescue Plan, and prioritising initiatives that will see the biggest impact on access to NHS dental care.

Rachael Maskell: [\[3716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, what steps he plans to take to increase the NHS participation rate for dentists.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 5 September 2024]: As we fix the National Health Service, we will deliver the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, so patients are always cared for by the right, qualified healthcare professional. The NHS has for years been facing chronic

workforce shortages and we must be honest that bringing in the staff we need will take time.

The Government will tackle the immediate dentistry crisis 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, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

■ **Dental Services: Aldershot**

Alex Baker:

[\[4105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of dental practices were rated as good by the Care Quality Commission in Aldershot constituency on 3 September 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulates all health and social care services in England. The Commission ensures quality and safety across a range of sectors that deliver health and care to people in England.

The CQC carries out assessments of approximately 10% of registered primary dental services, to determine if they are compliant with regulations. However, they do not rate dental services in the same way they do for the other services they regulate. Data held by the CQC on the active dental locations in the Aldershot constituency that have been assessed is undergoing quality assurance, and is currently unavailable.

■ **Dental Services: Contracts**

Alex Mayer:

[\[3432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will set a timeframe for introducing legislative provisions to reform the dental contract.

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 so that we deliver a system better for patients and the profession.

■ **Dental Services: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[3945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many new mobile dental vans he plans to introduce in Lincolnshire by the end of 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government will tackle the challenges patients face when trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more

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

We are clear that the dental recovery plan, Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry, published on 7 February 2024, did not go far enough to improve access for NHS dentistry patients. As part of our ambitions for dentistry, we will review what elements of the recovery plan can be taken forward within NHS budgets, including on the proposals for dental vans.

■ Dentistry: Pay

Sir John Hayes: [2725]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many orthodontists were paid more than £1 million by the NHS in each of the last five years.

Bob Blackman: [2847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the maximum net pensionable earnings paid by the NHS to an orthodontist was in England in each of the last three years.

Stephen Kinnock:

Data is not held centrally on the net pensionable earnings paid by the National Health Service to an orthodontist and how many orthodontists were paid more than £1 million by the NHS. Data is published on dentists earnings and expenses, however this does not differentiate between NHS and private earnings or reference orthodontists specifically. This data is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/dental-earnings-and-expenses-estimates/2022-23>

■ Dentistry: Training

Rachael Maskell: [3714]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, when he plans to announce which schools will provide (a) new and (b) additional dental training places from September 2026.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 5 September 2024]: No specific date has been set for the Office for Students to commence the process for dental training place applications from 2026 onwards. The Department will set out next steps in relation to dental training in due course.

We are determined to fix our National Health Service and restore it to a service we are proud of. In doing so, we are committed to training the staff we need to get patients seen on time, including dentists.

■ **Drugs: Waste Management**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[3123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ask NHS England to monitor the (a) uptake of locally implemented waste reduction schemes and (b) impact of such schemes on levels of unused medicines.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England is leading a programme on medicine optimisation which aims to help patients to improve outcomes and safety, take medicines as intended, avoid taking unnecessary medicines, and reduce wastage. Community pharmacies also offer the New Medicines Service, providing further support to patients newly prescribed certain medicines, and the Discharge Medicines Service, enabling hospitals to refer recently discharged patients to a community pharmacy for support with new medication.

Structured Medicine Reviews are offered by general practices (GPs), where pharmacists are part of multi-disciplinary teams to review patients' medication, optimise their medication, and prevent wastage. In addition, electronic Repeat Dispensing (eRD) allows a GP to send repeat prescriptions to a patient's pharmacy to manage the dispensing of the specific medicines required. As part of the eRD service, the pharmacy is required to make sure that the patient still needs all of their medicines, and dispense to the patients only those that are needed.

The national overprescribing review from 2021 set outs a series of practical and cultural changes necessary to ensure patients receive the most appropriate treatment for their needs, while ensuring value for money. The impact of these and other measures is not centrally monitored.

■ **Eating Disorders: Aldershot**

Alex Baker:

[\[3512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide support to young people with eating disorders in Aldershot constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is committed to working closely with NHS England to ensure that people with an eating disorder get the care and treatment they need, when they need it. The Department will focus on improving the performance of the existing waiting time standards for Children and Young Peoples' Eating Disorder services including in Aldershot.

This will be supported by recruiting 8,500 additional mental health staff across children and adult mental health services, ensuring every young person has access to a specialist mental health professional at school, and setting up Young Futures hubs in every community, offering open access mental health services for young people.

■ Emergency Calls: Standards

Charlotte Cane: [\[4127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has a strategy to reduce waiting times on the 111 Option 2 crisis response service.

Stephen Kinnock:

To ensure that crisis care services are safe, effective, and consistently provide high quality care across England, NHS England has asked all crisis care services accessible via NHS 111 option two to move at pace and begin reporting access, responsiveness, and patient feedback measures from quarter two of 2024/25.

The collected data will enable a better understanding of where pressures exist in the system and help to drive improvements in waiting times and overall service delivery. These measures will allow NHS England and local providers to monitor performance and implement targeted strategies to reduce waiting times, therefore ensuring a timelier response for individuals in crisis.

■ General Dental Council

Sir John Hayes: [\[2726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what powers he has to change the leadership of the General Dental Council.

Stephen Kinnock:

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the independent regulator of dentistry in the United Kingdom. As an independent body, the GDC is responsible for the discharge of its statutory duties and the Government is unable to direct the GDC's administrative functions or processes.

The GDC is accountable for the discharge of its statutory duties through the requirement for it to submit annual reports to the Privy Council; through scrutiny the Health and Care Select Committee may choose to undertake; and through annual performance reviews by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care, who can escalate serious or intractable concerns to both Government and Parliament.

The Privy Council may make orders which determine the composition of the Council and processes for the appointment of the Chair of the Council, as set out by Schedule 1 of the Dentists Act 1984.

■ General Practitioners: Aldershot

Alex Baker: [\[3514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide (a) resources and (b) other support to help GP surgeries to reduce (i) patient backlogs and (ii) workloads in Aldershot 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 this crisis in GPs to secure the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service. Aldershot sits within the NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board, where 84.8% of appointments were delivered within two weeks of booking, 2.1% higher than the national average.

The Government has committed to fixing the front door to the NHS by shifting the focus from hospitals and into the community. We know that if patients can't get a GP appointment, they will end up in accident and emergency, which is worse for them, and more expensive for the taxpayer.

NHS England is working to address training bottlenecks, so the health service has enough staff for the future, and we have provided £82 million to fund the recruitment of over 1,000 newly qualified GPs, to increase capacity and reduce workloads.

We are pleased to announce that newly qualified GPs will be included in the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme as part of an initiative to address GP unemployment, with additional funding over 2024/25.

Alex Baker:[\[3515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to enable GP surgeries to provide additional services in Aldershot constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

General practices are able to provide Directed Enhanced Services and Enhanced Services by opting in, and will receive payment for these services separately to global sum payments. As commissioners of primary care, integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning Local Enhanced Services, which are not agreed nationally and can vary in scope and funding to fit local needs.

Alex Baker:[\[4109\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

We have committed to training thousands more general practitioners (GPs) across the country, as well as taking pressure off those currently working in the system. The inclusion of newly qualified GPs into the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme will also support the recruitment of GPs.

The NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board, which includes Aldershot, advises it is committed to supporting, developing, and retaining its workforce, and that it offers a full and varied training and development offer to clinical staff. This includes the national New GP Fellowship programme, which currently has 40 newly qualified GPs across the Frimley system, two of whom are from Aldershot. The scheme helps the transition into GP, post qualification. Other initiatives include mentoring and national Continuing Professional Development funding for primary care staff.

■ General Practitioners: Broxbourne**Lewis Cocking:**[\[4077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of waiting times for GP surgeries in Broxbourne 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.

Broxbourne sits within the NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board, where 82.7% of appointments were delivered within two weeks of booking, 0.4% lower than the national average.

Our plan to restore GPs and improve the waiting times to see a GP will require both investment and reform. We have committed to train thousands more GPs, end the 8:00am scramble for GP appointments by introducing a modern booking system, and trial new Neighborhood Health Centers to bring community health services together under one roof. Furthermore, the Government will also bring back the family doctor by incentivising GPs to see the same patient.

■ General Practitioners: Energy**Sarah Champion:**[\[2903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support GP surgeries (a) improve energy efficiency and (b) reduce their carbon footprint.

Alex Sobel:[\[3062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help GP surgeries (a) improve energy efficiency and (b) reduce their carbon footprint.

Stephen Kinnock:

Primary care will play an important role in helping the National Health Service achieve the net zero targets outlined in the report, *Delivering a Net Zero NHS*, published in July 2022, by decarbonising its estate, travel, and supply chain. Targeted efforts are needed to reduce emissions from medicines, which make up nearly two-thirds of primary care's carbon footprint. There is range of support available to general practice (GP) surgeries to achieve this transition.

Supported by NHS England, the Royal College of General Practitioners is actively working to reduce the carbon footprint of GP surgeries through several initiatives like the Net Zero Hub, which provides guidance, eLearning, and tools for sustainability, and the Green Impact for Health Toolkit, which offers practical advice and awards for sustainable practices, among others. GP surgeries are also encouraged to use grants through the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, for low-carbon heating solutions.

On efficiency and heat, all new buildings and major refurbishment projects, including primary care upgrades, will need to comply with NHS England's Net Zero Building Standard, published in 2023.

■ General Practitioners: Leasehold

Julia Buckley:

[\[3488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of NHS England underwriting leases for GP practices.

Stephen Kinnock:

Under the GP Contracts, premises liabilities are the responsibility of the contractor. Overall contractual payments reflect this arrangement, with the National Health Service also reimbursing direct premises costs including rent, business rates, water, and clinical waste.

There are 8,842 practice premises across England, of these, 51% are leased premises. The NHS is not a formal party to the leases on these properties. If NHS England were to consider a formal underwriting of the leases, legal advice notes, that would constitute a commitment, which would require capitalisation under the International Financial Accounting Standard IFRS16, and limited NHS capital budgets would have to be diverted to offset this commitment, in addition to the payment of rents against the properties.

This would provide, in effect, a double payment of costs against the asset and would commit substantial capital funds to the exercise, limiting the ability of integrated care systems to invest in the primary care estate, address secondary and community care, mental health services, and critical and usual infrastructure maintenance requirements, significantly adversely affecting the overall investment plans for communities. As a result, NHS England considers that a formal underwriting of leases would not provide best use of public funds.

■ General Practitioners: Rural Areas

Jim Shannon:

[\[2079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of recent trends in levels of sustainability of GP practices in rural areas.

Stephen Kinnock:

We recognize that patients are struggling to access general practice (GP), and more must be done to improve the sustainability of the National Health Service both nationally and in rural areas. The Government is committed to fixing the front door to the NHS, which is crucial for its long-term sustainability.

We acknowledge the urgent challenge of ensuring rural areas have the resources to continue serving their patients. To address this, we will increase funding for GPs and primary care, and shift the focus of the NHS from hospitals to community-based care.

We will also ensure rural areas have the necessary workforce to provide integrated, patient-centered services.

We are committed to training thousands more GPs across the country, including in rural areas, starting with the training places outlined in the NHS's Long-Term Workforce Plan. This will increase capacity, secure the future pipeline of GPs, and alleviate the pressure on those currently working in the system.

We are pleased to announce that newly qualified GPs will be included in the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme as part of an initiative to address GP unemployment, with additional funding over 2024/25. This is a step in the journey while the Government works with GPs to identify longer term solutions to GP unemployment and sustainability.

Additionally, we have accepted the DDRB recommendations in full and, subject to consultation with the BMA, we will uplift the pay element of the GP contract by 6% on a consolidated basis (an increase of 4% on top of the 2% interim uplift in April); to provide practices with funding to uplift GP partner, salaried GP and other salaried staff pay by 6%.

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[3888\]](#)

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

Stephen Kinnock:

We recognise that patients are struggling to access general practice (GP), and more must be done to improve the sustainability of the National Health Service both nationally and in rural areas. The Government is committed to fixing the front door to the NHS, which is crucial for its long-term sustainability.

We acknowledge the urgent challenge of ensuring rural areas have the resources to continue serving their patients. To address this, we will increase funding for GPs and primary care and shift the focus of the NHS from hospitals to community-based care.

We will also ensure rural areas have the necessary workforce to provide integrated, patient-centered services. We are committed to training thousands more GPs across the country, including in rural areas, starting with the training places outlined in the NHS's Long-Term Workforce Plan. We have also 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 appointments delivered in general practice.

This will increase capacity, secure the future pipeline of GPs, and alleviate the pressure on those currently working in the system.

■ **Health Centres**

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[4034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral answer of 23 July 2024 from the Minister for Secondary Care, Official Report, column

510, whether he plans to announce further steps on the delivery of neighbourhood health centres.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: As my Rt hon. Friend the Minister for Secondary Care sets out, we have committed to trialling Neighbourhood Health Centres to bring together a range of services under one roof. This is part of our broader ambition to move towards a Neighbourhood Health Service, with more care delivered in local communities to spot problems earlier. We are working with officials to determine the next steps internally, and will provide further updates in due course.

■ **Health Services**

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[4441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of opening each trial neighbourhood health centre.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have committed to trialling Neighbourhood Health Centres, to bring together a range of services under one roof. This is part of our broader ambition to move towards a Neighbourhood Health Service, with more care delivered in local communities, to spot problems earlier. Costs will ultimately be dependent on the scope of facilities and delivery model, and the Government will confirm further details and next steps in due course.

■ **Health: Weather**

Jess Asato:

[\[3442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people aged 65 and over have been hospitalised for illnesses caused by cold weather in each of the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

While the information on hospital admissions is not available in the format requested, NHS England publishes data on the number of admissions due to external causes, including exposure to excessive natural cold. The following table shows the number of finished consultant episodes due to exposure to excessive natural cold for those aged 65 years old and over, from 2018/19 to 2022/23:

YEAR	NUMBER OF FINISHED CONSULTANT EPISODES
2022/23	754
2021/22	584
2020/21	692
2019/20	577

YEAR	NUMBER OF FINISHED CONSULTANT EPISODES
2018/19	535

Source: published by NHS Digital, with further information available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-admitted-patient-care-activity/2022-23>

Note: this does not include hospital admissions due to cold weather exacerbating existing conditions

■ Hospices: Finance

Mr Toby Perkins: [2802]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to meet Hospice UK to discuss hospice funding.

Mr Toby Perkins: [2803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the level of funding provided through the NHS to charitable hospices.

Mr Toby Perkins: [2804]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review the funding model for hospices as part his plans to improve NHS services.

Mr Toby Perkins: [2805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the saving to the the NHS and social care services by hospices delivering palliative care.

Stephen Kinnock:

Department officials meet regularly with Hospice UK and alongside our key partners at NHS England, will continue to proactively engage with the sector, including Hospice UK, to understand the issues they are facing.

Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing National Health Services. The amount of funding charitable hospices receive varies by integrated care board (ICB) area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth and range of palliative and end of life care provision within their ICB footprint.

Whilst the majority of palliative and end of life care is provided by NHS staff and services, we recognise the vital part that voluntary sector organisations, including hospices, play in providing support to people, and their loved ones, at end of life.

Palliative and end of life care is provided through a range of professionals and providers, both generalists and specialists, across the NHS, social care, and voluntary sector organisations. Therefore, the cost of provision is difficult to measure as relevant consultations and tasks are not always coded as palliative or end of life care. This makes it difficult to estimate how much is spent on palliative and end of life care provision as a whole, and how much might be saved by hospices delivering palliative care.

The Government is going to shift the focus of healthcare out of the hospital and into the community and we recognise that it is vital to include palliative and end of life care, including hospices, in this shift. We will consider next steps on palliative and end of life care, including funding, in the coming months.

Shaun Davies:

[\[3322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure the long-term (a) funding and (b) sustainability of hospices.

Stephen Kinnock:

Palliative care services are included in the list of services an integrated care board (ICB) must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

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 the end of life.

Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. The amount of funding charitable hospices receive varies by ICB area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth and range of palliative and end of life care provision within their ICB footprint.

The Government is going to shift the focus of healthcare out of the hospital and into the community, and we recognise that it is vital to include palliative and end of life care, including hospices, in this shift.

The Department, alongside NHS England, will continue to proactively engage with our stakeholders, including the voluntary sector and independent hospices, on an ongoing basis, in order to understand the issues they face.

Phil Brickell:

[\[3409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the funding model for hospices.

Stephen Kinnock:

Palliative care services are included in the list of services an integrated care board (ICB) must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and

supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

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 the end of life.

Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. The amount of funding charitable hospices receive varies by ICB area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth and range of palliative and end of life care provision within their ICB footprint.

We understand that, financially, times are difficult for many voluntary and charitable organisations, including hospices, due to the increased cost of living. We want a society where these costs are manageable for both voluntary organisations, like hospices, and the people whom they serve.

We, alongside NHS England, will continue to proactively engage with stakeholders, including the voluntary sector and independent hospices, on an ongoing basis, in order to understand the issues they face.

■ **Hospices: Newcastle-under-Lyme**

Adam Jogee:

[\[3883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) provision and (b) funding of hospice care in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

Palliative care services are included in the list of services an integrated care board (ICB), including the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB, which covers Newcastle-under-Lyme, must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support the ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

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 the end of life.

Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. The amount of funding charitable hospices receive varies by ICB area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth and range of palliative and end of life care provision within their ICB footprint.

We understand that, financially, times are difficult for many voluntary and charitable organisations, including hospices, due to the increased cost of living. We want a

society where these costs are manageable for both voluntary organisations, like hospices, and the people whom they serve.

We, alongside NHS England, will continue to proactively engage with our stakeholders, including the voluntary sector and independent hospices, on an ongoing basis, in order to understand the issues they face.

■ Integrated Care Boards: General Practitioners

Mark Pritchard:

[\[2783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will put in place oversight of integrated care boards that frequently commission services from GP practices that regularly underperform in patient satisfaction surveys.

Stephen Kinnock:

We recognise that despite the hard work of general practice teams, patients are still struggling to access care from general practitioners (GPs). We know that GPs are delivering record numbers of appointments, however, patient satisfaction has dropped nationally.

Integrated care boards (ICBs) must ensure that GP services meet the needs of the local population, and NHS England has a legal duty to annually assess the performance of each ICB and to publish a summary of its findings. The assessment must consider how well the ICB has discharged its functions, including the duty to improve the quality of services and the duty to make arrangements to involve patients, carers and the public in commissioning plans and decisions that affect them.

■ Maternity Services: Asylum

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the provision of maternity services to asylum seekers; and if he will take steps to help ensure that asylum seekers understand how to access emergency maternity health care.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: The Home Office manages all asylum processes, which includes supporting people to access the services they need. Women seeking asylum are asked at several stages of their asylum application whether they may be pregnant by Home Office case workers, who will identify the necessary support and relevant accommodation to meet their needs. Pregnant women seeking asylum are generally accommodated in community settings and, as such, have access to the same local health and care services as other resident women.

Under the umbrella of the National Asylum Seekers' Health Oversight Group, NHS England and the Home Office co-chairs a working group focused on maternal health and aimed at improving the access, experience, and outcomes of women seeking asylum during pregnancy and after birth. For example, the group has produced the

Escalation Route Agreement for healthcare professionals to communicate any concerns directly to Home Office case workers in relation to accommodation moves in the later stages of pregnancy or the perinatal period.

■ **Mental Health Services**

Charlotte Cane: [\[4126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will roll out Community Mental Health Hubs across the country.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England is currently piloting a new way of supporting people experiencing mental ill health, through neighbourhood based, open access community mental health centres, in six sites across the country. An external evaluation of these pilot sites will inform any future decision to roll these centres out in other parts of the country.

We will also roll out Young Futures hubs in every community, providing open access mental health support for children and young people in every community.

■ **Mental Health Services: Aldershot**

Alex Baker: [\[3508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase access to mental health services in Aldershot constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

People with mental health issues in Aldershot and across the country are not getting the support or care they deserve, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure that mental health is given the same attention and focus as physical health, so that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

We will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment which will also help ease pressure on hospitals. By cutting mental health waiting lists and intervening earlier with more timely mental health support, we can get this country back to good health.

■ **Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**

Chris Bloore: [\[3872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been waiting over six months to access CAMHS support in (a) Redditch and (b) Worcestershire.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows the number of new referrals, the number of new referrals who received a first contact at any point within the referral, and the number of referrals who subsequently received a first contact over six months from the referral

request date, for those aged zero to 17 years old within the Redditch local authority, from 2019/20 to 2023/24:

YEAR	NEW REFERRALS	REFERRALS WHO RECEIVED A FIRST CONTACT	REFERRALS STARTING IN THE YEAR WHO SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED A FIRST CONTACT OVER SIX MONTHS FROM THE REFERRAL REQUEST DATE
2019/20	885	625	35
2020/21	845	585	60
2021/22	1,265	920	100
2022/23	1,465	725	135
2023/24	1,565	680	15

Source: Mental Health Dataset.

The number of referrals still waiting for a contact having waited at least six months, regardless of when the referral started, within the Redditch local authority at the end of March 2024, was 645.

In addition, the following table shows the number of new referrals, the number of new referrals who received a first contact at any point within the referral, and the number of referrals who subsequently received a first contact over six months from the referral request date, for those aged zero to 17 years old in Worcestershire County, from 2019/20 to 2023/24:

YEAR	NEW REFERRALS	REFERRALS WHO RECEIVED A FIRST CONTACT	REFERRALS STARTING IN THE YEAR WHO SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED A FIRST CONTACT OVER SIX MONTHS FROM THE REFERRAL REQUEST DATE
2019/20	5,290	3,740	200
2020/21	5,410	3,800	160
2021/22	7,525	5,370	740

YEAR	NEW REFERRALS	REFERRALS WHO RECEIVED A FIRST CONTACT	REFERRALS STARTING IN THE YEAR WHO SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED A FIRST CONTACT OVER SIX MONTHS FROM THE REFERRAL REQUEST DATE
2022/23	8,035	3,880	750
2023/24	8,720	3,675	70

Source: Mental Health Dataset.

The number of referrals still waiting for a contact having waited at least six months, regardless of when the referral started, in Worcestershire County at the end of March 2024, was 4,000.

Provided is the number of referrals where the person was aged between zero and 17 years old at the time of referral, from 2019/20 through to 2023/24. This is because the definition of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) in the dataset is not clear cut, and 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.

The number provided includes all new referrals in each year where the person was a resident of the local authority of Redditch or Worcestershire county. In addition, the number of referrals who have had a contact is included to provide context around the numbers of referrals which have been received and subsequently had a care contact.

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. Additionally, 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, although this is a data quality issue.

■ Mental Health Services: Ealing Southall

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[4085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve mental health services in Ealing Southall constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: People with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they deserve, which is why we will fix the broken system

to ensure that mental health is given the same attention and focus as physical health, so that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it including in Ealing Southall. We will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, which will also help ease pressure on hospitals. By cutting mental health waiting lists and intervening earlier with more timely mental health support, we can get this country back to health.

■ **Mental Health Services: Gateshead**

Mark Ferguson:

[\[3279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been waiting to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services support in Gateshead for more than six months.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows the number of referrals that subsequently received a first contact over six months from the referral request date from 2019/20 to 2023/24, and the number of referrals still waiting for a contact having waited at least six months, regardless of when the referral started, as of the end of March 2024, for those aged zero to 17 years old:

REPORTING PERIOD	REFERRALS WHO RECEIVED FIRST CONTACT OVER SIX MONTHS FROM THE REFERRAL REQUEST DATE	REFERRALS STILL WAITING FOR A CONTACT HAVING WAITED AT LEAST SIX MONTHS
2019/20	85	
2020/21	150	
2021/22	570	
2022/23	145	
2023/24	60	1,745

Source: Mental Health Dataset.

As the definition of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) in the dataset is not clear cut, and the methodology for deriving CAMHS changes over time, the use of age at referral is the most reliable way of defining those referred to CAMHS.

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.

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.

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.

■ **Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists**

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[3614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on (a) implementing and (b) training additional mental health staff to help relieve waiting lists.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that the National Health Service has been facing chronic workforce shortages for a number of years and, while there has been growth in the mental health workforce over recent years, more is needed.

That is why, as part of our mission to build an NHS that is fit for the future and is there when people need it, we will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce waiting times and provide faster treatment. We recognise that bringing in the staff needed will take time. We are working to develop a plan to deliver this expansion of the mental health workforce, including where they should be deployed to achieve maximum effect.

■ **NHS: Ealing Central and Acton**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[4009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase (a) recruitment and (b) retention of NHS staff in Ealing Central and Acton constituency.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service has been facing chronic workforce shortages for years, and 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 will make sure the NHS has the staff it needs, to be there for all of us when we need it, and will get staff to the places where patients and the NHS needs them, not just benefiting Ealing and Acton, 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.

■ Perinatal Mortality: Aldershot

Alex Baker: [\[4107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of trends in rates of perinatal mortality in Aldershot constituency.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: While no specific assessment has been made of the trends in rates of perinatal mortality in the Aldershot constituency, NHS England does collect some data on perinatal mortality through the Maternity Services Data Set (MSDS), although this is not collected for individual National Health Service trusts in England. Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK (MBRRACE) is the gold standard for mortality data, and produces the national perinatal mortality figures. MBRRACE uses the data collected in the MSDS and combines it with other data sources to build an accurate picture of perinatal mortality in England. The MBRRACE Perinatal Mortality tool allows you to view trends for trusts and health boards which can be compared against other trusts in the region, and is available at the following link:

<https://timms.le.ac.uk/mbrrace-uk-perinatal-mortality/data-viewer/>

■ Pharmacy: Aldershot

Alex Baker: [\[4112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average payments to community pharmacies were in Aldershot constituency in (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23.

Stephen Kinnock:

The average payments by the NHS Business Services Authority to community pharmacies in the Aldershot constituency were: £68,547.19 per pharmacy per month in 2021/22, or £822,566.32 per pharmacy for 12 months; and £77,398.58 per pharmacy per month in 2022/23, or £928,782.96 per pharmacy for 12 months.

■ Social Services: Aldershot

Alex Baker: [\[3518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of social care capacity in Aldershot constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

Local authorities are best placed to understand and plan for the needs of their population, which is why under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are tasked with the duty to shape their care market to meet the diverse needs of all local people. In performing that duty, a local authority must have regard to the need to ensure that it is aware of current and likely future demand for such services, and to consider how providers might meet that demand.

The Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund includes grant conditions which require each local authority to submit an adult social care capacity plan. These were

submitted to the Department in June 2024. The hon. Member's local authority, Aldershot, submitted their 2024/25 capacity plan, which is currently undergoing processing and quality assurance.

■ Social Services: Royal Commissions

Dr Luke Evans: [\[3812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a royal commission on social care.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is determined to tackle the challenges facing adult social care. We want everyone to live an independent, dignified life. That is why we will build consensus on the long-term reform needed to create a National Care Service. We will engage with a range of stakeholders, including cross-party and people with lived experience. We will set out more detail of our priorities for adult social care in due course.

■ Trastuzumab Deruxtecan

Mr Joshua Reynolds: [\[3642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing access to Enhertu on the NHS for cancer patients.

Karin Smyth:

Decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS 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 on the basis of 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 National Health Service 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 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. This 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.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Applications

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[4479]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people had their application for asylum (a) accepted and (b) declined (i) with and (ii) without an appeal since 5 July 2024; and how many of those who had their application asylum declined have been returned, broken down by country.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on initial decisions on asylum claims by nationality is published in table Asy_D02 of the '[Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)' and data on asylum-related returns by nationality is published in Ret_04 of the '[Returns summary tables](#)'.

Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of each workbook. The latest data relates to the year ending June 2024.

Data up to September 2024 will be released on 28 November 2024. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

The Home Office also publishes data on asylum appeals by nationality in tables Asy_D06 and Asy_D07 of the '[Asylum appeals lodged and determined detailed datasets](#)'. Appeals data for April 2023 onwards is not available due to ongoing work on a new case working system. Updated data will be included in a future edition of the Immigration System Statistics release.

■ Asylum: Hotels

Wendy Morton:

[3704]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum hotels were in operation on (a) 1 January, (b) 4 July and (c) 31 August 2024.

Wendy Morton:

[3705]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of hotels that will be required to accommodate asylum seekers in the period between now and the end of 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly, and fairly including reducing the use of hotels over time.

Additionally, the government will be reviewing current Home Office arrangements to ensure efficiency and deliver value for money.

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, including hotels, can be found within the Asy_D11 tab for our most recent statistics release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables).

The Home Office remains committed to engaging with local authorities and key stakeholders as part of the process to accommodate asylum seekers.

■ Biometric Residence Permits

Daisy Cooper: [\[3794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Biometric Residence Permits will expire with the move to eVisas.

Daisy Cooper: [\[3795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many eVisa applications have been received as of 2 September 2024.

Seema Malhotra:

During the transition to eVisas, we are closely monitoring the volume of customers who have registered for a UKVI account and the forecast total volume of affected customers. The total volume will be dictated by ongoing approvals under BRP generating routes through to the end of 2024. This data requires detailed assurance before it can be published externally, but we plan to make it available on gov.uk in due course.

■ Gender Based Violence: York Outer

Mr Luke Charters: [\[3896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has for tackling violence against women and girls in York Outer constituency.

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.

We will dramatically improve the police and wider criminal justice response, including a relentless pursuit of dangerous perpetrators and sustained support for victims.

We will tackle the root causes of these crimes, including supporting our education system to teach children about respectful and healthy relationships and consent.

■ Immigration: Applications

Daisy Cooper:

[\[3783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will ensure that time spent in residence in the UK on any visa is counted towards the five-year period required for an application for indefinite leave to remain.

Seema Malhotra:

Many visa routes, such as those for family and skilled work, are intended to allow a path to settlement in the UK. Other routes, such as those for study and temporary work, are intended for visa holders to be able to come to the UK for a specific, time-bound purpose, and therefore do not count towards the qualifying period for settlement.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[3792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department have taken to inform residents with Indefinite Leave to Remain visas about the transition to e-visas.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[3793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to publicise the ending of Biometric Residential Permits and transition to e-visas.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office is delivering a substantial communications and engagement campaign to advise customers of the transition to eVisas and the need for BRP holding customers to register for a UKVI account by the end of 2024, if they were not automatically provided with a UKVI account and eVisa when their most recent immigration application was approved.

This includes, but is not limited to, direct messaging to customers via email and text message where contact details are available, information on gov.uk/eVisa, and how-to videos available on YouTube and via gov.uk/eVisa. We have regular engagement with other government departments, immigration representatives, the education sector, employers, landlords, local authorities, foreign embassies, Home Office advisory groups, devolved administrations and migrant support organisations as part of the engagement process.

A 'partner pack' of readily shareable content, including factsheets and social media content, has been developed and shared with other government departments and third party support networks which they can use to disseminate eVisa information to customers/clients with whom they engage. In April this year we issued a press notice about the transition to eVisa, and delivered detailed media briefings with UK and International media outlets.

For customers granted settlement (also known as indefinite leave to remain) prior to the introduction of BRPs, we have recommended through this campaign that they should make a No Time Limit application in order to secure an eVisa. Customers with

these older forms of evidence of immigration status, such as ink stamps in passports, will still be able to prove their rights as they do today, using their legacy documents where these are permitted. However, we still encourage those individuals to transition to an eVisa, given the range of benefits it offers to customers and status checkers.

■ Sex Establishments: Licensing

Max Wilkinson: [\[3850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to amend the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 to remove exceptions to licensing laws that allow sexual entertainment to take place in premises without a sexual entertainment licence.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The 1982 Act gives local authorities who adopt the legislation the ability to regulate lap dancing clubs as sexual entertainment venues. [Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1982 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Buildings: Safety

David Simmonds: [\[3827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a building safety levy.

Rushanara Ali:

Yes. The Building Safety Act 2022 gives the Secretary of State powers to make regulations which charge a levy on building control applications for the purpose of meeting building safety expenditure. We will bring forward regulations to make sure that those responsible for the building safety crisis pay to put it right.

■ Conveyancing

Mr Luke Charters: [\[3887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to speed up the conveyancing process for property sales.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government recognises that the current home buying and selling process in England is slow, costly and stressful, and that conveyancing can contribute to this. An improved, modernised process could benefit consumers, industry, the housing market and the wider economy.

A key part of the conveyancing process is obtaining search information from the relevant local authority. To speed up this process HM Land Registry are digitising search data held by local authorities. Eventually this will cover each local authority

and provide a quick and accurate response, potentially taking weeks off transaction times. More information can be found [here](#).

We continue to consider how to drive improvements most effectively across home buying and selling for both consumers and the sector.

■ Development Plans: Greater London

David Simmonds: [\[3830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with the Mayor of London on the London Plan 2021.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Deputy Prime Minister met with the Mayor of London in July to discuss housing delivery challenges in the capital and agree priority areas for partnership working.

The Government will continue to work with the Mayor to increase the supply of homes within the framework of the existing London Plan and to ensure an ambitious but deliverable revised London Plan is brought forward in due course.

■ Freeports

David Simmonds: [\[3828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is her policy to (a) maintain existing and (b) increase the number of freeports.

Alex Norris:

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [2702](#) on 4 September 2024.

■ Homelessness

Dr Luke Evans: [\[3807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to encourage joint working between (a) councils and (b) voluntary bodies to tackle local homelessness.

Rushanara Ali:

This Government recognises the crucial role that councils and the voluntary and community sector play in addressing homelessness and is committed to working closely with these partners, as well as councils and mayors, as we develop a new cross-government strategy that will put us back on track to ending homelessness once and for all.

■ Housing: Construction

Shaun Davies: [\[3844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many proposed homes have received planning permission to be built but have not been built after (a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four, (e) five and (f) six years or more.

Matthew Pennycook:

Estimates of how many homes received planning permission in each year are published by the department as part of its quarterly statistics on Planning Applications in England and can be found here: [Planning applications statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/planning-applications-statistics).

We do not hold information on how many of these had not been built after one, two, three, four, five, six years or more.

Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024

Gordon McKee: [3523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will implement the remaining provisions of Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

Yes. Please see the King's Speech 2024: background briefing notes here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kings-speech-2024-background-briefing-notes>.

Local Government: Devolution

David Simmonds: [3826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding devolution powers to district council areas.

Jim McMahon:

The Government is committed to ensuring that every part of England can rapidly benefit from devolution, moving power out of Westminster back to those who know their areas best. The English Devolution Bill will establish an ambitious standardised framework and make it easier to provide devolved powers quickly to more areas. We expect all combined county authorities to work constructively with District councils in realising the potential of devolution arrangements in their area, especially where are common interests.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Flags

David Simmonds: [3824]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to amend her Department's guidance entitled Flying flags: a plain English guide, published on 20 July 2021.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has no current plans to amend the guidance in question.

■ National Policy Statements

David Simmonds: [\[3821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 1314 on National Policy Statements, what the (a) current status, (b) planned timetable for consultation and revision and (c) expected (i) completion and (ii) ratification date is for each policy document.

Matthew Pennycook:

Of the thirteen National Policy Statements originally designated between 2011 and 2023, six, namely Energy National Policy Statements 1 to 5 and the National Networks National Policy Statement, were revised and updated in January and May 2024 respectively. The Water Resources National Policy Statement was designated for the first time in September 2023.

Where necessary, the Government is fully committed to updating National Policy Statements within the 12-month timescale. We are currently reviewing which National Policy Statements to update but we aim to consult on at least two – a revised NPS for ports and a new NPS for nuclear – before the end of this year.

■ Planning

Rachael Maskell: [\[3713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she is taking steps to help planning authorities prioritise reducing health inequalities.

Matthew Pennycook:

As part of the current government consultation on reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, we are seeking views on proposed changes intended to ensure that the planning system supports the increased provision and modernisation of key public services infrastructure, such as hospitals, and enables the planning system to do more to support the creation of healthy places, such as through policies to help tackling childhood obesity.

The consultation is open until 24 September and we will use the responses we receive to inform future steps.

David Simmonds: [\[3825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of (a) section 106 agreements and (b) the community infrastructure levy.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to strengthening the existing system of developer contributions to ensure new developments provide necessary affordable homes and infrastructure. Further details will be set out in due course.

■ Planning: Applications

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[3885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that planning authorities determine applications on time.

Matthew Pennycook:

In our consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, which began on Tuesday 30 July and closes on Tuesday 24 September, we are seeking views on changes to planning application fees with a view to increasing the resources available to local authorities and improving the timeliness of their decision-making.

If required, Government has the power to designate local planning authorities who demonstrate consistently poor performance in terms of the speed or quality of their decision-making. Where an authority is designated, applicants have the choice of submitting planning applications directly to the Planning Inspectorate for determination on behalf of the Secretary of State.

■ Political Parties: Finance

Lloyd Hatton:

[\[3903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment with the Electoral Commission of the adequacy of regulations on the funding of political parties.

Alex Norris:

Effective regulation and enforcement of political finance are crucial for maintaining public trust in our electoral systems. The Government has frequent discussions with the Electoral Commission on this. As set out in our manifesto, we are 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. My department will work closely with the Electoral Commission on developing proposals to give effect to this commitment.

■ Private Rented Housing: Rents

Ben Maguire:

[\[3929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of requests for payment of several months rent in advance before securing a tenancy on the ability of people to find housing in the private rented sector.

Matthew Pennycook:

We are currently monitoring the practice of landlords charging rent in advance to understand the impacts on tenants and will take action if necessary.

The Government is committed to redressing the balance between landlord and tenant. The Renters' Rights Bill will provide tenants with greater protections against unreasonable within-tenancy rent increases and put an end to rental bidding wars which unfairly pits tenants against each other.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Costs

Alex Mayer: [\[3881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will make an estimate of the annual cost to the public purse of pan-regional partnerships.

Alex Norris:

Government has provided core funding for pan-regional partnerships throughout the current Spending Review period. This has supported six pan-regional partnerships, with £5 million provided in 2022/23, £6 million in 2023/24 and £7 million allocated for 2024/25.

■ Social Rented Housing: Construction

Andrew Lewin: [\[3851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many homes for social rent were built by (a) housing associations and (b) local authorities in (i) Welwyn Hatfield, (ii) Hertfordshire and (iii) England in the last five years.

Matthew Pennycook:

The number of new social rent homes delivered, split by provider, geography and whether they are new build or acquisitions can be found via the affordable housing supply statistics, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply>.

The number of new social rent homes delivered in England by provider, including acquisitions, can also be found in Live Table 1013, available from the same page.

Ben Maguire: [\[3928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to require developers to build homes for social rent as part of large developments.

Matthew Pennycook:

Through local development plans, local planning authorities can set out policy expectations in relation to housing mix and they are already able to require developers to make contributions to affordable housing through Section 106 planning obligations. As part of its commitment to deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable in a generation, the Government plans to strengthen the existing developer contributions system and further details will be set out in due course.

■ Temporary Accommodation**Chris Bloore:** [\[3871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people live in temporary accommodation in each region.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government recognises that homelessness levels are far too high. Local authorities report the numbers of households in temporary accommodation and this data is published each quarter as part of the Homelessness Case Level Collection (H-CLIC). The most recent figures for January-March 2024, including regional breakdowns, are available here (see tab TA1): [Statutory homelessness in England: January to March 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-january-to-march-2024).

■ Unitary Councils: Kent**Mike Martin:** [\[4498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information her Department has obtained to inform a potential future decision on whether to break Kent County Council into a small number of unitary authorities.

Jim McMahon:

The department has not obtained such information.

■ Urban Areas: Regeneration**Mike Martin:** [\[4497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she has taken to rejuvenate town centres.

Alex Norris:

We are committed to supporting the businesses and communities that make our high streets flourish.

We are funding new partnership models with High Street Accelerators, implementing High Street Rental Auctions, and introducing a strong new 'right to buy' for community assets, to empower local communities to rejuvenate our high streets and address the blight of vacant premises.

JUSTICE**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Henry Tufnell:** [\[900368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to improve access to justice for rural communities.

Heidi Alexander:

Access to justice is integral to a fair society, including for our rural communities. That's why we want to ensure effective and timely access to justice, including through our legal aid system and the broader network of legal support services, and by making best use of modern technology in providing advice.

In our courts and tribunals, modernised services and more effective use of technology are improving people's access to the justice system across the country.

Ashley Dalton: [\[900372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to improve the enforcement of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government is committed to making sure victims have the information and support that they need, and we are determined to improve compliance with the Victims' Code.

We will implement the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, which lays a good foundation for victims to know the rights they have under the Code, and hold agencies accountable for delivering them.

But we will go further by increasing the powers of the Victims' Commissioner so there is more accountability when victims' rights under the Code are not upheld.

Ben Goldsborough: [\[900373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if her Department will review the effectiveness of the single justice procedure.

Heidi Alexander:

The Single Justice Procedure is an important part of ensuring cases can be heard swiftly within the magistrates' courts.

We are aware of the criticism of aspects of the process and are looking at ways to improve the process to ensure the Single Justice Procedure continues to provide a fair and proportionate way of dealing with these offences.

Rachael Maskell: [\[900374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to ensure adequate funding for support for victims of sexual violence after 31 March 2025.

Alex Davies-Jones:

My department provides funding for vital rape and sexual abuse support, to help victims cope and recover from the impacts of crime, through a mix of locally and nationally commissioned services.

Funding beyond March 2025 will be agreed with HM Treasury through the Spending Review, which we cannot pre-empt. We will work closely with HMT officials through this process.

■ Horizon IT System: Convictions

Jerome Mayhew:

[\[4254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many subpostmasters had their convictions quashed as a result of the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act.

Heidi Alexander:

The Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act 2024 quashed all convictions meeting the conditions in the Act immediately upon commencement on 24 May 2024.

Following the commencement of the Act, the Ministry of Justice has been working through data from a range of sources and spanning multiple decades to identify convictions that are in scope of the Act and notify individuals of this where possible. As of 6 September 2024, the Ministry of Justice has sent 178 letters to individuals notifying them that their convictions were quashed by the Act, covering a total of 506 convictions. More letters are being sent on a daily basis, and we aim to have issued letters to individuals with a known conviction by early November.

■ Law Reporting: Fees and Charges

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[900376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to reduce the cost of court transcripts for victims.

Heidi Alexander:

We currently offer free transcripts of the judge's sentencing remarks in some circumstances and are piloting extending this to victims of rape and serious sexual offences.

I understand transcripts may help individuals obtain closure on traumatic events.

Transcripts must be 100% accurate. Anyone who has used voice dictation technology will know mistakes can be made. I will continue to keep this under review but have to balance costs against many other competing priorities within the court budget.

■ Legal Aid Scheme: Foreign Nationals

Mary Glendon:

[\[2893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what information her Department holds on the number of foreign nationals living overseas who were in receipt of (a) non-means and (b) non-merits tested legal aid in 2023.

Heidi Alexander:

This information requested is not held centrally.

In making decisions about who qualifies for legal aid, the Legal Aid Agency must apply the provisions of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, and any regulations made under that Act. This legislation applies to any application for legal aid in connection with legal advice and proceedings in England and Wales. Where proceedings are before a court or tribunal in England or Wales,

legal aid is available to individuals who qualify for services irrespective of their nationality or usual place of residence. As nationality is not a determinative factor in the availability of legal aid, it is not mandatory that this information is provided with an application for legal aid and nor is it specifically tracked or recorded by the Department.

■ Prisoners: Safety

Rachael Maskell:

[\[4000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to provide safe conditions for prisoners.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Making prisons safe remains a key priority. We are working hard to reduce violence and self-harm and have a range of measures in place to address these safety issues.

We have completed our landmark £100 million Security Investment Programme to clamp down on illicit items such as drugs, mobile phones and weapons – that drive prison violence and undermine safety.

To ensure our staff are equipped with the right tools to protect themselves and prisoners from serious assaults, we have completed the roll out of PAVA – a synthetic pepper spray – for use by prison officers in the adult male estate alongside SPEAR, a personal safety training package.

We recognise that rates of self-harm across the estate are high, and we are taking action to address this. We provide individualised support through our case management process for people identified as at risk of suicide and self-harm.

We fund Samaritans through a £2 million grant (provided up until March 2025). This is primarily for the delivery of the Listener scheme in over 100 prisons; In 2023 there were over 1,300 prisoners volunteering as Listeners who provided over 14,000 hours of emotional support to other prisoners.

■ Prisons: Health and Safety

Claire Young:

[\[4485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that prisons are safe workplaces for staff.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Staff must be able to expect a safe and decent work environment. We will not tolerate any violence against prison officers and prisoners who are violent towards staff will face the full consequences of their actions.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 doubled the maximum penalty to up to two years' imprisonment for those who assault emergency workers, including prison officers. There are higher maximum penalties in place for more serious offences, including ABH, GBH and sexual assault.

We are providing targeted support to adult male prisons with the highest assault rates to tackle local drivers of violence.

We are continuing with plans for a phased removal of wet-shave razors in up to 30 prisons in the adult male estate in 2024/25.

To protect staff from serious assaults, prison officers in the adult male estate are provided with PAVA, a synthetic pepper spray. Every prison officer across public sector prisons can wear a Body Worn Video Camera whilst on shift, providing high-quality evidence to support prosecutions against those who commit assaults against staff.

We are implementing measures to ease prison crowding as we know that crowded conditions can increase violent incidents in prisons.

■ Recovery of Costs

Shaun Davies:

[\[3847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to allow Courts to impose cost orders on those who (a) plead and (b) are found guilty in order to recover the costs of (i) investigating the offence, (ii) bringing the case to Court and (iii) legal aid.

Heidi Alexander:

Courts have wide ranging powers to impose cost orders on defendants and to recover some of the costs of investigating the offence and bringing the case to court. All such orders are at the discretion of the court, ensuring that they are just and reasonable, taking into account the means of the offender. The Legal Aid Agency is responsible for recovering contributions towards defendants' legal aid costs from their income during the case and from their capital if they are convicted. Income contributions are returned to defendants who are acquitted.

■ Reoffenders

Steve Race:

[\[4463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce levels of reoffending.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Government will act to reduce reoffending by giving offenders leaving prison the tools to move away from crime.

This will include improving prisoners' access to purposeful activity, such as education; delivering pre-release plans for all those leaving custody; and ensuring that ex-offenders leave prison with a job and the skills needed to lead law abiding lives.

We are also supporting prisoners with a mental health or substance misuse need into treatment and are building stronger links with health partners to support continued engagement with treatment for prison leavers.

■ Youth Justice

Rachael Maskell:

[\[4002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to (a) develop a different approach to youth justice and (b) use programmes of diversion to prevent young people entering the youth estate.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Government is committed to intervening early and supporting the most vulnerable children to address their needs and reduce the risk of young people offending. We are developing a new approach to youth justice by creating a new Young Futures programme with a network of hubs reaching every community. These hubs will have youth workers, mental health support workers and careers advisers to support young people's mental health and avoid them being drawn into crime. Local prevention partnerships will identify young people who could be drawn into violence and crime and intervene.

Custody should always be a last resort for children. To divert more children from custodial remand, we are also running pilots in Greater Manchester and London for new forms of community accommodation as robust alternatives to custody and will continue to explore potential further reforms and steps in this area.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Disinformation

Layla Moran:

[\[3771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what progress his Department has made on establishing Ofcom's Advisory Committee on Misinformation and Disinformation.

Feryal Clark:

While the Online Safety Act (OSA) requires Ofcom to establish an advisory committee on disinformation and misinformation, the process and timing of setting it up remains at Ofcom's discretion.

Ofcom has confirmed that the Mis/Disinformation Advisory Committee will be established by the end of 2024. It will play an essential role in building understanding and technical knowledge of the challenges relating to mis- and disinformation and how best to tackle them. As such, it is vital that Ofcom has the appropriate time to appoint the best possible committee.

■ Internet: Offences against Children

Dan Norris:

[\[2720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with Ofcom on tackling child sexual abuse via the Online Safety Act 2023.

Feryal Clark:

Ministers have regular meetings with Ofcom on a range of subjects, including on providers' duties to tackle child sexual abuse via the Online Safety Act and ensuring effective implementation of the Act's duties. Both the Secretary of State and the Minister for the Future Digital Economy and Online Safety have met with Ofcom's Chief Executive to discuss Ofcom's work in ensuring children are protected online. The strongest protections in the Online Safety Act are against child sexual abuse and exploitation. Details of Ministerial meetings are published on the gov.uk website.

■ National Security Online Information Team**Rupert Lowe:**[\[3443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the total (a) cost of running, (b) number of staff employed and (c) number of people monitored by the National Security Online Information Team was in each year since 2020; and what the reasons for monitoring those people were in each year since 2020.

Feryal Clark:

The National Security Online Information Team (NSOIT) works to identify information threats by analysing narratives and trends from publicly available information online, around topics or events where ministers agree there is a high risk to UK audiences. This does not include the monitoring of individuals.

It is not appropriate for me to share details of the NSOIT's resourcing as this information could give hostile actors insights into UK capabilities.

■ NHS: Artificial Intelligence**Mr Luke Charters:**[\[3899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether officials in his Department (a) have had and (b) plan to have discussions with their counterparts in the Department for Health and Social Care on the potential impact of the use of AI on efficiency in the NHS.

Feryal Clark:

The DSIT Secretary of State is committed to enabling the public sector to better adopt AI safely. DSIT is working closely with Departments, including DHSC, to support this in their areas of responsibility. For example, through the £21m AI Diagnostics fund, DHSC is supporting the deployment of technologies in key, high-demand areas such as chest X-Ray and chest CT scans to enable faster diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer in over half of acute trusts in England. The Secretary of State has 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.

■ Online Safety Act 2023

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[3814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his planned timetable is to decide whether to accept Ofcom's advice on extending category 1 regulation of schedule 11 of the Online Safety Act 2023 to small online forums containing (a) racial hatred and (b) promotion of (i) suicide and (ii) eating disorders.

Feryal Clark:

The Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology is carefully considering Ofcom's categorisation research and advice and will make Regulations as soon as reasonably practicable.

■ Public Digital: Electronic Government

Andrew Griffith:

[\[4055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the approvals process for the appointment of the Director General Digital Centre Design included the Civil Service Commission being informed of donations made by Public Digital Limited to the Labour party by (a) him, (b) Ministers in his Department, (c) civil servants in his Department and (d) another Department.

Feryal Clark:

The Director General, Digital Centre Design was appointed in line with Civil Service Recruitment Principles and the Civil Service Commission was provided with the relevant background information requested, including the Director General's previous work roles, when approving this temporary appointment.

■ Research Collaboration Advice Team

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[4265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his policy is on the future of the Research Collaboration Advice Team.

Feryal Clark:

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) established the Research Collaboration Advice Team (RCAT) to provide advice to academia on national security risks in international collaborations. RCAT is central to managing research security concerns proportionately, and to supporting growth in research wherever possible.

The threats facing research are evolving and becoming increasingly complex. Therefore, DSIT is leading a review which is assessing the efficacy of all protections currently in place and considering future needs.

The outcomes of the review and future plans for RCAT will be announced in due course.

■ Semiconductors: Manufacturing Industries

Saqib Bhatti: [\[4442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take with the UK Infrastructure Bank to support the semiconductor industry.

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. We have announced our plan to align key government finance institutions, such as the UK Infrastructure Bank, under the National Wealth Fund, which will boost growth and unlock investment in sectors like the semiconductor industry.

The government is working at pace to establish the National Wealth Fund and the Chancellor will set out more detail at the international investment summit in October.

■ Social Media: Disinformation

Mr Luke Charters: [\[3898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to tackle disinformation on social media.

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 that will 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.

■ Twitter

Sir John Hayes: [\[3682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether Ministers in his Department met representatives of X in 2024.

Feryal Clark:

Ministers and officials have regular meetings with a range of platforms, including X. Details of Ministerial meetings are published on the gov.uk website.

SCOTLAND■ **A75: Scotland****John Cooper:**[\[4163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent progress his Department has made with the Scottish Government on upgrading the A75.

Ian Murray:

The previous Government publicly committed to providing £8m in development funding to complete a detailed feasibility study for specific upgrades to the A75 and to fund targeted improvements identified by the study, subject to the Scottish Government's business cases at various stages throughout the process. We recognise the importance of this project to communities in Southwest Scotland and remain in regular contact with DFT on it.

TRANSPORT■ **Airports: National Policy Statements****Sarah Olney:**[\[3758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to review the Airports National Policy Statement.

Mike Kane:

As required by the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State will review a National Policy Statement when she considers it appropriate to do so.

■ **Aviation: Noise****Sarah Olney:**[\[3760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the status is of the Aviation Night Noise Effects (ANNE) study, funded by her Department.

Mike Kane:

The Aviation Night Noise Effects (ANNE) study is a current study examining the relationship of aviation noise on sleep disturbance and annoyance, and how this varies by different times of night. The study is funded by the Department for Transport and is a collaboration between St George's, University of London, NatGen Social Research, Noise Consultants Limited, and the University of Pennsylvania. The final results of the ANNE study are expected to be published in Autumn 2026.

■ **Bus Services: Aldershot****Alex Baker:**[\[4123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to take steps to improve bus services in Aldershot constituency.

Simon Lightwood:

The government knows that Britain needs a modern transport network to help kickstart economic growth. Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities. As announced in the King's Speech, the government will introduce 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 of the communities who rely on them, including in Aldershot.

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.

■ Bus Services: Cornwall**Ben Maguire:**[\[3926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will hold discussions with representatives of National Express on the potential impact of the cancellation of its 503 service on people living in Launceston.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department recognises the importance of good transport links and it is the overall aim of this government to improve connections across towns and cities. We recognise the important role the coach sector can play in making these connections across the country for education, business and leisure travel. Coaches are a deregulated sector, so decisions such as where to run services are a matter for the operator concerned. We are, however, working with the sector to hear their concerns and address the challenges they face.

■ Bus Services: Rural Areas**Ben Maguire:**[\[3927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to ensure that (a) Launceston, (b) North Cornwall and (c) other towns in rural areas without a railway station are served by inter-city coach services.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department recognises the importance of good transport links and it is the overall aim of this government to improve connections across towns and cities. We recognise the important role the coach sector can play in making these connections across the country for education, business and leisure travel. Coaches are a deregulated sector, so decisions such as where to run services are a matter for the operator concerned. We are, however, working with the sector to hear their concerns and address the challenges they face.

■ Buses: Carbon Emissions

Alex Mayer:

[\[3880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of infrastructure required for the operation of zero-emission coaches.

Lilian Greenwood:

Our understanding from industry modelling indicates most coach operations could be run using electric coaches with depot charging, but that longer distance journeys would require longer-range coaches and/or infrastructure to be available elsewhere.

My Department will continue to engage closely with the coach industry in all aspects of decarbonisation, including infrastructure.

■ Cross Country Line

Max Wilkinson:

[\[3849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help improve the (a) punctuality and (b) performance of Cross Country rail services (i) to and (ii) from Cheltenham Spa.

Simon Lightwood:

CrossCountry has recently been placed on a formal Remedial Plan to ensure it takes action to address performance issues across its network and increases essential driver training. This is expected to result in a more reliable service following the implementation of the plan. The Department will closely monitor the progress of the plan and if CrossCountry fails to deliver, further action will be taken in line with its contractual terms.

■ Cycling: Gloucestershire

Max Wilkinson:

[\[3848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has had discussions with Network Rail about its intentions to allow its land between Cheltenham Spa rail station and Lansdown Road, Cheltenham to be used to facilitate the development of the Gloucestershire Cycle Spine.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department has not directly discussed land access with Network Rail for this route but is supporting and providing funding to Sustrans and Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) to deliver a route between Cheltenham Spa Station and Lansdown Road as part of the Cycle Rail Programme. We understand that Great Western Railway, Network Rail and GCC are working closely together to progress this project. GCC is responsible for securing appropriate land access agreements with Network Rail.

■ Driving Licences

Anna Sabine: [\[4137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of implementing graduated driving licences.

Lilian Greenwood:

The safety of our roads is an absolute priority for this Government. We are committed to delivering a new Road Safety Strategy – the first in over a decade. We will set out next steps on this in due course.

■ Driving Tests: Aldershot

Alex Baker: [\[4119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time is to take a driving test in Aldershot constituency from the date of booking the test as of 3 September 2024; and how many people are waiting to take a test in that constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

As of 2 September 2024, there were 2,216 car practical driving tests booked, and 134 driving tests available to book within the 24-week booking window at Farnborough driving test centre (DTC).

The average waiting time (August 2024) for a car practical test at Farnborough DTC was 24 weeks.

■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists

Liz Jarvis: [\[4285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps is she taking to reduce waiting times for driving tests in (a) Eastleigh constituency and (b) other 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.

Measures in place to reduce waiting times for customers at driving test centres, 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.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[3805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with (a) public and (b) private bodies on implementing more disability accessible electric vehicle charging points at public venues.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government wants everyone to be able to make the switch to electric vehicles, which is why we strongly encourage chargepoint procurers and operators to adopt the British Standards Institution Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 1899:2022 standard. This was sponsored by the Government and Motability, providing specifications on designing and installing accessible public electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints.

The Government is actively encouraging relevant parties to adopt its specifications, building on improvements already being made in the sector. It is also encouraging local authorities to incorporate accessibility into their procurement models.

The Government and Motability Foundation is working with advocacy groups, industry and other stakeholders to review the effectiveness and implementation of PAS 1899. This working group is expected to make its final recommendations in February 2025.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[3806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve access to electric vehicle charging points across the motorway and A road network.

Lilian Greenwood:

There are now over 960 open-access (can be used with any electric vehicle) rapid (50kW) and ultra-rapid (150kW+) chargepoints at motorway service areas across England.

The Rapid Charging Fund pilot will fund a portion of the cost of upgrading electrical capacity at motorway service areas, where it is not commercially viable for industry to do so. This will support the rollout of ultra-rapid (150kW+) chargepoints.

Government is also collaborating with National Highways on the Energy Storage Systems project. This project is focusing on motorway service areas where the current electrical capacity is limited. National Highways are procuring and installing batteries to support the installation of ultra-rapid chargepoints.

■ Heathrow Airport

Sarah Olney:

[\[3759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential (a) economic, (b) environmental and (c) health impact of a third runway at Heathrow.

Mike Kane:

An Appraisal of Sustainability and economic assessment were conducted before the Airports National Policy Statement was voted on by Parliament and designated in 2018.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/heathrow-airport-expansion#appraisal-of-sustainability-and-supporting-documents>

Heathrow Airport Limited will need to provide an assessment of the impacts of any proposed scheme for a third runway, and provide suitable mitigations, as part of any Development Consent Order application. The Government would carefully consider any such application in line with the relevant policies and planning processes.

Local Transport Fund: Leicestershire**Edward Argar:**[\[4222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Local Transport Fund allocations 2025 to 2032, published on 26 February 2024, what her Department's planned timetable is for making available the funding allocated to Leicestershire County Council.

Simon Lightwood:

The previous government made a number of funding commitments in the Network North Command Paper and these will be examined closely by the government in the coming months.

Railways: Staff**Wendy Morton:**[\[3707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress she has made on securing workforce reform as part of pay talks with the rail industry.

Simon Lightwood:

Our railways are broken and need change, but we simply cannot do this until we reset our relationships with unions. The breakthroughs on pay will mark a new era of industrial relations, getting unions and TOCs back around the table, and changing the tone of discussions.

The Department has been clear that in return for a fair pay settlement, this reset in relationships will enable a more collaborative approach on tackling long-standing issues that undermine productivity and reliability on the railways. This includes agreement to work together to address industry-wide matters that will improve the operational resilience of the railway, e.g. development of a new industry driver training competency framework and creation of a new joint advisory committee on new rolling stock procurement relating to cab design.

■ Roads: Nottinghamshire

Lee Anderson:

[\[4413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve road (a) maintenance and (b) conditions in (i) Ashfield constituency and (ii) Nottinghamshire.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network.

Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) is the local highway authority for the Ashfield constituency, and it is therefore responsible for the maintenance of the local road network in its area. NCC is a part of the East Midlands Combined Authority (EMCA), and for this financial year the Department for Transport is providing EMCA with £53.9 million of capital funding for local highway maintenance across its area. It is a matter for EMCA to determine how much of this funding to allocate to each of its constituent authorities.

Funding decisions for highways maintenance beyond 2024/25 will be made at the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Roads: Peatlands

Charlotte Cane:

[\[4125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has a strategy for maintaining floating roads in the Fens.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network.

Local highway authorities, such as Cambridgeshire County Council, have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highways network in their area. They are best placed to understand local needs and priorities as well as any particular challenges caused by the local geology or topography.

■ Train Operating Companies: Investment

Wendy Morton:

[\[3706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the transition from private to public ownership on train operating company investment programmes.

Simon Lightwood:

The process of transitioning railway passenger services into public ownership should not impact investment programmes. The vast majority of investment is already funded from public sources under current arrangements. Existing projects will be able to continue unless there is a good reason for review. The Department will work

closely with private sector Train Operating Companies and Network Rail during the planning process to understand the position of any relevant investment programmes.

TREASURY

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Jo White: [\[4292\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will raise apprenticeship levy funding.

Darren Jones:

The Apprenticeship Levy (AL) is currently paid by large employers, charged at a rate of 0.5% on an employer's annual pay bill of over £3 million. The annual apprenticeship budget is then set by HMT, which funds training and assessment costs for apprenticeships.

This government is committed to transform the Apprenticeship Levy into a Growth and Skills Levy, which will allow employers to invest in a wider range of training.

The government will set out more details on the Growth and Skills Levy in due course.

■ Banking Hubs

Anna Dixon: [\[4306\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that new banking hubs will be opened in communities affected by bank branch closures.

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, which will provide individuals and businesses up and down the country with critical cash and banking services.

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.

■ Business Rates

David Simmonds: [\[3822\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2024 to Question 409 on Business Rates, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of business rates on the prices charged by online retailers.

James Murray:

As set out in the manifesto, the government is committed to a fairer business rates system and to levelling the playing field between online giants and high streets.

Currently, the retail sector accounts for approximately 21% of total value of the business rates tax base, but only contributes 5% to Gross Value Added (GVA). As a result of the 2023 revaluation, business rates paid by the retail sector fell by an estimated 20%. Conversely, business rates increased by an estimated 27% for large distribution warehouses to reflect the growth in the online sales sector.

As with any tax policy, decisions will be made at fiscal events. The government keeps the tax system under review and is open to receiving evidence from stakeholders.

■ Business Rates: Reform

Connor Naismith:

[\[4134\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her planned timetable is for the reform of business rates.

James Murray:

The government made a manifesto commitment to a fairer business rates system that levels the playing field between online giants and the high street, supports investment and entrepreneurship and tackles empty properties. Further information on business rates reforms will be set out in due course.

■ Financial Services

Ayoub Khan:

[\[4157\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department is taking steps to introduce a National Financial Inclusion strategy.

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.

The Government is currently taking steps to understand barriers to financial inclusion in more detail and I am committed to considering what more can be done.

■ Freight: Northern Ireland

Robin Swann:

[\[4509\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 900173 on UK Internal Trade: Large Goods Vehicles, when she last met representatives of the Northern Ireland Haulage industry; what issues were raised; and what steps her Department took to help resolve those issues.

James Murray:

Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the process of policy development and delivery. In relation to the Windsor Framework, the Secretary of State for Northern

Ireland also regularly engages with businesses including meeting with industry representatives in Belfast in late August.

The Government's key focus is to ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements for the movement of goods under the Windsor Framework. Officials have regularly engaged business representative organisations and businesses on the technical delivery elements of the changes. This includes a workshop group with the haulage industry which has covered a range of topics in relation to the specific challenges faced by hauliers.

■ Ian Corfield

Laura Trott: [\[4424\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish the exceptional appointment form for Ian Corfield that was submitted to the Civil Service Commission.

Laura Trott: [\[4425\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether Ian Corfield's involvement with the Labour Party was declared to the Civil Service Commission before its approval of his appointment to the Civil Service.

Laura Trott: [\[4426\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her donation from Ian Corfield was declared to the Cabinet Office prior to his appointment as a Director in her Department.

Laura Trott: [\[4427\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her donation from Ian Corfield was declared to the Permanent Secretary of her Department within 14 days of her appointment.

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. The donation was included in the Chancellor's Register of Member's Interests. He has since been appointed, unpaid, as a direct ministerial appointment. The Civil Service Commission has published their letter to HM Treasury approving the appointment of Ian Corfield.

■ Office for Value for Money

Mr Luke Charters: [\[3891\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her planned timetable is for establishing the Office of Value for Money.

Darren Jones:

The Office for Value for Money was established as part of the Chancellor's speech on the 29th July 2024 setting out our actions to tackle waste and inefficiency from our

spending inheritance. As a new venture, the Office is still in the process of finalising its workplan and will imminently be appointing an independent Chair.

The Office has been set up with two primary roles. First, to provide targeted interventions, working with HM Treasury and other Government departments, so that value for money underpins every decision government makes. Second, to recommend reforms to the spending system, ensuring that our spending decision-making processes support the Government's missions and deliver value for money. The Office has already begun working on projects to tackle these issues in advance of the Budget and Spending Review.

■ **Private Education: Fees and Charges**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3994\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a lower rate of VAT on independent schools with lower fees.

Susan Murray:

[\[4099\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will ensure that revenues generated by VAT on independent school fees are passed on proportionally to devolved Administrations in (a) Scotland, (b) Wales and (c) Northern Ireland.

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.

The Government will confirm the introduction of these tax policy changes at the Budget on 30 October. Following scrutiny of the Government's costing by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility, details of the Government's assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes will be published at the Budget in the usual way.

These changes will apply across the UK. The Barnett formula will continue to apply in the usual way as set out in the Statement of Funding Policy.

■ **Public Expenditure**

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[3890\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many unfunded policies announced by the previous government her Department identified as part of its recent audit of public spending.

Darren Jones:

On 29th July, the Chancellor set out the £21.9bn pressure on departmental budgets in the 2024-25 financial year. This announcement was accompanied by the document 'Fixing the Foundations', which set out the detail underpinning this number.

Public Expenditure: Wales**Ben Lake:** [\[4013\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much the Welsh Government will receive in additional Barnett Formula consequential funding as a result of the most recent pay award for NHS staff in England.

Darren Jones:

The Barnett formula applies to all increases or decreases to Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL). When UK Government departmental budgets change, the Barnett formula will apply in the usual way. Any Barnett consequentials in 2024-25 resulting from the recent pay award for NHS staff in England would be confirmed at Autumn Budget 2024 and Supplementary Estimates 2024-25.

The published Block Grant Transparency document provides a detailed breakdown of how the block grants are calculated. The most recent report was published in July 2023.

Taxation: International Cooperation**Ben Lake:** [\[4409\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to support the implementation of UN General Assembly resolution A /RES/78/230 on the Promotion of inclusive and effective international tax cooperation at the United Nations adopted on 22 December 2023.

James Murray:

The UK has been an active participant in negotiations at the UN, as we are committed to working with others to ensure inclusive and effective international tax cooperation.

We maintain the view that a UN Framework Convention will only be successful in delivering this objective if it is clear in its aims, seeks to build upon rather than reinvent existing initiatives, and seeks to secure the broad support and participation of members.

We will continue to engage constructively in support of those principles.

Taxis: VAT**James Naish:** [\[4072\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 6.2 of the consultation entitled Consultation on the VAT Treatment of Private Hire Vehicles, published on 18 April 2024, what the evidential basis is for stating that two-thirds of the private hire vehicle market by value already accounted for VAT as principal on all their work.

James Naish:

[4073]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 4.6 of the consultation entitled Consultation on the VAT Treatment of Private Hire Vehicles, published on 18 April 2024, how her Department defines average passenger; and how often the average passenger would be expected to use a private hire vehicle in a given period to experience the estimated increase in fares.

James Murray:

There have been a number of court cases in recent years regarding private hire vehicle (PHV) legislation. A consultation seeking views on the potential impact of these court cases on the PHV sector was recently run. Since publishing that consultation, the Court of Appeal has overturned the *Uber Britannia Limited v Sefton Borough Council High Court* declaration that was handed down in 2023. The Government is currently considering the responses to the consultation, as well as the impact of the recent Court of Appeal judgment and will publish a response in due course.

The expected impact of the original High Court judgments on the average PHV passenger was published in the consultation, and was calculated based on data contained in Table NTS0303 of the National Travel Survey available online here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts03-modal-comparisons#full-publication-update-history>.

It is estimated that around two-thirds of the value of the private hire vehicle market already accounts for VAT as principal. This estimate has been calculated using the estimated size of the sector and data relating to VAT returns and receipts.

■ Trader Support Service

Robin Swann:

[3922]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the Trader Support Service (TSS) is fit for purpose; whether the TSS will continue after December 2024; and whether it is her policy that the TSS should remain free at the point of use.

James Murray:

The government is committed to providing ongoing support to traders moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland beyond the current Trader Support Service (TSS) contract period and will set out further information concerning the future of the TSS in due course.

The TSS continues to operate smoothly and consistently. HMRC monitors customer satisfaction scores, customer feedback and management information to continuously improve the service. As of July 2024, the TSS customer satisfaction score was 87.5%.

Jim Allister: [\[3935\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she took to raise awareness of the opportunity to tender for the provision of what became the Trader Support Service.

James Murray:

In July 2020, HMRC advertised the opportunity to tender for the current Trader Support Service (TSS) on the government tender notice portal, Tenders Electronic Daily (TED), which has now been replaced by Find a Tender. Prior to the tender being published, HMRC issued a Prior Information Notice (PIN) on TED to identify potential suppliers, and interested suppliers were invited to engagement sessions on the requirements.

■ Treasury: Public Appointments

Laura Trott: [\[4023\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she requested the promotion of Louise Tinsley.

Laura Trott: [\[4024\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the post of Director of Special Advisers and Chancellor Engagement was advertised openly.

Laura Trott: [\[4026\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether a job evaluation for senior posts was conducted for the role of Director of Special Advisers and Chancellor Engagement.

Laura Trott: [\[4027\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, (a) how many and (b) of which grades staff are line managed by the Director of Special Advisers and Chancellor Engagement.

James Murray:

The correct processes were followed in the appointment of the Director of Special Advisers and Chancellor Engagement. Louise Tinsley has been a civil servant for 7 years. She had passed a selection board for a role at director level prior to the election being called. A similar Director role had been filled by a civil servant prior to Louise's appointment. The incumbent has been appointed for an initial period of 6 months.

The Director of Special Advisers and Chancellor Engagement does not currently have line management responsibilities.

■ Treasury: Senior Civil Servants

Laura Trott: [\[4256\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish the (a) names and (b) job titles of all senior civil service jobs in her Department at director level and above (i) offered and (ii) appointed since 30 May 2024.

Laura Trott: [\[4257\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish the (a) names and (b) job titles of all senior civil service jobs in her Department at Deputy Director level and above (i) offered and (ii) appointed since 30 May 2024.

James Murray:

The below appointments to Senior Civil Service roles at Director level and above have been made since 4 July 2024:

1. Louise Tinsley - Director of Special Advisers & Chancellor Engagement
2. Timothy Power - Director, Business and International Tax

Ian Corfield has resigned as a Senior Civil Servant and been appointed as an unpaid adviser.

Offers of employment are personal information as individuals are not Directors (or above) until they take up a role.

The Treasury does not comment on individual appointments at Deputy Director level.

■ Treasury: Special Advisers

Laura Trott: [\[4259\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many special advisers have been appointed in her Department since 4 July 2024; and how many appointments there have been to the Council of Economic Advisers since that date.

James Murray:

Since 4th July 2024, 9 special advisers have been appointed to HM Treasury, of which 4 are members of the Council of Economic Advisers. These special advisers are appointed to add a political dimension to the advice and support the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Robin Swann: [\[4147\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance her Department plans to issue for (a) hauliers and (b) traders on the implementation of updated UK Internal Market Scheme; and if she will publish (A) details and (B) process maps for (1) H8 (TSS dataset) and (2) GVMS requirements.

James Murray:

The government continues to engage extensively with traders and hauliers to build readiness for the implementation of the new arrangements under the Windsor Framework.

Guidance on gov.uk is consistently updated in line with any new requirements coming into effect. Specific guidance for traders and hauliers on the UK Internal Market Scheme can be found on GOV.UK here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for->

[authorisation-for-the-uk-internal-market-scheme-if-you-bring-goods-into-northern-ireland.](#)

And guidance on the requirements for GVMS can be found on gov.uk here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-how-to-move-goods-through-ports-that-use-the-goods-vehicle-movement-service>.

■ Wines: Excise Duties

Daisy Cooper: [3786]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it is her policy to end the temporary duty easement for wines between 11.5% and 14.5% alcohol by volume on small and medium-sized wine businesses.

Daisy Cooper: [3787]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has received representations on the ending of the temporary duty easement for wines between 11.5% and 14.5% alcohol by volume on small and medium-sized wine businesses on 1 February 2025.

James Murray:

The Chancellor and I receive representations regularly from a wide range of stakeholders and welcome their views.

The current temporary duty easement for wine is due to end on 1st February 2025.

■ Winter Fuel Payment

Mel Stride: [3959]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to p.9 of the policy document entitled Fixing the Foundations, published on 29 July 2024, what discussions her Department had with the Office for Budget Responsibility before estimating the savings to the public purse from limiting eligibility to Winter Fuel Payments to people in receipt of Pension Credit.

Darren Jones:

The Chancellor's statement of 29 July made hard choices to reduce immediate spending pressures. It was not a fiscal event and was not accompanied by an economic and fiscal forecast from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).

The Chancellor commissioned a forecast from the OBR in her statement of 29 July, to be published alongside a Budget on 30 October. The OBR will certify the methodology behind the costings of measures announced on 29 July, including the targeting of Winter Fuel Payments at recipients of Pension Credit and certain other means-tested benefits, in the usual way at the Budget.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Armed Forces Covenant

Steve Darling:

[3855]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to strengthen her Department's compliance with the Armed Forces Covenant.

Andrew Western:

The Department takes its responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant very seriously and is proud to continue to provide vital and significant support services for veterans which recognises their particular needs and circumstances.

For DWP, strengthening our compliance with the Armed Forces Covenant is about making sure that we have a benefits and employment support offer that meets the needs of veterans, serving personnel, and their families. DWP is fully committed to the Covenant and will do what is necessary to support members of the Armed Forces Community.

■ Bereavement Support Payment

David Simmonds:

[3832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will (a) extend the duration of Bereavement Support Payments beyond 18 months and (b) uprate those payments in line with inflation.

Andrew Western:

Bereavement Support Payment (BSP) helps people through the immediate period following a bereavement by way of an initial lump sum followed by up to 18 monthly instalments. Where longer-term financial support is needed, benefits such as Universal Credit have been specifically designed to provide assistance with ongoing living costs. We have no current plans to change the duration of Bereavement Support Payment.

The rate of Bereavement Support Payment is reviewed on a discretionary basis as part of the annual uprating process, but there is no legal requirement to uprate it. BSP is not a cost-of-living benefit like Universal Credit, which has been increased in line with inflation. We will review the rate of Bereavement Support Payment later this year as part of the annual uprating process.

Chris Bloore:

[3869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applicants have received the Bereavement Support Payment since April 2017.

Andrew Western:

Statistics for Bereavement Support Payment, including claims allowed each month from April 2017 to March 2024, are published on [Stat-Xplore](#) in the [Bereavement Support Payment \(BSP\) Claims Received](#) dataset.

Users can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest and, if needed, can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

Chris Bloore: **[3870]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the total amount payable was to people in receipt of the Bereavement Support Payment.

Andrew Western:

The total expenditure of Bereavement Support Payment from April 2017 to March 2023 was £1.2 billion. Figures for the 2023/24 financial year are still being finalised so are not included in this expenditure total.

Note: figures are rounded to the nearest £100,000 and are taken from the Department for Work and Pensions Benefit expenditure and caseload tables 2024.

[Benefit expenditure and caseload tables 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Employment Schemes: Finance

Shockat Adam: **[4092]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing multi-year funding employability programmes funded by her Department.

Alison McGovern:

Employment programmes such as the Restart Scheme and the Work and Health Programme currently use multi-year funding to ensure the Department secures value for money and delivers employment support that is cost effective.

The Department is also working with local areas in England and Wales to deliver the manifesto commitment to enable local areas to shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer for local people. This will start with multi-year funding to expand the availability of a new national supported employment programme with an offer shaped around local priorities. This new programme will help disabled people, those with health conditions and those with complex employment barriers to find and fulfil their potential to work.

The main costs for these programmes and their providers are staffing, estates and digital infrastructure, all of which would be higher for single year than for multi-year funded programmes due to a combination of set-up and recruitment costs being absorbed over lower volumes and costs of temporary staff, short leases and other provider costs being higher generally.

The benefits of multi-year funded programmes include reduced costs, increased value for money and positive returns to the Exchequer.

■ Employment: Young People

Jim Shannon:

[\[3976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of trends in the number of young people in employment in the last 12 months.

Alison McGovern:

The number of employed 16–24-year-olds has fallen by 183,000 in the last 12 months, driven by higher economic inactivity. DWP places a strong emphasis on developing policies that support young people into employment, whilst also acknowledging that their needs will vary based on their location and individual circumstances.

My department, working closely with the Department for Education, are developing the Youth Guarantee, to refocus support to all young people aged 18-21 years old not in education, employment or training. We will ensure they have access to quality opportunities for training, an apprenticeship or help to find work for, to prevent them becoming excluded from the world of work at a young age.

DWP currently offers demand led labour market support to young people aged 16-24 through a comprehensive range of interventions at both national and local levels. This includes flexible, locally driven provision, nationwide employment programmes and tailored support delivered by work coaches in Jobcentres and in local communities, in collaboration with our partners.

■ Energy: Prices

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help ensure (a) people just above the Pension Credit threshold and (b) other older people can meet their energy costs,.

Emma Reynolds:

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 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.

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.

■ Fuel Poverty

Rachael Maskell: [\[3992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of the potential merits of establishing a fuel poverty prescription that can be given by GPs.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: This Government takes fuel poverty extremely seriously. 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.

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.

■ Household Support Fund

Dr Luke Evans: [\[3803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her policy is on 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.

■ Pension Credit

John McDonnell: [\[2712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims for Pension Credit took longer than six 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_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).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.

■ Pension Credit: Take-up**John McDonnell:**[\[2711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the steps her Department has taken to increase take-up of Pensions Credit since January 2019.

Emma Reynolds:

The latest available take-up estimates Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial yearending 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) cover the financial year 2021/2022 and suggest an overall Pension Credit take-up rate of 63%. The next take-up estimates covering the financial year 2022/2023 are due to be published in October.

■ Pensioners: Household Support Fund**Mel Stride:**[\[3963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what (a) data and (b) other information her Department provides to local authorities to identify pensioner households which could be eligible for support from the Household Support Fund.

Alison McGovern:

DWP provides Authorities with a variety of data to assist in the identification of vulnerable pensioner households, which they may use in their targeting of the Household Support Fund. This includes, but is not limited to:

- the National Insurance number, names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of those in receipt of the Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit element of Pension Credit and their appointees if appropriate, as well as for all claimants on ESA (IR)
- the National Insurance number, names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of customers who are in receipt of HB but not in receipt of a means tested benefit (for example: UC, Income based Jobseekers Allowance, ESA (IR), Income Support and Pension Credit) or Tax Credits

Authorities are also encouraged to use their own data, local knowledge and networks to identify and target households in need, including those with pensioners.

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.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Women

Kim Johnson:

[\[3183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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, whether she plans to seek parliamentary time to enable hon. Members to vote on financial redress proposals.

Emma Reynolds:

As a newly formed Government we will need time to review and consider the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

Now the election has concluded we need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides.

The issues outlined in the report are significant and complex, as such they require serious deliberation. Once this work has been undertaken, the Government will be in a position to outline its approach.

I met with representatives from the WASPI Campaign on the 5th of September.,

Ben Maguire:

[\[3645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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, whether she has made an estimate of the cost of providing financial redress to impacted women in (a) North Cornwall constituency and (b) the UK.

Emma Reynolds:

We have not estimated the costs of providing redress in North Cornwall. The Ombudsman's report (para 504) published on 21 March 2024 estimated that providing compensation to all 1950s women at the level 4 range would cost between around £3.5 and £10.5bn.

As a newly formed Government we will need time to review and consider the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

Now the election has concluded we need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides.

The issues outlined in the report are significant and complex, as such they require serious deliberation. Once this work has been undertaken, the Government will be in a position to outline its approach.

I met with representatives of the WAPSI Campaign on the 5 of September.

Helen Morgan:

[\[3834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her planned timetable is for responding to the recommendations of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman report into changes to women's State Pension age, published on 21 March 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: As a newly formed Government we will need time to review and consider the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

Now the election has concluded we need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides.

The issues outlined in the report are significant and complex, as such they require serious deliberation. Once this work has been undertaken, the Government will be in a position to outline its approach.

I met with representatives of the WASPI Campaign on the 5 of September.

■ Statutory Sick Pay

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[4435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that reforms to Statutory Sick Pay take account of (a) multiple sclerosis and (b) other fluctuating conditions.

Alison McGovern:

No one should be forced to choose between their health and financial hardship, which is why we plan to strengthen Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), so it provides a safety net for those who need it most. The Plan to Make Work Pay commits to remove the Lower Earnings Limit to make it available to all workers and remove the waiting period so that SSP is paid from the first day of sickness absence. Together these changes will ensure everyone receives fair earnings replacement when they have to take time off work.

Paying SSP for all days of work missed because of sickness will help support employees who have fluctuating conditions who may take frequent, shorter absences from work as part of managing their health condition, such as multiple sclerosis.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[4436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to implement the recommendations of the Fourth Report of the Work and Pensions Committee of Session 2023-24 on Statutory Sick Pay, HC148, published on 28 March 2024, in the Employment Rights Bill.

Alison McGovern:

The Government will be providing a response to the Fourth Report of the Work and Pensions Committee of Session 2023-24 on Statutory Sick Pay in due course and once the Chair of the Work and Pensions Select Committee has been appointed.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[4437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the rate of Statutory Sick Pay to that of the National Living Wage.

Alison McGovern:

No one should be forced to choose between their health and financial hardship, which is why we plan to strengthen Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), so it provides a safety net for those who need it most. The Plan to Make Work Pay commits to remove the Lower Earnings Limit to make it available to all workers and remove the waiting period so that SSP is paid from the first day of sickness absence. Together these changes will ensure everyone receives fair earnings replacement when they have to take time off work.

The Government will continue to keep the rate of SSP under review as part of the annual uprating process.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[4438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of paying Statutory Sick Pay at an hourly rate.

Alison McGovern:

No one should be forced to choose between their health and financial hardship, which is why we plan to strengthen Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), so it provides a safety net for those who need it most. The Plan to Make Work Pay commits to remove the Lower Earnings Limit to make it available to all workers and remove the waiting period so that SSP is paid from the first day of sickness absence. Together these changes will ensure everyone receives fair earnings replacement when they have to take time off work.

As part of these changes consideration will be given as to how to best structure the payment rate for individuals earning below the flat weekly rate of SSP.

■ Winter Fuel Payment

Andy McDonald:

[\[2336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with stakeholders on the decision to withdraw eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments from those not in receipt of 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.

The Department met with Age UK, the Local Government Association and Citizens Advice prior to the Chancellor's statement, which included the Winter Fuel Payment announcement.

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.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[2370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 43 of her Majesty's Treasury's policy document entitled, Fixing the foundations public spending audit 2024-2025, published on 29 July 2024, what discussions she held with stakeholders on the Government's policy of ending the Winter Fuel Allowance for some recipients.

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.

The Department met with Age UK, the Local Government Association and Citizens Advice, prior to the Chancellor's statement which included the Winter Fuel Payment announcement.

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 a 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.

Mel Stride: [\[3958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Table 2 of the policy paper published on 29 July 2024 entitled Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25, whether the savings from targeting Winter Fuel Payments at recipients of Pension Credit and certain other means-tested benefits from winter 2024-25 take account of the potential impact of that policy on the number of people in receipt of Pension Credit.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: The Department for Work and Pensions has indicated that it will not be possible to answer this question within the usual time period. An answer is being prepared and will be provided as soon as it is available.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Louth and Horncastle

Victoria Atkins: [\[3710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to the eligibility criteria for Winter Fuel payments to be introduced from winter 2024-25 on the (a) financial and (b) physical well-being of pensioners in Louth & Horncastle constituency; and what steps she plans to take to mitigate any potential negative impact on those affected.

Emma Reynolds:

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.

We are 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.

The Household Support Fund is being extended for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ National Security & Investment Act - Annual Report

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Pat McFadden):

[\[HCWS82\]](#)

I am today laying before Parliament the Annual Report covering the operation of the National Security and Investment (NSI) Act 2021 for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. This fulfils the requirements under section 61 of the NSI Act and a copy of the report will also be published on [GOV.UK](#).

The Government is committed to ensuring the Act protects our national security and does so as effectively, efficiently, and transparently as possible - giving investors the certainty they need to kickstart growth across the UK.

The report shows the vast majority of notified acquisitions – 95.6% – were cleared to proceed within 30 working days. Of the 847 notifications reviewed – only 4.4% – were issued with a call-in notice and underwent further assessment. Five final orders were issued and ten called in acquisitions were withdrawn before a decision was made. All notifications were screened within the Act's statutory time limits.

This report shows that notifications, call-ins, final orders, withdrawals, and final notifications covered many different sectors and acquirers' countries of origin.

I have included new information in this year's report. For the first time, the report sets out how many calendar days (as well as statutory days) different stages of the process, for example the time it took to make a final decision following a notification or a call-in. I hope this will provide further transparency on how the Act is operating.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Water (Special Measures) Bill

Minister for Water and Flooding (Emma Hardy):

[\[HCWS79\]](#)

On 4 September, the Government introduced the Water (Special Measures) Bill to Parliament to deliver on our manifesto commitment to put water companies under special measures to clean up our water. This builds on the statement of 11 July, which set out our first steps for ending the crisis in the water sector, and paves the way for a review to shape further, transformative legislative change to fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good.

This Government will never look the other way while water companies pump record levels of sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas.

To deliver on the manifesto commitment to 'block the payment of bonuses to executives who pollute our waterways', the Bill will provide Ofwat with a new power to establish rules for the water industry relating to governance and remuneration.

The Bill also delivers on the manifesto commitment to ‘bring criminal charges against persistent law breakers’ by making obstruction of the general investigatory powers of Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales and the Drinking Water Inspectorate punishable by imprisonment; and by opening up new routes for prosecuting executives.

To deliver on the manifesto commitment to ‘impose automatic and severe fines for wrongdoing’ the Bill will enable the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales to issue automatic fines for certain offences, ensuring water companies face rapid repercussions where it is immediately clear they have acted unlawfully.

To deliver on the manifesto commitment to ‘ensure independent monitoring of every outlet’, the Bill will place a requirement on water companies to publish data on discharges from emergency overflows in near real-time. This data will be independently scrutinised by the regulators.

Finally, the Bill will also modernise and strengthen the water industry Special Administrations Regime by introducing procedural rights around winding up petitions, and providing powers to recover the costs of special administration – bringing it in line with other sectors, such as energy.

Taken together, these measures will turn around the performance of the water industry and will be a first important step in enabling long-term and transformative change across the water sector.

However, I am clear that there are other fundamental challenges facing the sector, which will not be addressed by this Bill alone. A comprehensive reset is needed to restore our rivers, lakes and seas to good health, deliver a resilient water supply in the face of a changing climate, and ultimately ensure that the water sector works for customers and the environment.

Therefore, to build on the critical first steps of the Water (Special Measures) Bill, this Government will carry out a review of the water sector regulatory system and will fundamentally transform the water sector through future legislation. The review will focus on the private regulatory model and will not change plans for much needed investment in PR24. It will ensure that the framework that underpins our water sector delivers long-term stability, with incentives aligned to clear, achievable targets that reflect the needs of customers and the environment at a catchment, regional and national scale, supporting the Government's growth mission. We will invite views from a range of experts covering areas such as the environment, public health, consumers, investors, engineering and economics, and this will include a public consultation to test the proposals and bring in a diverse range of views. Further details will be set out in the Autumn.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) / Chagos Archipelago**

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Mr David Lammy): [\[HCWS80\]](#)

Following the meeting between the Prime Minister, my Rt Hon Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras, and the Prime Minister of Mauritius on 23 July, the UK and Mauritius have agreed to continue the negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)/Chagos Archipelago launched under the previous Government in November 2022. An agreed resolution to this long-standing, complex and important issue is in the interest of both parties and the best way to protect the UK's national interests. Working in close coordination with the United States, the UK will endeavour to expeditiously reach a negotiated agreement that protects and preserves vital security interests on Diego Garcia, respects Chagossian communities, enhances environmental cooperation and builds a long-term strategic partnership with Mauritius as a close Commonwealth partner. To enhance these efforts Mr Jonathan Powell has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Envoy to the BIOT/ Chagos Sovereignty Negotiation.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Pandemic Accord Negotiations at the World Health Organization (September 2024)**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention (Andrew Gwynne): [\[HCWS77\]](#)

I would like to update the House regarding the ongoing negotiations on a new, legally binding international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response ("Pandemic Accord") at the World Health Organization (WHO).

Infectious diseases do not respect borders. As the COVID-19 pandemic showed, and the current mpox health emergency has reminded us, we can only protect citizens and economies from health threats if we collaborate closely with other countries.

Whether it is to monitor the spread of disease or to develop new vaccines, in future health emergencies we will likely rely on others, and they may rely on us, to share the information and resources we all need to save lives. It was only because of the information shared with us from countries which Covid reached first that helped us develop the vaccines which protected the UK and many around the world. More global collaboration on health threats will make Britain stronger and safer.

That is why the Government is committed to working with our international partners, including those in the Global South, to negotiate a Pandemic Accord that enhances global health security across the world and is firmly in the UK's national interest.

The Pandemic Accord presents a unique opportunity to:

- protect lives, livelihoods and the NHS by strengthening pandemic prevention and response;

- contribute to economic growth by promoting innovation in pandemic-related R&D;
- signal to the world that the UK is taking a new approach to multilateralism and is sincere about improving equitable access to vaccines, treatments and tests.

The Government is also determined to use this opportunity to support delivery of our health, growth and security missions. We will engage closely with our developed and developing country partners to reach a consensus agreement that reflects their priorities as well as our own, to keep us all safer. We will also continue to engage with civil society, industry, and the Devolved Governments, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

Member States of the WHO have until the World Health Assembly in May 2025 to reach an agreement on the Pandemic Accord, following an extension agreed at the World Health Assembly in May 2024.

Targeted amendments to the International Health Regulations to improve information sharing and collaboration for public health emergency response were agreed at the World Health Assembly in May 2024. The International Health Regulations are an important technical framework that helps to prevent and protect against the international spread of disease. This set of proposed amendments updates the regulations to reflect lessons learned, including from COVID-19.

Every WHO Member State, including the UK, now has the right under the International Health Regulations to evaluate each and every amendment before exercising its sovereignty to decide whether to accept or opt out of each of - or all of - the amendments. This Government will of course only agree to amendments if they are in the UK national interest. Officials across Government are currently analysing the amendments and will provide advice to Ministers. The Government will provide an update to Parliament on the UK's approach in due course.

The Pandemic Accord and International Health Regulations negotiations have been the subject of significant misinformation. Both the WHO and the UK Government are clear that respect for Member State sovereignty is a guiding principle of the negotiations. Cooperation with countries around the world doesn't compromise our sovereignty, it strengthens our security.

The Government is firm in our belief that a new Pandemic Accord and strengthened International Health Regulations that set out how countries will work together to address health threats is in all of our best interests. The world is safer when we stand together.

We will continue to update the House through the course of this session at relevant and important junctures in the negotiating process.

HOME OFFICE**■ Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules**

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Migration and Citizenship (Seema Malhotra): [\[HCWS81\]](#)

My rt hon Friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules.

Introduction of a Visa requirement on Jordan

We are today introducing a visa requirement on all visitors from Jordan. Nationals of Jordan will also be required to obtain a direct airside transit visa if they intend to transit via the UK having booked travel to another country. The visa requirement comes into force at 15.00 BST today.

Consequential to this, nationals of Jordan will no longer be eligible to travel to the UK with an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA).

There will be a four-week, visa-free transition period for those who already hold an ETA and confirmed bookings to the UK obtained on or before 15:00 BST 10 September 2024 where arrival in the UK is no later than 15:00 BST 8 October 2024.

Arrangements are in place so that Jordanian nationals can apply for visas. We are publicising the changes so travellers are aware and can plan accordingly.

We are taking this action due to an increase in the number of Jordanian nationals travelling to the UK for purposes other than what is permitted under visitor rules since the visa requirement was lifted in February 2024. This has included a significant and sustained increase in asylum claims, and high rates of refusals at the border due to people travelling without the intention of visiting for a permitted purpose. This increase in asylum claims and refusals has added significantly to operational pressures at the border, resulting in frontline resource being diverted from other operational priorities.

The decision to introduce a visa requirement has been taken solely for migration and border security reasons. Our relationship with Jordan remains a strong and friendly one. Any decision to change a visa status is not taken lightly and we keep the border and immigration system under regular review to ensure it continues to work in the UK national interest.

Implementation of the UK Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme

On 25 October 2023, the UK Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme was launched to secure our borders and make the UK safer, by enhancing our ability to screen travellers upstream. The scheme applies to those passengers visiting or transiting the UK, who do not currently need a visa for short stays and do not have a valid UK immigration status prior to travelling.

Currently, the ETA scheme applies to nationals of Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The Government will complete the implementation of the scheme, in a phased manner to all remaining non-visa nationalities. In November

2024, the ETA scheme will open to all nationals travelling to the UK who do not currently need a visa, except Europeans, and will be a travel requirement from 8 January 2025. In March 2025, the scheme will then be extended to European nationals and will be a requirement for travel from 2 April 2025, completing the rollout of the ETA scheme. The complete list of ETA nationalities is detailed in the accompanying Statement of Changes at Appendix ETA National List at ETANL 1.1.

Once fully rolled out, the ETA scheme will close the current gap in advance permissions and mean that for the first time, we will have a comprehensive understanding of those travelling to the UK.

End Diplomatic Visa Waivers and introduce a “Diplomatic Visa Arrangement” (DVA) Visitor visa

The UK's border is being transformed to include digital pre-travel checks. As part of this, Diplomatic Visa Waivers (DVWs) are being phased out. Diplomatic Visa Arrangement (DVA) visitor visas are being introduced to replace DVWs. DVAs will ensure diplomatic passport holders from countries that have benefited from DVW, who are nominated by their governments through a Note Verbale, will continue to benefit from smooth and efficient access to the UK. DVAs will provide a bespoke visitor visa for eligible diplomatic passport holders. Applications will be made through a light-touch application form, but application fees and the requirement to submit fingerprints will be waived. The route aims to support and better facilitate diplomatic travel to the UK and will also enable DVA visitors to undertake a range of standard visitor activities. These changes will not impact accredited diplomats who are free, or “exempt” from immigration control.

Introduction of the VIP Delegate Visa

We are launching the VIP Delegate Visa, a bespoke visa product targeted at delegations accompanying foreign Heads of State and serving Government Ministers on official visits to the UK. This product is a global offer, balancing the UK's bilateral considerations and aligning more closely with the approach of international partners. This product will be capped at an upper limit of twenty issues for government official delegates accompanying Heads of State, and ten for government official delegates accompanying serving Government Ministers. Those applying for this product will have their application assessed under the Immigration Rules, supported by a Note Verbale process, but application fees and the requirement to submit fingerprints will be waived.

Changes to Appendix Bereaved Partner and Appendix Gurkha and Hong Kong military unit veteran discharged before 1 July 1997

Currently, a bereaved partner who has no other route to stay must leave the UK if they cannot afford the fee for settlement. So, we are changing the relevant rules to allow bereaved partners and their dependants to benefit from a fee waiver if they are destitute. Equivalent changes are being made to the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations 2018, which are also being laid in Parliament today. The provision of a fee waiver to those who are destitute will allow them to settle in the UK at the time they are most vulnerable.

Changes to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)

We are making some changes to the Immigration Rules in Appendix EU for the EUSS, which, in accordance with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, enables EU, other European Economic Area and Swiss citizens living in the UK before the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, and their family members, to obtain the UK immigration status they need to continue living in the UK. The changes include referring to the scope to automatically convert pre-settled status under the EUSS to settled status where the person qualifies for this and without the need for them to make a further valid application, and to require a joining family member to apply to the EUSS within three months of their first (not latest) arrival in the UK since the end of the transition period (or later where there are reasonable grounds for their delay).

These changes to the Immigration Rules are being laid on 10 September 2024. For the changes regarding Jordan, due to safeguarding the operation of the UK's immigration system, those changes will come into effect at 15.00 BST on 10 September 2024. The changes regarding Appendix Bereaved Partner and Appendix Gurkha and Hong Kong military unit veteran discharged before 1 July 1997 will come into effect on 9 October 2024, changes regarding the VIP Delegate Visa will come into effect on 10 October 2024, changes to introduce a "Diplomatic Visa Arrangement" (DVA) Visitor visa will come into effect on 18 February 2025 and associated changes to end Diplomatic Visa Waivers will come into effect on 11 March 2025.

All other changes will come into effect on 8 October 2024.

TRANSPORT

■ Development consent decision extension

Secretary of State for Transport (Louise Haigh):

[\[HCWS78\]](#)

This statement confirms that it is necessary to extend the deadline for a decision on the application by Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited under the Planning Act 2008 for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange Development Consent Order ("the application").

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, a decision on an application must be made within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless the power under section 107(3) is exercised to extend the deadline and a Written Ministerial Statement is made to the Parliament announcing the new deadline.

The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on 10 June 2024. The current deadline for a decision on the application is, therefore, 10 September 2024.

The deadline for the decision is extended to 10 March 2025. The Department will however endeavour to issue the decision ahead of the extended deadline of 10 March 2025 where possible.

The reason for the extension to the decision deadline is that while the Secretary of State is minded to agree with the Examining Authority's recommendation that she should

withhold consent, she wishes to gather further information on certain matters and to allow for the analysis of that further information before taking her final decision. She is therefore publishing a letter today which explains why, having weighed the benefits and adverse effects of the proposed development, she is minded to refuse consent and sets out those matters on which she requires further information.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the Secretary of State's decision on whether to grant the application development consent.