



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 11 September 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:08 P.M., 11 September 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Audit

**James Naish:** [\[4286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the report by the Financial Reporting Council entitled Annual Review of Audit Quality 2024, published on 30 July 2024, whether he plans to take steps to improve audit (a) regulation, (b) quality and (c) accountability.

**Justin Madders:**

As set out in the King's Speech, the Government intends to publish a draft Audit Reform and Corporate Governance Bill, which will contain measures to tackle bad financial reporting through a strengthened regulator. The draft Bill will uphold standards and independent scrutiny of companies' accounts, supporting investment and economic security.

#### ■ Business: Rural Areas

**Sarah Dyke:** [\[4063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department supports rural businesses.

**Gareth Thomas:**

Businesses across the country, including those in rural areas, can access support through their local Growth Hubs. DBT is committed to helping rural businesses to boost exports, improve access to finance, stamp out late payment practices and compete for public procurement contracts.

#### ■ Business: Staffordshire

**Adam Jogee:** [\[3453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what plans he has to (a) meet the Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce to discuss further cooperation and (b) visit businesses in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

**Gareth Thomas:**

DBT is committed to driving long-term, inclusive and secure economic growth in all parts of the country, and engagement with Mayors, businesses and communities in all regions, including the West Midlands, is therefore a priority.

DBT officials are in regular contact with Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce colleagues, helping to support their local businesses. The Ministerial team's plans for engagement, including regional and local visits, are revisited regularly.

## ■ Carers: Leave

**Mary Glendon:**

[\[4528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how his proposed review into the implementation of unpaid carers' leave is to be conducted; and whether the review will be published.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government made a commitment to review carer's leave in the Plan to Make Work Pay. We will provide an update on progress in this area in due course.

The Plan to Make Work Pay also includes a number of measures which will help unpaid carers workers to enter, remain and progress in work - including making flexible working the default and introducing a right to switch off.

## ■ Conditions of Employment

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[4439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government response to the consultation entitled Health is everyone's business, published on 4 October 2021, whether he plans to incorporate proposals within that consultation on tackling ill health-related job losses into the Employment Rights Bill.

**Justin Madders:**

This Government is committed to delivering the Plan to Make Work Pay in full and updating Britain's employment protections, so they are fit for our modern economy and the future of work. As set out in the Plan to Make to Work Pay we are committed to strengthen Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), so it provides a safety net for those who need it most. We will 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. Ministers are identifying the most appropriate delivery mechanisms for the commitments in the Plan, including an Employment Rights Bill that will be introduced to Parliament within 100 days of taking office.

## ■ Foreign Investment in UK: Northern Ireland

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[3981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to increase inward investment in Northern Ireland.

**Sarah Jones:**

My department is working in partnership with Invest Northern Ireland through DBT's Trade and Investment hub in Belfast and its wider global network to showcase NI as a location for investment.

We are focused on driving investment into all parts of the UK, including through our forthcoming International Investment Summit in October 2024.

**■ Minimum Wage: Colne Valley****Paul Davies:** [\[4141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he taking to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from the national minimum wage in Colne Valley constituency.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government is determined to deliver a genuine living wage for working people and has asked the Low Pay Commission to make progress on extending the National Living Wage to all adults.

HMRC enforces the minimum wage, and they investigate where they believe an employer is not paying the minimum wage. This includes considering all complaints from workers, conducting proactive enforcement activities and delivering educational activity to support employer compliance.

The National Minimum Wage Naming Scheme sends a clear message to businesses that they must pay their workers at least the National Minimum Wage where required, or we will publicly name them for having failed to meet their legal obligations.

**■ Small Businesses: Colne Valley****Paul Davies:** [\[4143\]](#)

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

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Government is investing £1.14 billion over 30 years (£38 million annually) towards West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority's local economic priorities, including business support. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund also provides £83 million for West Yorkshire, including support to businesses in Colne Valley.

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 support through Help to Grow Management, the Business Support Service and a network of Growth Hubs – including the [West Yorkshire Business Support Service](#).

**■ Trade Agreements****Sir John Hayes:** [\[4339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what trade deals his Department is (a) negotiating and (b) not currently negotiating.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

We are resuming delivery of the UK's programme negotiating new and updated FTAs, starting with the Gulf Co-operation Council, India, Israel, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, and Turkey. This is the extent of the current bilateral FTA programme.



The Secretary of State has written to these international partners, and we expect the first discussions in the resumed programme to start this Autumn. We are also committed to ensuring UK businesses can take full advantage of CPTPP when it enters into force in December.

#### ■ UK Trade with EU: West Yorkshire

**Paul Davies:**

[\[4144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help increase exports to European countries from (a) Colne Valley constituency and (b) West Yorkshire.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Department for Business and Trade is committed to boosting UK exports to the EU. UK businesses, including those in Colne Valley & West Yorkshire, can access our export support via Great.gov.uk. This comprises a digital self-serve offer and our wider network of support, including Export Champions, the Export Academy, our International Markets network, and UK Export Finance. Alongside this, our international trade advisers provide one-to-one tailored support to businesses across the UK.

We will also continue work with the EU to improve the UK's trade and investment relationship and reduce unnecessary barriers to trade, in order to help British and EU businesses thrive.

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ 10 Downing Street: Digital Technology

**Alex Burghart:**

[\[4407\]](#)

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

**Georgia Gould:**

The purpose of 10 Downing Street Data Science Team is to ensure that the best available data and evidence is available for use in government decision making, in particular to advise the Prime Minister, other senior ministers and senior civil servants.

The function of the team is to build predictive models, to assess metrics and to provide advice on the evidence base for policy making; and to track and monitor delivery of government priorities. We use data from government departments, other public sector bodies and open source data.

**■ Admiralty House****Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[2633\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the three Ministerial flats in Admiralty House are unoccupied.

**Georgia Gould:**

As of 11 September, all residential flats at Admiralty House are currently unoccupied.

**■ Blood: Contamination****Jim Shannon:** [\[3968\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has data on the number of people awaiting infected blood compensation in Northern Ireland; and if he will take steps to ensure that compensation is received as a matter of urgency.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

The Government is committed to working with Devolved Administrations and delivering compensation to people who are infected and affected as soon as possible.

As of 30 June 2024, 109 individuals in Northern Ireland have received interim compensation payments. This comprises 85 individuals infected with contaminated blood or blood products, and 24 bereaved partners of infected individuals who have sadly passed away. While the Statistical Expert Group, established by the Infected Blood Inquiry, has provided valuable insight into the numbers of infections from blood and blood products in the UK between 1970 and 1991. Due to the nature of the Infected Blood scandal there is uncertainty over the number of people, especially those affected, who might be eligible for compensation. The final number of eligible people will ultimately depend on the number of victims who come forward. The Government will compensate people who have been infected and affected by the infected blood scandal, and we expect the Infected Blood Compensation Authority to begin making payments by the end of the year.

**■ Cabinet Manual****John Glen:** [\[2062\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government plans to issue a revised Cabinet Manual in 2024.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

The Government is aware of the function of the Cabinet Manual and we will keep this under review.

**■ Cabinet Office: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change****Sir John Hayes:** [\[3946\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Ministers in his Department have met the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change since 5 July 2024.

**Georgia Gould:**

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

**■ Civil Servants: Pay****Ayoub Khan:**[\[4161\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to consolidate the number of national pay bargaining units in the civil service.

**Georgia Gould:**

Pay arrangements for civil servants below the Senior Civil Service are delegated to departments. Under the framework of delegation, each department and agency has the power to determine its own terms and conditions of employment and is therefore a separate bargaining unit. Each department and agency is therefore responsible for consultation (or for certain matters, negotiation) with trade unions subject to the annual Civil Service Pay Remit Guidance. This has been the case since 1996. Departments each have their own local pay bargaining units to engage with trade unions.

**■ Civil Service: Trade Unions****Sir John Hayes:**[\[4340\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his oral contribution of 25 July 2024 in response to the question from the hon. Member for Islington North, if he will publish a summary of his meeting with civil service unions.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

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

**■ Departmental Boards: Members and Peers****John Glen:**[\[3670\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on appointing (a) sitting hon. Members and (b) Peers as non-executive board members of Departments.

**Georgia Gould:**

Appointments of non-executive directors to departmental boards are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and are made in compliance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. Board members are also bound by the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies.

There is no automatic bar in the Governance Code or Code of Conduct to a Member or Peer taking up a public appointment, though I note that the Modernisation Committee will be looking at the issue of MPs and second jobs.

However, as with all appointments, full consideration would need to be given to any potential conflicts of interest and whether they call into question the individual's ability to perform the role.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Conditions of Employment**

**John McDonnell:** [\[4166\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to align (a) pay, (b) terms and (c) conditions of facilities management employees contracted to his Department by OCS with those of comparable directly-employed staff.

**Georgia Gould:**

Pay, T&C of OCS employees is managed by OCS. On all GPA Facilities Management contracts, we have a requirement for the payment of the Real Living Wage and London Living Wage.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Industrial Disputes**

**Joani Reid:** [\[4087\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he plans to take to help resolve the industrial dispute with OCS at his Department's East Kilbride office.

**Georgia Gould:**

Abercrombie House is a Government Property Agency (GPA) run building occupied by the FCDO. The GPA provides all facilities management services through several contracts including the contract with OCS. No individuals taking strike action are directly employed by the government.

The GPA is actively encouraging OCS and the PCS trade union to cooperate to resolve the dispute, including facilitating constructive dialogue between them.

■ **Pensioners**

**Mel Stride:** [\[3966\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) people are and (b) households include someone above State Pension age in each parliamentary constituency.

**Georgia Gould:**

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

A response to the Hon gentleman Parliamentary Question of (03/09) is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. [Letter from the National Statistician](#) [PQ3966 (1).pdf]
2. [PQ 3966 Data set 1](#) [PQ3966 dataset, CT21\_0336\_Census 2021 (1).xlsx]
3. [PQ 3966 Data set 2](#) [PQ3966 dataset, Mid 2022 PCON 2025 (1).xlsx]

## ■ Treasury: Security

**Laura Trott:**

[\[4025\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many passes for HM Treasury have been issued to (a) civil servants and (b) special advisers since 4 July 2024.

**Georgia Gould:**

Following the practice followed by past administrations, the government does not comment on security matters.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Culture: Education

**Josh Newbury:**

[\[4066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans her Department has to promote cultural education in Cannock Chase constituency.

**Chris Bryant:**

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is supporting this Government's mission to extend opportunities for children and young people.

As part of this, DCMS will support the Department for Education led Curriculum and Assessment Review to develop a broader curriculum so that children and young people have access to creative education such as music, the arts and drama and the enormous range of benefits they bring to a child's development from improved language development to confidence building.

Arts Council England has supported the development of cultural partnerships in Cannock Chase to help grow audiences, opportunities and cultural infrastructure. This has included funding of £10,000 to launch a cultural compact in the borough, led by the local Cultural Education Partnership.

### ■ Martial Arts

**Josh Newbury:**

[\[4068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a single national martial arts training centre for elite athletes.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

We are fully committed to enabling our athletes to excel on the world stage. Decisions relating to training centres for elite athletes are a matter for the relevant martial arts governing bodies. We welcome sports working together to share expertise and resources where they feel there is mutual benefit for their sports and athletes.

**■ Sports: Colne Valley****Paul Davies:**[\[4146\]](#)

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

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Sport is a huge part of our national story. Team GB has won a gold medal at every Summer Olympics since 1896 and the 14 gold medals at the Paris 2024 Games continues this record. Not only is success on the world stage a huge source of national pride, but it also inspires people of all ages to get involved in sport and physical activity.

The Government is committed to a legacy of the Paris Games that is measured not just in medals, but also in ensuring that everyone, everywhere, has access to and benefits from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

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

Funding from the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme continues to be invested in England through Sport England and our delivery partner, the Football Foundation. As it has to date, this will continue to deliver high-quality, inclusive grassroots facilities that help more people access sport in Colne Valley.

**■ Sports: Women****Tom Hayes:**[\[4299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to encourage more women and girls to participate in non-professional sport in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council area.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

We are dedicated to supporting every aspect of women's sport and ensuring all women and girls, no matter their background, have access to high quality sport.

Sport England, our Arm's Length Body, directly supports Active Dorset to help get people active in the area. To date, activities have reached over 1500 participants, 58% of whom are girls.

There are also some fantastic initiatives that exist to encourage women to take up sport and physical activity, for example Sport England's This Girl Can campaign, which has already inspired millions of women and girls to get active.

We, as Government, are committed to supporting girls and boys across the country to get more access to sport and physical activity, this includes a review of the curriculum to protect time for PE. Sport England has also developed the Studio You PE teaching resource which aims to get young girls engaged in PE lessons by offering a range of non-traditional activities, like boxing, dance, pilates and yoga.

## ■ Voluntary Work: Young People

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[3940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what the (a) value of grants made and (b) number of recipients of funding from the National Citizen Service was in (i) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (ii) Lincolnshire since 2010.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Following Covid-19 and a strategic review, in 2023 the NCS Trust launched a new delivery model for the NCS programme. The new programme consists of residential, community and digital experiences. NCS Trust provides grant-funding to local organisations across England to deliver these community experiences. The figures provided here include all funding and young people in their respective areas, including that provided prior to the new grant-funding model.

In South Holland and the Deepings, since 2010, at least 1340 young people have taken part in an NCS experience and approximately £313,000 has been distributed to provide the experiences to these young people. This funding was delivered to at least 6 organisations.

In Lincolnshire county, since 2010 at least 8850 young people have taken part in an NCS experience and £2.7m of funding has been distributed across 12 organisations. Since 2023, 723 young person experiences have taken place directly funded by grants and NCS has provided over £230k grant-funding to organisations that deliver community experiences to young people in Lincolnshire. This grant funding was delivered to two local organisations.

## ■ Youth Services

**Abtisam Mohamed:**

[\[4096\]](#)

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

**Stephanie Peacock:**

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

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

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

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

## DEFENCE

### ■ Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner: Resignations

**Robin Swann:** [\[4577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date he became aware of resignation of the Northern Ireland Veterans' Commissioner; and whether he had discussions with the Commissioner prior to his resignation.

**Robin Swann:** [\[4578\]](#)

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

**AI Carns:**

I became aware on 5 September that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had accepted the resignation of the Commissioner. We are committed to continuing to support veterans in Northern Ireland through the Veterans Welfare Service NI and the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

### ■ Veterans: Identity Cards

**Tom Hayes:** [\[4129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veteran ID cards have been distributed in each local authority area.

**AI Carns:**

The Armed Forces Veteran Card Scheme was launched in two phases. Phase one is complete, with all service leavers since December 2018 being automatically issued with a card as part of their discharge process. Phase two extended access to veterans who left service before December 2018. The new digital application and verification service launched at 00:01 on 28 January 2024 allowing pre-2018 veterans to apply for the card.



As of 3 September 2024, 134,830 cards had been dispatched to pre 2018 veterans who had applied. The attached table shows the total number of Phase two cards distributed by postal county.

**Attachments:**

1. [Veteran ID cards distribution](#) [4129 - HAYES-Excel Table-Phase 2 Data-Totals-O1.xlsx]

**Tom Hayes:** **[4298]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has to make the veterans ID card more widely accepted.

**Al Carns:**

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

Currently, some of the uses for the card can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/using-a-veteran-card-as-a-service-leaver>

## EDUCATION

### ■ **Childcare: Recruitment**

**Clive Lewis:** **[4008]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of low pay on early years childcare sector recruitment.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The department recognises the concerns the sector has about workforce recruitment and retention challenges. The department continues to work closely with the sector to understand these challenges. Early education and childcare is delivered by a mixed market of private, voluntary and independent provision who set their own rates of pay.

The department is uplifting funding rates to support providers in dealing with the costs they face, including staffing costs. Current national average funding rates are broadly in line with, or higher than, nursery fees paid by parents last year. For 2024/25, this includes an investment of £67 million to reflect the increase in the National Living Wage from April 2024. Local authorities are required to pass through a minimum of 95% of the funding to early years providers.

### ■ **Children: Swimming**

**Tom Hayes:** **[4300]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support more children to learn to swim.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Swimming and water safety is a vital life skill. This is why swimming and water safety are compulsory elements of the PE National Curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2, including teaching on how to perform safe self rescue in different water-based situations.

The government recently launched a Curriculum and Assessment Review to drive high and rising standards for all pupils. This will seek to deliver a broader curriculum, so that children and young people do not miss out on subjects such as PE and sport.

Primary schools can use the PE and sport premium to support swimming and water safety lessons, including funding teacher training and additional swimming lessons for children not able to meet National Curriculum expectations after their PE lessons.

The department is working across government to deliver its Opportunity Missions which includes ensuring that children and young people have equal opportunities to participate in high-quality PE, sports and physical activities, including swimming.

The department is also providing up to £300,000 a year to fund Inclusion 2024 to improve opportunities for children with special educational needs and disabilities to take part in PE and sport, including a focus on swimming and water safety. As part of the programme a new Inclusive Education Hub on the Swim England website has been created that provides resources for schools and swimming teachers. This can be accessed here: <https://education.activityalliance.org.uk/>.

**■ Private Education: Fees and Charges****Helen Morgan:****[R] [4059]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of applying VAT to private school fees on state-funded special educational needs provision.

**Stephen Morgan:**

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister has been clear that if a child has an education, health and care plan that requires them to attend a private school because their needs cannot be met in the state sector, they will not feel an impact from this policy.

The department will continue to work with local authorities to ensure that every local area has sufficient places for children that need them, and that appropriate support is provided where pupils with special educational needs require a place at a state-funded school.

**Susan Murray:****[4100]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will hold discussions with (a) business and (b) professional representatives on the potential impact of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees on the number of independent school leavers who seek to enter (i) managerial and (ii) professional employment after they leave education.

**Stephen Morgan:**

This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy. HM Treasury will deliver the tax changes and is engaging with a range of stakeholders as it carefully considers the impact of this policy.

**Schools: Curriculum****Paul Davies:**[\[4140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to link the school curriculum with skills needed in the workplace.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

The review will seek to deliver a curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work, and one that builds the knowledge, skills and attributes young people need to seize opportunity and to thrive in the changing workplace. This includes weaving speaking and listening skills, as well as digital and other life skills, into their learning.

The review will be undertaken in close partnership with stakeholders, including employers. A call for evidence will be launched in the coming weeks, which will set out the areas where the review group would particularly welcome input.

**Schools: Transport****Ayoub Khan:**[\[4162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to help ensure that home-to-school transport is provided for all children aged between 16 and 18 with special educational needs and disabilities.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

Local authorities are responsible for transport to education and training for 16-19 year olds. Post-16 transport guidance requires local authorities to make the necessary transport arrangements or provide financial support to ensure young people can participate in education or training. The needs of young people with SEND should be specifically considered and the arrangements put in place for each group must be documented in local authority transport policy statements.

In addition to their statutory responsibilities, many local authorities do offer some form of subsidised transport which, combined with the 16-19 bursary, has been intended to provide financial support to students from low-income households. These decisions

are best made locally, in consideration of local needs, the resources available and other local circumstances.

### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Broxbourne**

**Lewis Cocking:**

[\[4083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help support children with special educational needs in Broxbourne constituency.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

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

The department provides support and accountability to the Hertfordshire local area partnership by monitoring progress against its priority action plan and Improvement Plan, and by providing advice and guidance via a SEND expert advisor. The partnership has also established a SEND Improvement Board, independently chaired by Dame Christine Lenehan to oversee progress and provide appropriate challenge.

### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Staffordshire**

**Josh Newbury:**

[\[4065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support (a) children with SEND and (b) their parents in (i) Cannock Chase constituency and (ii) Staffordshire.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

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

## ■ Speech and Language Therapy

**Charlotte Nichols:**

**[4029]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that speech, language and communication (a) needs and (b) development are supported as early as possible including for children whose needs are identified pre-school age.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Early language skills are vital in enabling children to thrive in the early years and later life, as well as for all aspects of later attainment in school.

The early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets the standards and requirements that all early years providers must follow to ensure every child has the best start in life and is prepared for school. The three prime areas of learning and development within the EYFS are particularly important for building a strong foundation, with communication and language being one of the prime areas.

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs and to plan activities and support. The assessment requirements in the EYFS include a progress check at age two and the EYFS Profile, both of which involve reviewing a child's development in communication and language.

However, the department knows that when it comes to referrals for additional support, too many children are waiting too long for speech and language therapy. NHS planning guidance asks local systems to reduce overall waiting times for community services, with a particular focus on reducing the longest waits. Community health services, including speech and language therapy, will be key in delivering this government's commitment to shift to a neighbourhood health service and provide more care in the community. Full details of the NHS operational planning and contracting guidance can be found on this website:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/operational-planning-and-contracting/>.

To further support early language skills, the department is also:

- Extending the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme (NELI) for the 2024/25 academic year to support reception-aged children needing extra support with their speech and language development. NELI is proven to help children make four months of additional progress, and seven months for those eligible for free school meals.
- Delivering the early years education recovery programme, including:

Providing funding for settings to undertake evidence-based continuous professional development programmes, including those focussed on speech, language and communication, via a national network of early years stronger practice hubs.

Training through the 'professional development programme' and the online early years child development training, both of which include a specific module focused on early language.

Training for up to 7,000 special educational needs co-ordinators to help children with speech, language and communication needs and support earlier identification of needs.

- Enabling Family Hubs to train practitioners to support families with the home learning environment. Practitioners are being trained to help parents learn new skills, including providing effective support for children's speech and communication.
- Working in partnership with NHS England to deliver the 'Early Language Support for Every Child' pathfinders.
- Working with partners to deliver an 'Early Language Local Innovation and Excellence' programme which includes implementation of published speech and language communication pathway guidance and an early language identification measure.
- Publishing early years special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) assessment guidance and resources including practical advice, tools and downloadable resources. These will help educators assess children with SEND, capture their voice, and set learning targets featuring a dedicated tool for communication and interaction.

**Charlotte Nichols:**

**[4030]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help ensure the specialist workforce needed for (a) babies, (b) children and (c) young people with speech, language and communication needs.

**Charlotte Nichols:**

**[4031]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of the specialist workforce needed for (a) babies, (b) children and (c) young people with speech, language, and communication needs.

**Charlotte Nichols:**

**[4032]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential (a) return on investment, (b) improved outcomes and (c) opportunities from tackling the speech, language and communication needs of (i) babies, (ii) children and (iii) young people.

**Stephen Morgan:**

This government's vision for children and young people with special educational needs, including those with speech, language and communication needs, is the same as it is for all children and young people. We want them to achieve well in their early years, at school and in further education; to find employment; to lead happy and fulfilled lives; and to experience choice and control.

In July, the department announced that funded support would continue in the 2024/25 academic year for 11,100 schools registered to the Nuffield early language intervention programme. This will help pupils who need extra support with speech

and language development to find their voice. The department is also funding the Early Language and Support For Every Child pathfinders, in partnership with NHS England. This will fund nine Integrated Care Boards and will fund one of the local areas within each of the nine Regional Expert Partnerships to trial new ways of working to better identify and support children with speech, language and communication needs in early years and primary schools. Alongside this, we know that continuing to build the pipeline of speech and language therapists is essential. That is why the department introduced the speech and language degree apprenticeship, which is now in its third year of delivery and offers an alternative pathway into a successful career as a speech and language therapist.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Energy: Prices

**Alex Sobel:**

[4776]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the energy price cap for winter 2024-25.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The energy price cap is set by Ofgem and not the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. More information on how Ofgem calculate the price cap can be found on its website - <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-price-cap>.

### ■ Heating: Housing

**Jim Shannon:**

[3972]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support households switch to low carbon heating where heat pump installation is not (a) economically or (b) practically possible.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The Government is taking a range of steps to make heat pumps more affordable and remove barriers to their installation. This includes providing grants of £7,500 under the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS), supporting innovation and reviewing permitted development rights.

For the small number of homes where a heat pump is not suitable, we expect other technologies to play a role in the transition to clean heat. We continue to build the evidence base on alternative technologies and this research will inform future policy development.

**■ Solar Power: Land Use****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[4474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much and what proportion of the land to be used for the proposed East Park Energy Solar Farm is designated as agricultural grade (a) 1, (b) 2 and (c) 3a farmland.

**Michael Shanks:**

This is a proposed Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and is currently at the pre-application stage of the Planning Act 2008 consent process. This is when the applicant starts to create their application and is required to consult with people and organisations in the area. We understand that the developer intends to hold four public consultation events, starting in early October 2024.

The application is expected to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate between January and March 2025.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Badgers: Disease Control****Steve Darling:**[\[3858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the cost is of culling badgers in Devon since the beginning of the cull.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Badger culls are industry led and the cost of delivering them has been met by participants. The additional costs to Defra have related to licensing, monitoring and policing for public safety.

Badger control costs are published annually on GOV.UK and are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-government-badger-control-costs>.

Badger control costs for 2023 will be published in due course.

Whilst a breakdown of costs by individual county is not available, police costs are available on individual force websites. Costs for Devon and Cornwall Police can be found at: <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/police-forces/devon-cornwall-police/areas/about-us/about-us/transparency-and-financial-information/badger-cull-costs/>.

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.



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>.

## ■ **Beavers: Conservation**

**Sarah Green:**

[4273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of widening the reintroduction of beavers to the wild in England.

**Mary Creagh:**

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

## ■ **Dogs: Smuggling**

**Lisa Smart:**

[3356]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent the illegal smuggling of dogs into the UK.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

As outlined in our manifesto, the Government is committed to ending puppy smuggling. We will clamp down on unscrupulous traders who prioritise profit over welfare. We are considering the most effective ways to deliver this and will be setting out next steps in due course

## ■ **Fisheries**

**Steve Darling:**

[3330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to develop a national fishing strategy.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

I have recently heard the representations of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and others on the benefits of a national fishing strategy. This is something to discuss further with the industry and with colleagues in the Devolved Administrations given fisheries issues are largely devolved.

## ■ **Hunting**

**James MacCleary:**

[3586]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to ban the practice of fox trail hunting.

**Mary Creagh:**

This is a devolved matter with regard to Scotland and NI; hunting with dogs is a reserved matter with respect to Wales and therefore, the information provided relates to England and Wales.

The Government is committed to enacting a ban on Trail Hunting, and work to determine the best approach for doing so is ongoing. Further announcements will be made in due course.

**■ Nature Conservation: National Parks**

**Ayoub Khan:** [\[4329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the state of nature in national parks.

**Mary Creagh:**

The new Government is committed to making Protected Landscapes greener, wilder and more accessible. We are currently considering the best way to do this.

To support this, Defra is working with the National Parks and National Landscapes to improve data on the state of nature in Protected Landscapes.

**■ Nature Conservation: Standards**

**Ayoub Khan:** [\[4323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps Government is taking to meet its 2030 nature recovery targets.

**Mary Creagh:**

In England, we have committed to halting the decline in species abundance by 2030. The UK Government is also committed to protecting 30% of the UK's land and sea by 2030, and to playing our part in achieving the global 30by30 target adopted at the UN Biodiversity Summit COP15 in December 2022.

Delivering these targets sits at the heart of our mission to ensure nature's recovery. To meet our species abundance target we will create, restore and connect wildlife-rich habitat, reduce pressures on species including from pollution and climate change and take targeted action to recover specific species, working in partnership with civil society, communities and business. Delivering 30by30 on land in England means ensuring that our most important and wildlife-rich habitats are benefiting from effective, long-term conservation and management. This will require a collaborative approach, and all sectors have a role to play.

We have launched a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan to complete before the end of the year to make sure it is fit for purpose to deliver our ambitious targets. This review is an important step in turning the page on nature recovery and will provide the foundations for delivering these targets. This includes the Government's manifesto promise to expand nature-rich habitats such as

wetlands, peat bogs and forests so people can enjoy and wildlife can thrive, including on public land.

We have also commissioned an overarching evaluation framework for our 2030 species target and wider biodiversity targets programme. This will strengthen our understanding of our progress towards meeting our biodiversity targets and will follow [Magenta Book guidance](#).

## ■ Rural Payments Agency

**Adam Jogee:**

[\[3476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he last met the leadership of the Rural Payments Agency.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

As the Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs with responsibility for the Rural Payments Agency, I met the Chief Executive Officer on 23 July 2024. The Secretary of State also met the Chief Executive Officer on 28 August 2024.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Sudan: Crimes against Humanity

**Stephen Gethins:**

[\[3987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help gather evidence of potential crimes against humanity in Sudan.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK has highlighted and condemned human rights abuses at the UN Human Rights Council and Security Council, and directly with the warring parties. We continue to call for an end to the violence, and for those responsible for human rights abuses to be held to account. We are funding the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR), a research body which is gathering open-source evidence about abuses in Sudan, to amplify the voices of those being targeted and to inform future accountability processes. The UK strongly supports the ICC Prosecutor's continuing investigation into the allegations of atrocity crimes committed in Darfur since 1 July 2002, and which encompasses the current conflict, where there are credible reports of further atrocities being committed. We are seeking the renewal at the October session of the UN Human Rights Council of the mandate of the Fact Finding Mission into alleged abuses in Sudan.

### ■ Uganda: Politics and Government

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[4247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the safety of the opposition leaders in Uganda.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The British High Commission in Uganda regularly advocates for the protection of democratic freedoms and respect for human rights enshrined in Uganda's constitution and has raised the issue of opposition parties being able to campaign safely with the Government of Uganda. Allowing political parties to operate freely is vital to a healthy democracy.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ **Blood: Screening**

**Jim Shannon:** [4204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report by NHS England entitled Improving the blood culture pathway, published on 29 June 2022, what recent discussions NHS England has had with (a) regional, (b) integrated care system and (c) NHS trust managers on implementing the recommendations of that report.

**Jim Shannon:** [4205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report by NHS England entitled Improving the blood culture pathway, published on 29 June 2022, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the implementation of the recommendations of that report in NHS hospitals.

**Jim Shannon:** [4206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report by NHS England entitled Improving the blood culture pathway, published on 29 June 2022, what recent progress his Department has made on implementing the framework set out in that report.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Improving the blood culture pathway report was published in June 2022, and updated in March 2023. NHS England has been engaging with partner organisations, including integrated care boards, National Health Service regions, patients, industry, academia, regulators, and charities, to drive blood culture improvement and deliver the ambitions within the report, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/B0686-improving-the-blood-culture-pathway-executive-summary-v1-1.pdf.pdf>

A national audit has been instigated to assess current practice against guidelines for best practice. An analysis of data from the audit is underway, and will inform an assessment of the implementation of the recommendations in the report. The Department will continue to work with NHS England to review what further action needs to be taken.

## ■ Brain: Injuries

**Mark Pritchard:**

[\[2788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help (a) raise awareness of the symptoms of brain aneurysms and (b) improve training for GPs to recognise those symptoms.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Through neurosurgery networks, NHS England will engage with referring clinicians to ensure that patients receive appropriate assessments, diagnostics, and referral pathways to a neuroscience centre when required.

Moreover, the standard of medical training is the responsibility of the General Medical Council (GMC), which is an independent statutory body. The GMC has the general function of promoting high standards of education and co-ordinating all stages of education to ensure that medical students and newly qualified doctors are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for professional practice.

The training curricula for speciality trainees is set by the relevant Royal College, and has to meet the standards set by the GMC and be formally approved by them. The training curriculum for general practitioner speciality training is set by the Royal College of General Practitioners. Whilst curricula do not necessarily highlight specific conditions for doctors to be aware of, they instead emphasise the skills and approaches that a doctor must develop in order to ensure accurate and timely diagnoses and treatment plans for their patients.

General practitioners are responsible for ensuring their own clinical knowledge remains up-to-date and for identifying learning needs as part of their continuing professional development. This activity should include taking account of new research and developments in guidance, such as that produced by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, to ensure that they can continue to provide high quality care to all patients.

## ■ Brain: Tumours

**Alistair Strathern:**

[\[4454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to improve access to clinical trials for those affected by brain tumours.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

*[Holding answer 10 September 2024]:* The Department is committed to implementing the recommendations of Lord O'Shaughnessy's review into commercial clinical trials, making sure that the United Kingdom leads the world in clinical trials, and ensuring that innovative, lifesaving treatments are accessible to National Health Service patients, including those with brain tumours.

The Department funded National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) funds research and research infrastructure, which supports patients and the public to participate in high-quality research.

In addition, the NIHR provides an online service called Be Part of Research, which promotes participation in health and social care research by allowing users to search for relevant studies and register their interest. This makes it easier for people to find and take part in health and care research that is relevant to them.

When designing research studies, researchers consider inclusion and exclusion criteria carefully to ensure they are not unnecessarily excluding specific groups who would benefit from the outcome of their study. The Health Research Authority is developing guidance to improve practices in this area.

## ■ Cancer: Medical Treatments

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[3788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he (a) has had and (b) plans to have discussions with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence on (i) its use of the new severity modifier and (ii) how it (A) measures and (B) reports the impact of the modifier on approval of treatments for (1) cancers, (2) relapsing and remitting conditions and (3) conditions that are more prevalent in older people.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[3789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of the removal of the end-of-life modifier on cancer technology appraisals.

**Karin Smyth:**

We have received briefings on the use of the severity modifier by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), in the development of its guidance for the National Health Service, on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS.

The severity modifier was introduced by the NICE in 2022 to replace the end-of-life modifier following extensive public and stakeholder engagement, as part of a number of changes that are designed to make the NICE's methods and processes fairer, faster, and more consistent. The severity modifier reflects evidence of societal preferences and has already enabled the NICE to recommend innovative treatments for cystic fibrosis and hepatitis D that would not have been eligible for an end of life weighting.

Most cancers would be classed as severe and so would still have the additional weight applied. 79% of the NICE's cancer appraisals carried out under the NICE's updated methods have been positive, which compares with 78% under the NICE's previous methods. The NICE continues to monitor the impact of the severity modifier on its evaluations.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[3790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many myeloma patients are receiving a fourth line treatment; and what proportion of those patients are being treated with isatuximab in combination with pomalidomide and dexamethasone.

**Karin Smyth:**

Information on the number of myeloma patients receiving a fourth line treatment is not held centrally. However, the following table shows the number of patients notified to receive isatuximab, in combination with pomalidomide and dexamethasone, in 2021, 2022, 2023 and from January to July of 2024:

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Patients notified to receive isatuximab, pomalidomide, and dexamethasone	508	522	464	278

Source: NHS England. Note: not all patients will necessarily go on to receive the treatment itself.

**Jim Shannon:**[\[3979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the availability of minimally invasive cancer therapies; and whether his Department plans to provide funding for Integrated care systems to help ensure the availability of such treatments.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has not made a formal assessment. The adoption of new treatments, including increasing the number and availability of minimally invasive cancer treatments, into the National Health Service in England is generally the result of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance and commissioner decisions. Both NHS England and the integrated care boards (ICBs) are required to put in place access for any treatment that carries a positive recommendation from the Technology Appraisal programme, operated by the NICE.

Where treatments are approved by the NICE through the Technology Appraisals programme, the NHS is required to fund and make them available within agreed timescales, which vary by technology. Implementation of any NICE approvals will be supported by the service readiness assessment and the development of additional capacity where necessary.

During 2024/25, NHS England will continue to support all ICBs in integrating the planning and commissioning of suitable specialised services with their wider population-level commissioning responsibilities, in line with their individual timeline for delegation.

## ■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Long Covid: Research

**Caroline Voaden:**

[4301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support biomedical research into (a) long covid and (b) myalgic encephalomyelitis.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department funds research on health and social care through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including long COVID and myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). The NIHR and the Medical Research Council (MRC) are committed to funding high-quality research to understand the causes, consequences, and treatment of long COVID and ME/CFS, and are actively exploring next steps for research in these areas.

Over the last five years, the Government, through the NIHR and the MRC, has invested over £50 million into long COVID research through two specific research calls. The projects funded aim to improve our understanding of the diagnosis and underlying mechanisms of the disease, and the effectiveness of both pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies and interventions, as well as to evaluate clinical care.

The MRC has provided £4.15 million of ME/CFS research funding since 2013, including £3.19 million jointly awarded with the NIHR for the DecodeME project, which aims to find genetic risk factors of ME/CFS to better understand the disease and ultimately to find treatments. The NIHR has committed approximately £3.9 million of programme funding over the same period.

As findings emerge from current research, we encourage researchers to apply for funding to build on and develop the newly established infrastructure, partnerships, and research capabilities. Government research funders remain available to support long COVID and ME/CFS researchers in their applications for funding.

## ■ Clinical Waste: East of England

**Ben Obese-Jecty:**

[4475]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department issues on the incineration of medical waste in the East of England.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 10 September 2024]:* The Department does not currently hold this information. However, the national guidance for the National Health Service's clinical waste strategy is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/nhs-clinical-waste-strategy/>

Organisations across integrated care systems, such as NHS trusts, would have their own policies on how to enact this guidance.



## ■ Dental Services: Shipley

**Anna Dixon:**

[\[4308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry in Shipley constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The Government's ambition is to make sure that everyone who needs dental treatment can access a dentist, including in the Shipley constituency. We will tackle the immediate dentistry crisis 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 National Health Service dentists.

Integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning primary care services, including NHS dentistry, to meet the needs of the local populations, and for determining the priorities for investment in their area.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Communications

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[3075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department spent on communications in the last year for which data is available.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department of Health and Social Care Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 is the latest version laid before Parliament. For spend on communications we have interpreted this to be publicity and advertising, which includes health promotion campaigns, for instance Better Health, childhood immunisations, and winter vaccinations. The costs in this year for the Department were £27,473,336.

## ■ Diabetes: Aldershot

**Alex Baker:**

[\[4113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of people who were diagnosed with diabetes in Aldershot constituency in each of the last five years.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The following table shows the number of people that were newly diagnosed with diabetes in the Aldershot constituency, in each of the calendar years from 2018 to 2022, broken down by diabetes type:

YEAR OF DIAGNOSIS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE NEWLY DIAGNOSED WITH DIABETES		
	TYPE 1	TYPE 2 AND OTHER	ALL DIABETES TYPES
2018	15	540	555
2019	15	590	605

YEAR OF DIAGNOSIS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE NEWLY DIAGNOSED WITH DIABETES		
	TYPE 1	TYPE 2 AND OTHER	ALL DIABETES TYPES
2020	10	405	415
2021	15	450	465
2022	5	505	510

### ■ Endometriosis: Diagnosis

**Markus Campbell-Savours:** [\[4093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to reduce diagnosis times for people with endometriosis.

**Karin Smyth:**

Endometriosis is a common gynaecological condition, estimated to affect one in 10 women of reproductive age. Endometriosis can significantly impact women and girls' physical and mental health, and anyone with symptoms of endometriosis should contact their general practice.

Cutting waiting lists is a key priority for the Government, and we are committed to prioritising women's health as we build a National Health Service fit for the future. We will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments per week, as a first step in our commitment to ensuring that patients can expect to be treated within 18 weeks.

**Markus Campbell-Savours:** [\[4094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the average length of time between patients first presenting to a GP with relevant symptoms and receiving a diagnosis of endometriosis in each of the last 15 years.

**Karin Smyth:**

The data requested is not held centrally.

### ■ Gender Dysphoria: Children

**James MacCleary:** [\[3582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the proposed restrictions on puberty blockers will apply to those already using these medications.

**Karin Smyth:**

In May 2024, a three-month emergency order restricting the sale and supply of Gonadotrophin-Releasing Hormone Analogues (puberty blockers) was introduced in Great Britain and was due to expire on 2 September 2024.

On 22 August 2024, the Government laid a further Order to renew the restrictions in Great Britain. As the Northern Ireland First Minister and Deputy First Minister provided their agreement for the Minister of Health to co-sign the order, the restrictions also extend to Northern Ireland for the first time.

Ensuring that care is safe, evidence-based and appropriate was the driving force behind the decision by my rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. The Cass Review was categorically clear that there is not enough evidence on the long-term impact of using puberty blockers to treat gender incongruence to know whether they are safe or if children benefit from them.

The Order prohibits the sale and supply of puberty blockers for any purposes to those under 18 against prescriptions from prescribers registered in the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland. For private prescriptions issued from registered prescribers in the United Kingdom, the Order prohibits the sale or supply of puberty blockers for gender incongruence or dysphoria to children under 18 years old not already on a course of treatment with them. Patients receiving these medicines for other uses, for example precocious puberty, can continue to access them.

If a young person has already been prescribed these medicines, for gender dysphoria or incongruence in the six months prior to 3 June 2024 in Great Britain or 27 August 2024 in Northern Ireland, they can continue to do so, providing their prescription is now issued by a UK registered prescriber. They are strongly advised to meet with their prescribing clinician to fully understand the safety risks. For those patients accessing prescriptions from an EEA registered prescriber, they can seek help from a UK private provider or see their general practitioner.

#### ■ **General Practitioners: Infrastructure**

**Lewis Cocking:**

**[4078]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve infrastructure for general practices.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government is committed to delivering a National Health Service that is fit for the future, and this means better utilising and expanding primary care infrastructure across the NHS estate. That is why we have set out our intention to fix the front door to the NHS and bring healthcare closer to home, and the local community.

At a local level, the relevant integrated care board is responsible for deciding how the NHS budget for its area is spent, and funding is allocated according to local priorities, such as new general practice surgeries, integrated care centres, or neighbourhood hubs. Any further support for NHS organisations delivering local and national priorities will be considered as part of the forthcoming Spending Review.

## ■ Genomics: Research

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[4017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of (a) Genomics England Limited and (b) the NHS Genomic Medicine Service in (i) stimulating and (ii) facilitating research activity.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The NHS Genomic Medicine Service (NHS GMS), in partnership with Genomics England (GEL), delivers a national whole genome sequencing service, as part of routine care for rare disease and cancer patients. GEL delivers the National Genomic Research Library (NGRL) to store consented genomic and clinical data, enabling approved researchers to access the data securely and responsibly for health research. The NGRL currently comprises of approximately 170,000 whole genomes. Over 1,500 academic and industry researchers have access, working across 1,000 research projects since 2018. GEL and the NHS GMS also facilitate research programmes, including the Generation Study, Diverse Data, and Cancer 2.0. In addition, eight NHS Genomic Networks of Excellence have been established to generate evidence and models of adoption for new genomic technologies, and the NHS Genomics Research and Innovation Collaborative ensures coordination between the National Health Service, GEL, and the National Institute for Health and Care Research.

## ■ Health Professions: Qualifications

**Julia Buckley:**

[\[4102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Health and Care Professions Council in accrediting people with international qualifications.

**Julia Buckley:**

[\[4103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce the time taken by the Health and Care Professions Council to process accreditations for people with international qualifications.

**Karin Smyth:**

No assessment has been made by the Government. The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) oversees the work of the statutory bodies that regulate health professionals in the United Kingdom, including the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

On 30 August 2024, the PSA published its 2023/24 performance review of the HCPC. The HCPC met 16 out of 18 of the PSA's Standards of Good Regulation. The HCPC met all four of the PSA's standards on registration including Standard 11, that the regulator's process for registration, including appeals, operates proportionately, fairly, and efficiently, with decisions clearly explained.

## ■ Health: Mould

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[4369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of cold and damp housing conditions on health outcomes.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

*[Holding answer 10 September 2024]:* Living in a home that is cold or damp can directly impact occupants' physical and mental health, creating or exacerbating health issues across the life course. The Government is committed to a preventative approach to the public's health. Improving housing standards and addressing hazards such as cold and damp is a key part of this.

The UK Health Security Agency publishes the Adverse Weather and Health Plan for England, which sets out a framework for action to protect the population from harm to their health from adverse weather, including excess cold, and outlines the health risks of cold homes.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[4371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure a cross-departmental approach to preventing ill health due to damp and cold homes.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

*[Holding answer 10 September 2024]:* The Government is committed to a preventative approach to the public's health, taking a cross-departmental approach to improve poor housing conditions, such as damp and cold. We have set out a commitment to tackle the social determinants of health.

The Government will introduce Awaab's Law to the social rented sector, setting new time limits for social landlords to fix dangerous hazards, including excess cold, damp, and mould.

## ■ Health: Older People

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[4372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies on preventing ill health in later life of the Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2023, Health in an Ageing Society, published on 10 November 2023.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

*[Holding answer 10 September 2024]:* One of the Government's five missions is to build a National Health Service fit for the future. At the heart of the mission will be supporting people in staying healthier for longer, shortening the time people spend in ill health, and promoting greater independence. No specific assessment has been made against the Chief Medical Officer's 2023 annual report.

## ■ Hinchingsbrooke Hospital: Repairs and Maintenance

**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[4477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of prioritising the rebuilding of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 10 September 2024]:* We must reset the New Hospital Programme to put it on a sustainable footing, however we are clear that replacing hospitals built wholly or mostly with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, including Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, is the priority.

We are undertaking a full review of the programme to provide a thorough, costed, and realistic timeline for delivery, and to ensure we can replace the crumbling hospital estate in England. The review will be completed this autumn, and once concluded, Parliament will be updated on the next steps for the programme.

## ■ Housing: Health

**Dr Caroline Johnson:** [\[4398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will hold discussions with the Chief Medical Officer on the effect of (a) becoming cold and (b) living in a cold home on the (i) health, (ii) rate of hospitalisation and (iii) death rates of (A) elderly and (B) disabled people.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 10 September 2024]:* My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care meets regularly with the Chief Medical Officer to discuss key issues affecting the public's health, including winter pressures.

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to public health, including support for households living in cold homes. The Government will invest an extra £6.6 billion over this Parliament in clean heat and energy efficiency, upgrading five million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation. This will help keep people warm and well in their homes and help reduce pressures on the National Health Service.

The UK Health Security Agency publishes the Adverse Weather and Health Plan for England, which sets out a framework for action to protect the population, including the elderly and disabled people, from harm to their health from adverse weather, including excess cold.

## ■ Influenza: Fuel Poverty

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[4382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to target people living in fuel poverty for the flu vaccine.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department currently have no such plans. The current eligibility criteria are based on the advice of the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). Adults aged 65 years old and older are eligible for the influenza vaccination. The JCVI does not consider socio-economic factors, but does take into account the clinical risk of severe disease and benefits from vaccination, and assess whether a National Health Service-provided vaccination programme can be considered cost effective. Cost effectiveness takes into account the health benefits of vaccination and the costs to the health service, as well as the savings. It does not take into account the wider societal benefits and costs.

**Joint Replacements: East Midlands****Sir John Hayes:**[\[3942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been waiting more than 12 months for (a) knee and (b) hip replacement surgery in (i) Lincolnshire and (ii) the East Midlands.

**Karin Smyth:**

In the NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board, as of 25 August 2024, there were fewer than five patients waiting more than 12 months for knee replacement surgery, and six patients waiting more than 12 months for hip replacement surgery.

In the East Midlands, as of 25 August 2024, there were 479 patients waiting more than 12 months for knee replacement surgery, and 244 patients waiting more than 12 months for hip replacement surgery. The data captures patients waiting in the NHS Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board, NHS Leicester, the Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care Board, the NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care board, the NHS Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board, and the NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board.

**Long Covid: Health Services****Manuela Perteghella:**[\[4293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to establish (a) dedicated care pathways, (b) specialist clinics and (c) home support for people with long covid.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Since 2020, the National Health Service in England has invested significantly in supporting people with long COVID. This includes setting up specialist post-COVID services nationwide for adults, and children and young people, as well as investing in ensuring general practice (GP) teams are equipped to support people affected by the condition.

As of 1 April 2024, there are over 90 adult post-COVID services across England, along with an additional 10 children and young people's hubs. These services assess people with long COVID and direct them into care pathways which provide

appropriate support and treatment. GPs will assess patients that have COVID-19 symptoms lasting longer than four weeks, and refer them into a long COVID service where appropriate. Referral should be via a single point of access, which is managed by clinician-led triage.

More widely, we are committed to moving to a Neighbourhood Health Service, with more care delivered in local communities, to spot problems earlier. This includes shifting resources to primary care and community services over time.

Having suffered from long COVID myself, improving services and outcomes for patients remains a priority.

### ■ **Maternity Services: Standards**

**Melanie Ward:** [\[3911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS hospitals are required to record the number of occasions on which instrumental delivery of a baby creates lasting health problems for the mother.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department recognises the significant physical and psychological consequences of birth trauma and the devastating impact this has on women. The Government remains fully committed to improving the quality and consistency of care for women throughout pregnancy, birth, and the critical months that follow. National Health Service trusts in England submit data through the Maternity Services Data Set from the booking appointment through to discharge from maternity services, which is usually approximately 10 days after birth. This includes data on instrumental delivery complications including post-partum haemorrhage and severe perineal tears but, due to the time period covered by the data, does not capture lasting health problems arising from birth.

### ■ **Medical Records: Information Sharing**

**Blair McDougall:** [\[3376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the efficiency of the sharing of medical records when a patient requires NHS treatment in different nations of the UK.

**Karin Smyth:**

While the delivery of healthcare is a devolved matter, health services in England and the devolved administrations cooperate to share medical records for patients' treatment, with systems such as Primary Care Support England and the National Health Service Central Register in Scotland to support the process.



## ■ Mental Health Services: Aldershot

**Alex Baker:**

[\[4110\]](#)

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 mental health specialists in Aldershot constituency.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

To fix the chronic workforce shortages in the mental health workforce we plan to recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers across child and adult mental health services, to reduce waiting times and provide faster treatment, across all areas of England, including the Aldershot constituency.

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 England is also working to improve retention through clearer career progression pathways.

## ■ Mental Health: Medical Treatments

**Tom Gordon:**

[\[3284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people received NHS treatment for dissociative identity disorder in each of the last five years; and which NHS Hospital Trusts offer this treatment.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

The information requested regarding the number of people receiving or having received treatment for dissociative identity disorder is not available in the format requested.

## ■ Midwives: Aldershot

**Alex Baker:**

[\[4111\]](#)

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 midwives in Aldershot constituency.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government will make sure the National Health Service has the staff it needs, to be there for all of us when we need it, and will get the staff to the places where patients and the NHS need them. This will not only benefit the Aldershot constituency, but the whole of the NHS in England.

Recruitment decisions do not sit with the Government but instead are the responsibility of the local employers, who are best placed to understand the diverse needs of their communities. They 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. Each trust has a retention midwife who

focuses on retention and providing pastoral support to midwives as they consider their future options in and outside of the NHS.

## ■ NHS: Carbon Emissions

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[4557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress his Department and NHS England have made on the Greener NHS initiative.

**Karin Smyth:**

Significant progress has been made on the Greener NHS initiative, with the National Health Service taking important strides toward its target of achieving net zero by 2040 for direct emissions, and 2045 for indirect emissions. Key achievements include: successfully delivering over £1 billion in decarbonisation grant funding under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, to replace fossil fuel systems with non-carbon alternatives; increasing the energy efficiency of the NHS estate, for instance boosting LED lighting coverage to over 50% of NHS facilities; the introduction of Green Plans by all NHS trusts; and the publication of the first ever NHS Net Zero Travel and Transport Strategy in 2023. These efforts are reducing emissions and improving sustainability across NHS operations. We continue to work with partners across the Government and the wider public sector to pursue our shared environmental aims.

## ■ NHS: Compensation and Legal Costs

**Jim Shannon:** [\[3974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to reduce (a) legal and (b) compensation costs incurred by the NHS.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The rising costs of clinical negligence claims against the National Health Service in England are of great concern to the Government. Costs have more than quadrupled in the last 17 years, and are forecast to continue rising, putting further pressure on NHS finances.

Over recent years, the NHS in England has taken significant steps forward in addressing this issue. NHS Resolution, which manages claims against the NHS in England, has implemented the Early Notification scheme to improve maternity safety and support families in a cohort of maternity claims, and has made significant improvements in claim resolution through greater use of alternative dispute resolution and mediation across all claims.

The causes of the overall cost rise are complex and there is no single fix, as costs are likely to be rising because of a range of factors, including higher compensation payments and legal costs, rather than more claims or a decline in patient safety. We recognise that this is an important issue, and ministers are looking at all the drivers of cost, and considering the next steps.

## ■ NHS: Supply Chains

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[4556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to audit NHS supply chains to ensure that no medical (a) garments and (b) equipment are sourced from (i) Xinjiang and (ii) other regions with widespread reports of forced labour and human rights abuses.

**Karin Smyth:**

The United Kingdom is committed to tackling the issue of Uyghur forced labour in supply chains, and is taking robust action. We have introduced new guidance on the risks of doing business in Xinjiang specifically in section 6.2 of the guidance, enhanced export controls, and announced the introduction of financial penalties under the Modern Slavery Act. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-business-risk-china/overseas-business-risk-china#business-and-human-rights>

The Procurement Act, which received Royal Assent in 2023, will enable public sector contracting authorities to reject bids and terminate contracts with suppliers which are known to use forced labour themselves or anywhere in their supply chain.

Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires commercial organisations that supply goods and services and have a total turnover over £36 million to publish a transparency statement annually, to set out what steps they have taken to ensure that modern slavery is not occurring in their supply chains.

The Department has pledged to put an end to modern slavery in the National Health Service by meeting my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's duty to assess and mitigate modern slavery risk in NHS supply chains. New regulations will require public bodies procuring goods or services for delivering health services in England to assess the risk of modern slavery and implement reasonable steps to procurement and contracting activities, with a view to eradicating the use of goods and services tainted by modern slavery.

## ■ NHS: Training

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[3798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applicants were (a) accepted onto and (b) rejected from the NHS Scientist Training Programme in (i) 2021-2022, (ii) 2022-2023 and (iii) 2023-2024.

**Karin Smyth:**

The following table shows the total number of annual starters in the NHS Scientist Training Programme, as well as their split by the in-service and direct entry routes, and the number of rejected or unsuccessful direct entry applicants, each year from 2021/22 to 2024/25:

YEAR	TOTAL STARTERS	IN-SERVICE	DIRECT ENTRY	REJECTED OR UNSUCCESSFUL DIRECT ENTRY APPLICANTS
2024/25	534	146	388	6,705
2023/24	489	116	373	5,099
2022/23	501	127	374	7,227
2021/22	404	89	315	5,931

Source: National School of Healthcare Science, NHS England.

Direct entry posts are open to all, so long as they meet the published entry criteria, and are successful via the recruitment process, which is managed by the National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS).

Applicants to the in-service posts are nominated by their host trust or employer and will have gone through an internal recruitment process within said trust or employer, in order for them to be nominated to join the programme, having met the published entry criteria as stated by the NSHCS.

## ■ Ovarian Cancer: Health Services

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[3983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve (a) early intervention and (b) treatment outcomes for ovarian cancer.

**Karin Smyth:**

It is a priority for the Government to support the National Health Service in catching cancer, including ovarian cancer, as early as possible, to treat it faster and more effectively, and thereby improve outcomes. This is supported by the NHS's current key ambition on cancer, to increase the number of cancers diagnosed at stages 1 and 2 to 75%, to improve treatment outcomes and survivorship.

To improve early intervention, NHS England is running the Help Us, Help You (HUHY) campaign, which was relaunched on 8 January 2024. The HUY campaign seeks to address the barriers that are deterring patients from accessing the NHS. The current HUY campaign is focused on addressing fear of cancer as a barrier to presentation across all cancer types.

The NHS Cancer Programme has commissioned six new cancer clinical audits, which includes ovarian cancer, to provide timely evidence for cancer service providers of where patterns of care in England may vary, increase the consistency of access to treatments, and help stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes for patients. The Royal College of Surgeons began work on this audit in October 2022, and the first outcomes are expected this September 2024.

## ■ Prescriptions

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[3799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to conduct a review of prescribing rights during this Parliament.

**Karin Smyth:**

In late 2020, NHS England launched a series of public consultations seeking views on proposals to amend the responsibilities for the prescribing, supply, and administration of medicines for the following professionals:

- dental hygienists and dental therapists;
- biomedical scientists, clinical scientists, and operating department practitioners;
- podiatrists and physiotherapists; and
- paramedics.

This work was undertaken as part of the Chief Professions Officers' Medicines Mechanisms (CPOMM) programme. The Department is working with NHS England to consider the CPOMM consultations and progress the extension of responsibilities to supply, administer, and prescribe medicines under the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (HMRs 2012) to regulated healthcare professionals, where a clear need and benefits have been identified.

For example, the Department recently completed work to amend the HMRs 2012 to allow dental hygienists and dental therapists to supply and administer specified medicines via exemptions, and pharmacy technicians to use Patient Group Directions. This legislation came into force in late June 2024.

## ■ Respiratory Diseases: Health Services

**Sarah Green:**

[\[4452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the accessibility of treatment for terminal lung condition idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis on the NHS.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

NHS England is committed to improving outcomes for people with respiratory conditions, particularly through early and accurate diagnosis, which is a priority area under the NHS Long Term Plan.

A key component of an early and accurate diagnosis for a number of respiratory conditions, including pulmonary fibrosis, is the provision of quality assured spirometry. Additional funding has been made available to systems in 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.

NHS England has worked with a range of partners, including Asthma and Lung UK, the British Thoracic Society, the Association for Respiratory Technology and Physiology, and clinical network leads, to develop a package for systems containing

the information and support required to help increase the number of people receiving early and accurate diagnosis for respiratory disease.

NHS England is investing in additional diagnostic capacity for respiratory pathways as part of the £2.3 billion 2021 Spending Review capital investment in diagnostics. Community Diagnostic Centres are being established to deliver additional, digitally connected diagnostic capacity in England, providing patients with a coordinated set of diagnostic tests in the community, in as few visits as possible, enabling an accurate and fast diagnosis on a range of clinical pathways, including people with chronic respiratory disease.

**Sarah Green:**

**[4453]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the capacity of interstitial lung disease specialist centres, in the context of increased eligibility for antifibrotic treatment.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

NHS England is responsible for the commissioning of interstitial lung disease (ILD) services and funds the high-cost, anti-fibrotic treatments. Access to these treatments was widened to people with non-idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, with the publication of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's Technology Appraisal 747 in November 2021. NHS England outlines the requirements of a quality service in its ILD service specification, and requires the completion of quality metrics through the ILD Specialised Services Quality Dashboard. This helps ensure that ILD teams provide appropriate support to patients living with this condition. Earlier diagnosis and treatment improve outcomes for patients.

Moreover, the Specialised Respiratory Clinical Reference Group contains clinical members who are able to advise NHS England in relation to ILD services, and includes a member of a pulmonary fibrosis charity, Action for Pulmonary Fibrosis (APF), as one of its Patient and Public Voice members. APF has recently issued a report on patient experience, which is helping to inform pathway redesign as well as raise awareness of the condition.

## ■ Respiratory Diseases: Mould

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[4370]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of instances of (a) stroke, (b) myocardial infarction, (c) hyperthermia, (d) pneumonia and (e) other respiratory disease admissions to NHS hospitals that have been the result of patients living in damp homes in the last 12 months.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

*[Holding answer 10 September 2024]:* Poor quality homes, including those that are cold or damp, can directly affect physical wellbeing, creating or exacerbating health issues such as respiratory and cardiovascular illness.

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to the public's health. Addressing poor housing conditions such as cold, damp, and mould will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives, and reducing pressures on the National Health Service.

■ **Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust: Veterans**

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[4275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure sustainable long-term funding for the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2024]:* The NHS Long Term Plan committed the National Health Service to a series of financial reforms, designed to return the NHS to financial balance. NHS England's regional finance team have been working directly with The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust on possible solutions to enable funding for the service to continue.

■ **Sexual Offences: Victim Support Schemes**

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[4403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of using voluntary organisations to support victims of sexual assault.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Voluntary organisations are important providers of specialist services to adults and children who have experienced sexual assault or abuse. They are major providers of specialist advocacy, sexual trauma counselling, pre-trial therapy, and support services.

Sexual Assault Referral Centres are expected to develop and maintain referral pathways and working relationships with relevant voluntary sector services in each NHS England region. A core principle of the enhanced mental health pathway is to build delivery partnerships between the National Health Service and specialist sexual violence and abuse voluntary sector organisations, tailored to meet needs in relation to complex trauma.

The majority of services funded by the Ministry of Justice for victims and survivors of sexual violence are delivered by voluntary organisations.

**■ Surgical Mesh Implants: Northern Ireland****Jim Shannon:** [\[3980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women in Northern Ireland have been awarded compensation for suffering complications from vaginal mesh implants.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

Where women have received vaginal mesh implants in Northern Ireland and pursued claims for compensation having suffered complications, such claims would be pursued in Northern Ireland's judicial system, and as such fall under the jurisdiction of the legal system in Northern Ireland. This question relates to data in respect of claims for compensation for healthcare in Northern Ireland, which is a devolved matter. As such it is respectfully requested that this question be redirected to the Justice Minister for Northern Ireland or the Minister for Health for Northern Ireland, to be handled at a devolved level.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Abortion: Demonstrations****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[4542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to set a date to commence Section 9 of the Public Order Act 2023 to enforce safe access zones outside abortion clinics.

**Jess Phillips:**

We are committed to commencing Section 9 of the Public Order Act 2023 as soon as possible. Protecting women's rights is a priority for this government, and it is vital that anyone exercising their legal right to access abortion services is free from harassment and intimidation.

**■ Animal Experiments****Dan Norris:** [\[2715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to end the forced swim test in addition to holding discussions with (a) the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology and (b) UKRI.

**Dan Norris:** [\[2716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish a timeline for ending the forced swim test.

**Dan Norris:** [\[2717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will set a deadline for elimination of the forced swim test.



**Dan Norris:**

[\[2718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many active licences authorise use of the forced swim test.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Home Office intends to completely eliminate the use of the forced swim test. This will require the validation of suitable appropriate alternatives.

## ■ **Asylum: Children and Young People**

**James Naish:**

[\[4074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to help reduce the risk of human trafficking of unaccompanied (i) children and (ii) other young asylum seekers who are staying in hotels run by her Department.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

All Home Office staff, and contracted parties have a duty, under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, to ensure that immigration, asylum, and nationality functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK. The HO does not have a statutory responsibility for safeguarding - statutory agencies retain responsibility for all decisions on intervention activity.

On arrival in the UK, all asylum seekers, including unaccompanied children, have an interview which includes a series of questions specifically designed to ascertain potential indicators of trafficking. If indicators are noted, a referral is made to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). In the case of children, a safety plan is put in place by social services, whilst adults identified as potential victims of modern slavery are entitled to care with support provided by the Salvation Army.

The Home Office no longer accommodates Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children in hotels as of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024. Local authorities have a statutory duty under S20 of the Children Act 1989 to look after children in need in their area. This includes unaccompanied asylum seeking (UAS) children who either arrive in a local authority area or are transferred there under the mandated National Transfer Scheme (NTS). When a child is being looked after by a local authority, that local authority is under a duty to safeguard and promote the child's welfare under the Children Act 1989.

The Home Office and its accommodation providers have robust processes in place to ensure that where an adult asylum seeker is at risk or vulnerable, they are referred to the appropriate statutory agencies such as the police, NHS and social services, to promote appropriate safeguarding interventions.

## ■ Home Office: Communication

**Neil O'Brien:** [\[3077\]](#)

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

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office reports data on media spending and discloses this together with IT in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts.

Refer to page 243 (page 247 on the PDF reader) of the 2023-24 Annual Report and Accounts, through the link below.

[Home Office Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

## ■ Homicide: Children

**Mark Pritchard:** [\[3953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish data on the number of deaths of children through (a) murder and (b) manslaughter in England in (i) 2022 and (ii) 2023.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office Homicide Index holds information on the age of victims and whether the offence was initially classified as murder or manslaughter. The data are given in the table.

**TABLE 1: OFFENCES CURRENTLY RECORDED AS HOMICIDE BY INITIAL CLASSIFICATION OF OFFENCE FOR VICTIMS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS**

### England, year ending March 2022 to year ending March 2023

Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

Initial classification of offence	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023
Murder	60	63
Manslaughter	13	5

As at 12 December 2023; figures and classification of offence are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts, or as further information becomes available.

**■ Police: Finance****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[4473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of implementing a redistribution of the Police Allocation Formula based on the previous Government's preparatory work.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The government will consider police funding, including the allocation of funding to forces, in the round as part of the Spending Review process.

**■ Police: Vetting****Daisy Cooper:**[\[4020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 2 September 2024 to Question 2138 on Police: Vetting, whether her Department has made an assessment of the effectiveness of English police forces in delivering Disclosure and Barring Service checks in a (a) satisfactory and (b) timely manner.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) send their Enhanced checks to a police force if there is a potential match against the names on the application form and local police systems.

DBS commissions 52 independent police disclosure units that are spread geographically across the nation and are operationally independent.

DBS has dedicated Police Performance Managers that assess, monitor and work closely with the police forces to ensure police performance against published DBS Key Performance Indicators remains strong.

The DBS's target is to issue 80% of Enhanced checks within 14 days. DBS' performance against this target is published every quarter: [DBS dataset 1: DBS checks, the DBS Update Service, and disputes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

**Daisy Cooper:**[\[4021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 2 September to Question 2138 on Police: Vetting, what information her Department holds on the performance of police forces processing of Disclosure Barring Service checks that can be obtained without disproportionate cost.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) regularly publishes statistics on the overall processing times for each of their services. This includes checks where they are referred to police forces.

The most recent relevant data set was published July 30th is available at: [gov.uk - DBS performance](#).

## ■ Visas: Families

**Shockat Adam:**

[\[4091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to raise the minimum income requirement for family immigration visas to £34,000; and whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of such an increase on (a) Leicester and (b) other low average income areas.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The financial requirements for the Family Immigration Rules include the Minimum Income Requirement (MIR) which is currently set at £29,000 and is intended to maintain the economic wellbeing of the UK whilst respecting family life.

The Home Secretary has announced her intention to commission the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to review the financial requirements in the Family Immigration Rules.

Conducting a review of the financial requirements across the family routes will ensure we have a clear and consistent system. There will be no changes to the current threshold of £29,000, or the ways in which the MIR can be met, until the MAC review is complete.

## ■ Wildlife: Crime

**Danny Beales:**

[\[3639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of making crimes against wildlife notifiable offences.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

This Government recognises the importance of tackling wildlife crime, which is why, along with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Home Office directly funds the National Wildlife Crime Unit to help tackle these crimes.

The National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) provides intelligence, analysis and investigative assistance to the police and other law enforcement agencies across the UK to support them in investigating wildlife crime. This includes supporting cases referred by Border Force to the National Crime Agency or to individual forces. The NWCU is also the UK policing focal point for EUROPOL and INTERPOL wildlife crime activity. The NWCU uses this information to produce strategic and tactical assessments of wildlife crime across the UK.

Any non-notifiable wildlife crime reported to police can still be investigated where appropriate, as Chief Constables have operational independence to tackle the crimes that matter most to their communities.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Affordable Housing: West Yorkshire****Paul Davies:**[\[4145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help provide affordable housing in (a) Colne Valley constituency and (b) West Yorkshire.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government is committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and ensuring that every part of the country benefits from it.

We will set out further details in due course.

**■ Community Ownership Fund****Alicia Kearns:**[\[3156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, until what date the Community ownership fund will remain open; and if her Department will extend that fund beyond 31 March 2025.

**Alex Norris:**

The Chancellor's July 'Public Spending: Inheritance' speech set out the state of the UK's spending inheritance from the previous Government. In this context, the Chancellor has set out a path to confirming plans for this year and next at the forthcoming Budget on October 30th.

We understand that this may have caused uncertainty about the status of the Community Ownership Fund. The Government will seek to provide certainty wherever it can between now and conclusion of the Spending Review.

**■ Council Tax****Mr Jonathan Brash:**[\[4071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of council tax bands.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Government currently has no plans to reform council tax. Ahead of any decisions taken on the tax, the Government will carefully consider the impact on councils and taxpayers. The Government is committed to keeping taxes on working people as low as possible.

**■ Council Tax: Single People**

**Paula Barker:** [\[4044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate her Department has made of the number of households in receipt of the single person council tax discount that are set to lose Winter Fuel Payments.

**Paula Barker:** [\[4045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of households that receive the single person council tax discount are (a) widows and (b) widows of retirement age.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Government does not collect data on the individual characteristics, or benefits received, of residents of households receiving a single person council tax discount.

**Paula Barker:** [\[4444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the removal of the single-person council tax discount on (a) under-thirties and (b) pensioners.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Government currently has no plans to reform council tax. Decisions on future local authority funding will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged.

**■ Elections: Proof of Identity**

**Tom Hayes:** [\[4297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to make the veterans ID card an acceptable form of photo ID for elections.

**Alex Norris:**

I refer my hon Friend to the answer given to Question UIN [1157](#) on 30 July 2024.

**■ Homelessness**

**Paula Barker:** [\[3197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans her Department has to work with the voluntary and community sector to help end homelessness.

**Paula Barker:** [\[3205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Rough Sleeping Initiative Funding beyond March 2025.

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[3235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to provide funding for homelessness services following the end of the Rough Sleeping Initiative funding in April 2025.

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[3808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to extend the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25 beyond April 2025.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Deputy Prime Minister is responsible for cross-governmental coordination of policy to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping and will update in due course.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[3996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to reduce levels of homelessness in winter 2024-25.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Government will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country to get us back on track to ending homelessness and rough sleeping once and for all.

Whilst we develop our new strategy, the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) is providing £547 million over the period from April 2022 to March 2025 to 300 local authorities across England for local, tailored rough sleeping services.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[3997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the (a) health and wellbeing and (b) housing needs of people experiencing homelessness.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The DPM is responsible for cross-governmental coordination of policy to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping and will update in due course.

## ■ Homelessness: Departmental Coordination

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[4544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for holding the inaugural meeting of the inter-ministerial group on homelessness; and how frequently that group will meet.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Deputy Prime Minister is responsible for cross-governmental coordination of policy to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping and will update in due course.

**■ Homelessness: Young People****Rachael Maskell:** [\[3998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of developing a youth homeless strategy.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Government recognises that homelessness levels are far too high and this can have a devastating impact on those affected, including young people. We will look at these issues carefully and will consider youth homelessness as we develop our long-term, cross-government strategy to get us back on track to ending homelessness.

**■ Internal Drainage Boards: Finance****Sir John Hayes:** [\[3943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of increases in internal drainage board levies on the ability of local authorities to protect communities from flooding.

**Jim McMahon:**

The 2024/25 Internal Drainage Board levy support allocations target the local authorities who have experienced the greatest financial pressures from IDB special levy increases over the past two years.

MHCLG recognises the need for a long-term solution and are working with Defra to explore potential approaches.

**■ Islamophobia****David Simmonds:** [\[3829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on the use of the term Islamophobia; and whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of adopting the working definition of Islamophobia published by the APPG on British Muslims in its report entitled Islamophobia defined.

**Alex Norris:**

There is no place in our society for religious or racial hatred of any kind. Tackling Islamophobia is a priority for this Government, especially in light of last month's violent disorder, where we saw mosques and Muslim communities targeted. This is deplorable, and there can be absolutely no place in our society for this violence and intimidation that has wreaked havoc on our communities. This Government has taken rapid action to step up protections for mosques facing significant, imminent threats of disorder, or those dealing with the immediate aftermath of attacks, as part of our Protective Security for Mosques scheme.

We are actively reviewing our approach and considering various options for how best to tackle Islamophobia and all forms of hatred, to deliver a more integrated and cohesive approach to this vital work. We recognise the complexity of this issue, and we want to make sure that any new approach comprehensively reflects multiple



perspectives and implications for different communities. We will provide further updates in due course.

## ■ Local Government

**Jim Dickson:**

[4130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure that local authorities are subject to independent review and inspection.

**Jim McMahon:**

This Government is committed to resetting the relationship between local and regional government to establish partnerships built on mutual respect, genuine collaboration and meaningful engagement. We are keen to work with any local authorities facing challenges to support recovery and reform.

As part of the [sector support programme](#) the ministry funds the Local Government Association (LGA) to deliver a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) review programme. Local authorities are subject to scrutiny from a number of government bodies, including inspectorates and ombudsmen. External audit is also important, which is why, on 30 July, the Government announced measures to tackle the local audit backlog we inherited. We will also update the House in the autumn on longer-term plans to fix the local audit system.

It is important that Government can act where local authorities may need more intensive support or intervention in order to meet their Best Value Duty. The Secretary of State has a set of tools and statutory powers, detailed in the statutory guidance ' [Best value standards and intervention](#) '. This includes a statutory power to commission inspections of local authorities in relation to their compliance with the Best Value Duty. Decisions about statutory inspections are taken based on the circumstances of each case following an evidence based assessment.

## ■ Local Government: Devolution

**Josh Newbury:**

[R] [4064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what role (a) district and (b) borough councils will play in future devolution agreements.

**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. District councils are an important part of local government and should play an active role in devolution arrangements in their area, often as an important delivery partner.

**Local Government: Hampshire****Liz Jarvis:** [\[4069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to monitor the Savings Programme 2025 process at Hampshire County Council.

**Jim McMahon:**

Councils are responsible for their own financial management.

This Government recognises the vital work that local councils do for their communities. The department works closely with local government and other government departments to understand specific demand and cost pressures facing councils. We stand ready to speak to any council that is experiencing financial difficulties.

This Government will get councils back on their feet by providing multi-year funding settlements, ending competitive bidding for pots of money and reforming the local audit system.

**Local Government: Remote Meetings****Jim Dickson:** [\[4131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ensure that the proceedings of local authorities are available to the public live online.

**Jim McMahon:**

Public access to council meetings is an essential part of ensuring accountability and transparency at the local level. Except where specific exemptions apply, the Local Government Act 1972 is clear that all council meetings are open to the public.

Under the current rules it is for individual local authorities to agree and determine the provisions for remote public access to local authority meetings through their standing orders.

Many councils already broadcast their meetings online, which the public can attend, and meeting agendas and papers are routinely shared in advance of meetings on council websites.

**Max Caller****Laurence Turner:** [\[4569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 3908 on Max Caller, what records were kept of that meeting.

**Jim McMahon:**

As previously set out in my answer to Question UIN [3908](#) on 5 September 2024, officials attended the meeting between the former Secretary of State and Max Caller

on 26 September 2023. As has been the case under successive administrations, the details of internal correspondence and meetings between officials are not routinely published.

### ■ Social Rented Housing: West Sussex

**Andrew Griffith:**

[4053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of immigration on the length of waiting lists for social housing in (a) Horsham, (b) Chichester District and (c) Arun District.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The department does not hold information on the immigration status of those on the waiting lists.

[Local Authority Housing Statistics](#) show that, at 31 March 2023, Horsham District Council had 740 households on the waiting list for social housing, Chichester District Council had 2,029 households on the waiting list, and Arun District Council had 1,732 households on the waiting lists.

[Local Authority Housing Statistics](#) also show that Horsham District Council has a local connection test in place to determine who qualifies for social housing, Chichester District Council has both a residency and local connection test, and Arun District Council has a residency test.

### ■ Temporary Accommodation: Costs

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[4543]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an estimate of the potential costs to local authorities of providing temporary accommodation in line with their their homelessness relief duties in the 2024-25 financial year.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Government recognises that homelessness levels are far too high and that this can have a devastating impact on those involved, as well as placing financial strain on councils. Local authorities have reported the costs of providing temporary accommodation for 2023/24. This information is available at the 'Revenue outturn housing services (RO4)' tables at: [Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2023 to 2024 individual local authority data - outturn - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing-england-2023-to-2024-individual-local-authority-data-outturn).

### ■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

**Julia Buckley:**

[4101]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will continue after March 2025.

**Alex Norris:**

Decisions on funding post March 2025 are a matter for the Budget on October 30th.

We recognise the challenges this brings for some projects. We are working closely with local authorities and key stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition to future funding, so communities continue to benefit from this vital support. In the meantime, officials remain available to discuss any issues impacting delivery.

**JUSTICE****■ Bedford Prison: Standards****Sarah Owen:**[\[3801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report by HM Inspectorate of Prisons report into HMP Bedford, published in February 2024, what steps she is taking to improve conditions in HMP Bedford.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

HM Prison & Probation Service is committed to delivering sustained improvement in living conditions and performance across the prison estate, to promote a safe and secure environment that facilitates genuine rehabilitation. Since the publication of HM Inspectorate of Prison's latest report on the prison, HMP Bedford has prioritised the improvement of living conditions, by introducing a programme of cleaning, maintenance, pest control and decency checks.

The new Governor, appointed in February, is continuing to monitor performance at the prison to ensure sustained improvement.

**■ Legal Aid Scheme****Abtisam Mohamed:**[\[4097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the level of legal aid in the context of recent increases in the cost of living.

**Heidi Alexander:**

Legal aid is a vital part of the justice system. It underpins our plans to build a justice system that works for victims, supports access to justice, and ultimately upholds the rule of law.

We are keen to understand the different ways the legal aid system can be improved to ensure each part works to the best of its ability. We will be carefully considering our options on the way forward including the evidence gathered over the past year on civil legal aid.

This Government understands the challenges related to legal aid eligibility and we are assessing the appropriate next steps. We are also seeking to implement changes to the means test that will extend the range of payments which may or must be disregarded from the legal aid means assessment.

**■ Magistrates' Courts: Telford****Shaun Davies:**[\[3843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, on how many sitting days Telford Magistrates Court rooms were not used (a) at all and (b) in part in each of the last three years.

**Heidi Alexander:**

HMCTS records the availability of courtroom in 'sessions'. A 'session' represents the time that court/hearing room space is available, with up to two sessions available each day. Available and unavailable sessions are recorded for all jurisdictions.

Telford Magistrates Court had the following number of sessions recorded as available and then confirmed as used during the enquired period:

PERIOD	TOTAL SESSIONS	CONFIRMED SESSIONS
Jan-Dec 2021	1,518	878
Jan-Dec 2022	1,500	754
Jan-Dec 2023	1,080	717
Jan- Mar 2024	252	198

Data relating to total sessions is extracted from HMCTS Courtroom Planner database, data relating to Confirmed Sessions is extracted from the Rota database. The data relating to session availability and confirmed sessions are from different source systems and are therefore not directly comparable. Please note all data provided is internal and subject to data quality issues inherent in any large-scale manual system.

HMCTS records a session being unavailable for a number of reasons, including important alternative uses. For example:

- box work
- case-related unavailability
- community engagement
- where the room is connected to chambers which are in use
- court closures due to severe weather or security incidents, holidays (not public holiday) or formerly due to COVID
- external meetings (e.g., Court User Group)
- use for external organisations (e.g., Coroner)
- maintenance work
- mediation (parties present)
- overspill (in support of a hearing taking place elsewhere)

- staff meetings and/or training
- video link being used for other matter

The amount of time we use our available estate for hearings is also connected to the funded number of sitting days in any one year, and the availability of key participants such as judiciary and legal professionals.

It should be noted that Courtroom 6 in Telford Magistrates has been out of operation since March 2023 owing to the need to replace the roof. This has progressed through the required government approvals process and building work is due to be instructed shortly on the roof replacement.

Replacement of the roof will enable the room to be brought back into operation.

## ■ Prisoners' Release

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[3999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to ensure that people on early prison release have (a) housing, (b) employment and (c) sufficient probation provision to support them.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

Individuals released through the Standard Determinate Sentence changes, known as SDS40, and at risk of homelessness can be referred to HMPPS's Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3), which can provide up to 12-weeks temporary accommodation. We are working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and the Welsh Government to mitigate any impact on Local Authorities, as well as taking practical steps to minimise the chances that individuals are released homeless. This includes ensuring data is shared with the 49 Strategic Housing Specialists based in prisons and the Probation-based Homeless Prevention Teams to make sure plans are in place for those who need accommodation support.

We are also working closely with the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure that prisons and Jobcentres are prepared to support temporarily higher volumes of prisoners approaching release. We will collectively ensure that relevant staff in prisons and Jobcentres have the right data on prisoners who are being released and will provide guidance and regular communications to those staff, so they are aware of what actions to take. This will ensure that prisoners are supported on release in the community with provision of bank accounts and ID, referrals to work programmes on release, arranging employment pre-release, and timely access to benefits where appropriate.

It is vital there is sufficient probation capacity to manage these individuals upon release. The move to SDS40 gives probation staff more time to prepare and plan for release, compared to the previous government's End of Supervised Licence Scheme meaning there will be more resilience in the system. We are also onboarding 1,000 new trainee probation officers by March 2025.

Once released, offenders will be subject to the same set of strict licence conditions that would apply had they been released at a 50% automatic release point and will be liable to recall to prison if they do not comply with these conditions or are judged to be a risk to public safety. These could include electronic monitoring, alcohol tags, and exclusion zones.

## ■ Prisoners: Veterans

**Paula Barker:** [4445]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate her Department has made of the number of veterans in prison.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

As per the statistics in the “Ex-service Personnel in the prison population: 2023” publication included at the following link, an estimated 3.6% of the prison population were ex-service personnel as of 30 June 2023: [Offender Management Statistics quarterly: April to June 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2023).

## ■ Prisons: Construction

**Sir John Hayes:** [3683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to build new prisons in England and Wales.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

We are committed to delivering the remaining new prisons as well as the expansion and refurbishment of the existing estate, including through temporary accommodation, as quickly as possible, and to ensure the planning processes for new prisons are not subject to lengthy delays.

We have also committed to a 10-year capacity strategy which will outline the steps the Government is taking on the future of the prison estate.

## ■ Prisons: Disclosure of Information

**Claire Young:** [4486]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what (a) protections and (b) support mechanisms are in place for whistleblowers in prisons.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice has a comprehensive whistleblowing policy which all staff can access via the intranet. The policy sets out the protections and support available to a whistleblower. Protections include protection under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 \(PIDA\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/legislation/public-interest-disclosure-act-1998) and the assurance that the Department will take disciplinary action if a whistleblower is subject to detrimental treatment as a result of having raised a concern.

Sources of support include Nominated Officers, who can advise on how to raise a concern, and specialist teams including Counter Corruption, the HM Prison and

Probation Service Tackling Unacceptable Behaviours Unit, and the Department's employee assistance provider.

## ■ Prisons: Standards

**James Cartlidge:** [\[4392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to end the use of A to D ratings for the prisons system.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

There are currently no plans to end the use of A to D ratings for the prisons system.

## ■ Probation

**Caroline Voaden:** [\[3550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average caseload of probation officers in England and Wales was in each of the last ten years for which figures are available.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The average caseload of Probation Officers has been calculated using data from the Workload Measurement Tool (WMT) and has been presented for the period July 2021 to June 2024. Data has been restricted to this period because the Probation Service unified in June 2021, with some Probation Officers and their caseload held by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) prior to this point. The Probation Service does not have access to data for caseload held by CRCs and so it would not be consistent to present a time series prior to June 2021.

**Table One: Probation Officer average annual caseload across England and Wales**

PERIOD	ANNUAL AVERAGE CASELOAD PER PROBATION OFFICER
July 21 – June 22	36.0
July 22 – June 23	37.1
July 23 – June 24	35.2

### Notes

- The data within the WMT are manually entered by Senior Probation Officers (SPOs) for those in their line management chain. These data are subject to inaccuracy as a result of the manual nature with which data are entered.
- Annual average caseload per Probation Officer has been calculated by taking the average caseload on the last day of each month in that period (an average across the 12 months).



- We are aware of data quality concerns regarding some of the data with some instances of cases being allocated to those who are not delivering caseload. There may be cases where staff who have left the Probation Service still appear to hold caseload on the WMT. Some staff on long-term absences (e.g. career breaks / long-term sickness) may still have a caseload allocated to them. There are also instances where those with no contracted hours are allocated cases without having an allocated capacity. Average caseload does not take into account the level of risk or complexity of cases, and this will have a large effect on the workload of Probation Officers.
- Data have not been presented for the period prior to June 2021, the point at which unification of the Probation Service took place. Prior to June 2021, some Probation Officers and caseload were held by CRCs, data for which is not included in the WMT. It would not be consistent to present a time series of caseload per Probation Officer before and after unification.

## ■ Reoffenders

**Caroline Voaden:**

[\[3551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many recalls to prison there were of people on licence in England and Wales in each of the last ten years for which figures are available; and what plans she has to reduce the number of recalls to prison.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The number of recalls to custody recorded in the ten years from 2013 to 2023 is provided in the table below.

RECALL YEAR	NUMBER OF RECALLS
2014	17,649
2015	21,467
2016	21,559
2017	21,915
2018	24,268
2019	26,503
2020	24,437
2021	22,105
2022	23,571
2023	27,820

1. The table above shows the number of recalls not the number of offenders – an offender may be recalled more than once.
1. The figures in these tables have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. As such, figures are subject to change as information is updated.

Data source: Public Protection Unit Database (PPUD)

The Government's absolute focus is on public protection. Offenders on licence can be swiftly recalled to prison if they breach their licence conditions in such a way as to indicate that their risk has increased and they are about to commit further offences. The recall of an offender to custody is an important public protection measure but our priority is to reduce reoffending and the risks presented by offenders, so that they do not need to be recalled in order to protect the public.

Additionally, HMPPS has issued guidance to the probation practitioners, to ensure all safe alternatives to recall are considered before a decision is taken to recall an offender. HMPPS has also re-invigorated the Secretary of State's power to release recalled offenders following a risk assessed recall review without reference to the Parole Board.

With public protection as our top priority, we continue to work across government to ensure that we take the necessary steps to reduce the recall population and keep the system functioning safely.

## ■ Trials: Shrewsbury

**Shaun Davies:**

[\[3841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average waiting time is for a trial at Shrewsbury Crown Court.

**Heidi Alexander:**

We have interpreted waiting time to refer to the time between the date of sending a case to the Crown Court and the start of the substantive "main" Crown Court hearing.

The average (median) waiting time at Shrewsbury Crown Court in 2023 was 42 days, compared to 40 days nationally.

The Crown Court outstanding caseload remains one of the biggest challenges facing the Criminal Justice system. We want to make sure every victim has the swift access to justice they deserve, and we are committed to reducing the caseload and bringing waiting times down.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Communications****Neil O'Brien:**[\[3082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much his Department spent on communications in the last year for which data is available.

**Feryal Clark:**

In financial year 2023/2024 the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) spent a total of £8,316,561.37 on communications. This is inclusive of £3,516,253.54 which are payroll related costs for staff who work in the Communications Directorate.

The DSIT Communications Team is responsible for all communications conducted by the department and its Ministers to help inform, promote and explain departmental policies through traditional and new media channels. This includes a number of paid-for marketing campaigns such as those designed to encourage uptake of R&D funding made available through Horizon Europe and campaigns to build skills required for the jobs of the future.

**■ Internet: Offences against Children****Jim Shannon:**[\[3977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the Online Safety Act 2023 to help tackle online grooming.

**Feryal Clark:**

The strongest protections in the Online Safety Act are against child sexual abuse and exploitation. The higher the risk on a service, the more measures and safeguards they will need to take to keep their users safe from harm, and prevent their services being used as a platform to groom and exploit children

Ofcom, the online safety regulator, has strong powers to combat this kind of abuse and will keep its codes of practice to tackle illegal harms under review.

**■ Mobile Phones: Lincolnshire****Sir John Hayes:**[\[3941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help improve mobile phone coverage in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

**Chris Bryant:**

The Government is committed to improving mobile coverage across the UK. Ofcom's most recent coverage data for the constituency of South Holland and The Deepings shows 94% 4G geographic coverage from all four mobile network operators and that

5G is available from at least one mobile network operator outside 79% of premises, and our ambition is for nationwide coverage by 2030.

I am aware that Ofcom's coverage data does not always reflect consumers' experience of mobile networks at a local level, and I am intent on ensuring Ofcom takes all necessary steps to improve the accuracy of its coverage data.

Alongside this, the Government intends to reform the planning system in a way that will make it easier to build digital infrastructure.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Bus Services: Fares

**Alex Baker:** [4121]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on average bus fares in (a) Aldershot constituency, (b) Hampshire and (c) England.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The information requested regarding the average cost of bus fares is not available. The Department produces quarterly bus fare statistics in the form of a local bus fares index. However, this data is not available specifically for (a) Aldershot constituency, or (b) Hampshire. Data is available for (c) England and the latest publication can be found on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-bus-fares-statistics-january-to-march-2024>.

### ■ Chiltern Railways

**Saqib Bhatti:** [4549]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will expedite the approval of additional trains to help resolve capacity issues on Chiltern Railways.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department continues to work closely with Chiltern Railways to support the delivery of its long-term fleet strategy and has recently approved Chiltern Railways' Mk3 fleet replacement Outline Business Case (OBC). Chiltern now needs to produce the Final Business Case.

Chiltern also continues to review opportunities to maximise its passenger capacity within its current train fleet. In June 2024, Chiltern introduced an additional morning and evening peak service on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, between London Marylebone and Princes Risborough, which operated pre-COVID-19. This provides additional seating capacity in response to customer demand and crowding.

### ■ Dangerous Driving: Fines

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [4405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of penalties for dangerous driving.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department for Transport has not recently assessed the adequacy of penalties for dangerous driving. The Government is 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.

**■ Dangerous Driving: Rural Areas****Anna Dixon:**[\[4310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to tackle dangerous driving in (a) villages and (b) rural areas.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

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

**■ Department for Transport: Weed Control****Sojan Joseph:**[\[4503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to ensure that thistles and ragwort are removed from land owned by her Department between the village of Mersham and the Sevington inland border facility.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

I can confirm that a cut of the field to remove the thistles and ragwort was completed by Sunday 8th September. The cut was started following an ecological walkover visit on Monday 2nd September to ensure that the works could go ahead without impacting nesting birds.

**■ Driving Tests: Lincolnshire****Sir John Hayes:**[\[4585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help reduce waiting times for practical driving tests in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

**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 9 September 2024, there were 556,774 car practical driving tests booked, and 91,059 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

**Jim Shannon:** [\[3969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the efficiency of electric vehicle charging points across the UK.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Government has not made a recent assessment of chargepoint efficiencies across the UK.

### ■ Hammersmith Bridge

**Sarah Olney:** [\[4012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has made an estimate of the potential cost to the public purse of replacing Hammersmith Bridge with a new structure.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Hammersmith Bridge is protected by Historic England. It is a Grade II Listed heritage asset, as it is a 'particularly important' national structure of 'more than special interest'.

The Department has not made any estimates of the cost of replacing the structure as the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is the asset owner and project lead for the Hammersmith Bridge Restoration Project. The Borough has estimated that the cost of dismantling the current bridge and building a new bridge would be significantly more than the repair of the current bridge.

### ■ Hammersmith Bridge: Repairs and Maintenance

**Sarah Olney:** [\[4011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to fund one third of the cost of the Hammersmith Bridge strengthening works.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department will be exploring funding options for a suite of transport related projects at the Spring Spending Review, including the Hammersmith Bridge strengthening works.

### ■ London North Eastern Railway: Industrial Disputes

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[4049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the terms of the agreement were with the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen that led to industrial action being called off at London North Eastern Railway.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Following discussions, on 29 August London North Eastern Railway (LNER) and ASLEF found a resolution to their long running local dispute at no extra cost to the taxpayer and preventing 22 days of industrial action whilst ensuring an improved service for passengers. LNER has agreed a new rest day working agreement with its drivers and has agreed to use driver managers in line with common industry practices.

**Motorcycles: Driving Licences****Sammy Wilson:**[\[4346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report by the Motorcycle Industry Association entitled A Licence to Net Zero: Unleashing Our Potential, License Reform Essential: L-Category Licensing Reform Proposals, published on 16 October 2023, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the proposals in that report on the licensing regime for (a) mopeds, (b) motorcycles and (c) other powered light vehicles; and if she will hold discussions with relevant stakeholders on that matter.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department for Transport continues to meet with representatives from the motorcycling industry to discuss proposals on Category L licensing reform. We are awaiting evidence from the Motorcycle Industry Association on their proposals.

**Sammy Wilson:**[\[4347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Motorcycle Strategy Focus Group is next scheduled to meet; and whether the agenda will include a review of (a) moped and (b) motorcycle licensing requirements.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Motorcycle Strategic Focus Group plan to meet in autumn 2024. The date and agenda for the meeting have yet to be decided.

**Sammy Wilson:**[\[4348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the evidential basis is for (a) licensing requirements and (b) age restrictions for (i) mopeds, (ii) motorcycles and (iii) other powered light vehicles.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The current licensing requirements and age restrictions for moped, motorcycles were implemented in 2012 when the UK transposed the requirements of the European Union's Third Driving Licence Directive. These regulations were drafted after extensive public consultation, impact assessments and Parliamentary scrutiny via the European Scrutiny Committee. Furthermore, these regulations were subject to a Post Implementation Review in 2017, published on the legislation.uk website.

## ■ Motorways

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[4584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to end the use of smart motorways.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The safety of everyone travelling on our roads is the Government's priority, which is why we are committed to delivering a new Road Safety Strategy, the first in over a decade. We will not roll out new smart motorways and will set out next steps in due course.

## ■ Motorways: Safety

**Paula Barker:** [\[4043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the safety of smart motorways.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Safety on our roads is of the upmost importance and that is why the Government is committed to delivering a new Road Safety Strategy. The last set of safety data published by National Highways shows that, overall, all three types of smart motorway are safer than conventional motorways for safety metrics such as deaths or serious injuries. However, the data also shows that the risk of a collision between a moving and a stopped vehicle is greater on smart motorways without a permanent hard shoulder than on other motorway types, with the risk of a serious injury or death due to a stopped vehicle collision lower on conventional and controlled motorways. National Highways has been taking action designed to reduce the risks associated with live lane stops, including but not limited to rolling out stopped vehicle detection (SVD) technology. We will continue to monitor safety on these roads.

## ■ Railways: Fares

**Paula Barker:** [\[4042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the cost of rail travel.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Affordability is one of our six key objectives for rail reform – wherever possible, prices should be kept at a point that works for both passengers and taxpayers.

We have just announced a new networkwide Rail Sale that will launch early next year to tie in with celebrations to mark the 200th anniversary of Britain's passenger railways. Returning by popular demand, the sale will aim to encourage more people onto the railways by offering up to 50 per cent off train tickets for a specific time period.



We are also committed to simplifying ticketing and exploring options for expanding ticketing innovations like digital pay as you go, and digital season tickets across the network.

## ■ Railways: Gender Based Violence

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[3984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help reduce the number of violent attacks on women and girls on rail services.

**Simon Lightwood:**

This government has set out its mission to halve violence against women and girls within a decade and will treat this work as a national emergency.

No one should ever have to face the risk of violence or harassment when travelling on our transport networks.

We are taking action to make sure women and girls in particular feel safe on our transport network. We work closely with railway partners, including the British Transport Police (BTP), to achieve this. BTP utilises specialist teams of plain clothed and uniformed officers across the network to target and identify offenders. It uses enhanced patrols, with a directed, intelligence-led focus around the nighttime economy, providing high-visibility presence to reassure rail staff and the public.

Current public campaigns and support tools include the National Rail 'Zero Tolerance' campaign aimed at ending sexual harassment and BTP's Railway Guardian app, which provides safety advice, links to partner organisations and enables reporting of incidents to the force directly. Previous public awareness campaigns have included using real victim stories to encourage more members of the public to come forward and report incidents of sexual harassment to the force.

## ■ Railways: Ticket Offices

**Alex Baker:**

[\[4117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of train station ticket office closures on passengers in Aldershot constituency.

**Alex Baker:**

[\[4118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has to support vulnerable and disabled passengers affected by the closure of railway ticket offices in Aldershot constituency.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Improving services for passengers is at the heart of our plans to improve Britain's railways, and station staff play an important role in supporting passengers, especially those who require additional assistance. This Government has no plans to close ticket offices, and we expect train operating companies to take measures to ensure they are open at published times.

**■ Road Safety Investigation Branch****Layla Moran:** [\[4245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she intends to establish a Road Safety Investigation Branch.

**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.

**■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance****Sir John Hayes:** [\[4592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing five year block awards to councils for pothole management.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

This Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing all parts of the local highway network.

The Department recognises the benefits of providing all local highway authorities with long-term funding certainty, and will consider this carefully.

**■ Tyres: Standards****Mark Pritchard:** [\[4343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps with car manufacturers to agree a minimum stopping safety requirement for car tyres which are (a) manufactured in the UK and (b) imported.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

All new tyres, both UK made and imported, require GB type approval before they are permitted for sale. To gain approval, manufacturers must demonstrate that they achieve a range of technical performance requirements. This includes a minimum wet grip performance which aims to ensure that sufficient deceleration can be achieved, even in adverse weather conditions. In addition, the braking system of the vehicle is required to achieve a minimum stopping performance in a variety of states.

**TREASURY****■ Police Service of Northern Ireland: Finance****Alex Easton:** [\[4132\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will provide additional funding to the PSNI for training new recruits.

**Darren Jones:**

The Northern Ireland Executive (NIE) receives Barnett consequentials on spending on policing and justice by the UK Government in England and Wales. Any Barnett consequentials in 2024-25 are subject to a 24% needs-based uplift, to reflect the higher level of relative need in Northern Ireland, as identified by the independent Northern Ireland Fiscal Council.

In addition, the UK Government provides ringfenced Additional Security Funding for the Police Service of Northern Ireland each year to help address Northern Ireland's specific security challenges. Decisions on future non-Barnett funding for the Northern Ireland Executive will be taken at future spending reviews.

Policing and justice are devolved responsibilities of the NIE. The allocation of funding for the PSNI is a decision for the NIE, the NIE Department of Finance and the NIE Department of Justice.

**■ Tax Avoidance****Helen Hayes:**[\[4534\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has taken steps to establish an independent review of HMRC's implementation of the Loan Charge.

**James Murray:**

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

**WALES****■ Roads: Wales****Robbie Moore:**[\[900319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on road building projects in Wales.

**Jo Stevens:**

This government is committed to resetting the relationship and working collaboratively with the Welsh Government to improve transport infrastructure.

I am pleased to see the Welsh Government redesigning and delivering new road schemes like the Llanharan link road in a way that is cheaper, reduces embedded carbon, minimises impact on the environment, and delivers better public transport connectivity.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### ■ Conversion Therapy: LGBT+ People

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[4555\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to engage with LGBT+ people from minority (a) ethnic and (b) religious groups about the impact on them of (i) conversion practices, (ii) prejudice and (iii) abuse.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

It is crucial that all LGBT+ people are safe and protected from discrimination, including those from ethnic minority and/or faith communities.

Work is underway to deliver the Government's Manifesto commitments that will enhance legislative protections for LGBT+ individuals. In particular, the Government is committed to delivering a trans-inclusive ban on abusive conversion practices and ensuring that all existing strands of hate crime constitute an aggravated offence.

We are committed to continuing to listen to all viewpoints as this work progresses, and engage with a wide range of stakeholders, organisations and all LGBT+ communities.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Child Maintenance Service: Complaints

**Shockat Adam:** [\[4090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints about the Child Maintenance Service were investigated by the Independent Case Examiner (a) overall, (b) by the receiving parent and (c) by the paying parent in each of the last five years.

**Andrew Western:**

The Independent Case Examiner's office investigated 2,142 Child Maintenance Service (CMS) cases over the last 5 complete reporting years, broken down as follows:

REPORTING YEAR	CMS INVESTIGATIONS
2019/20	188
2020/21	267
2021/22	396
2022/23	507
2023/24	784

The Independent Case Examiner's office does not hold the information to provide a response to parts (b) and (c) of the question.

## ■ Children: Maintenance

**Shockat Adam:**

**[4088]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure the accuracy of the (a) systems and (b) IT used by the Child Maintenance Service.

**Andrew Western:**

Regular updates ensure the Child Maintenance Service's systems comply with policy. Each change follows industry standards, including thorough testing before and after implementation. The core principles for calculating Child Maintenance have remained largely unchanged since 2012, with no current system defects affecting these calculations.

The Department for Work and Pensions rigorously monitors accuracy, with the National Audit Office setting a target of monetary value errors under 1%. This standard is consistently met.

**Shockat Adam:**

**[4089]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help ensure that the CMS child maintenance calculation adequately reflects the (a) living expenses and (b) income of both parties.

**Andrew Western:**

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) operates on the principle that both parents have financial responsibility for their child, including their food and clothing, as well as contributing towards the associated costs of running the home that the child lives in.

The calculation represents an amount of money that is broadly commensurate with the amount that a paying parent would spend on the child if they were still living with them, irrespective of the income or assets of the receiving parent.

The CMS will assess how much the paying parent should pay the receiving parent, which in most cases is based on a percentage of the paying parent's gross annual income. The income of the receiving parent is not taken into consideration as they are already contributing as the child's primary caregiver and their income should not remove the responsibility of a paying parent to support their child.

A review is ongoing to look again at the child maintenance calculation to ensure it is fit for purpose and fair for both parents in light of societal changes since it was last looked at.

**■ Health: Weather****Jess Asato:****[3441]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to the Winter Fuel Payment on the demand for health care.

**Emma Reynolds:**

This Government is committed to pensioners – everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement.

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control.

Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged over 80.

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to public health. Keeping people warm and well at home and improving the quality of new and existing homes will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives and reducing pressures on the NHS.

We are also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This will support investment in insulation and low carbon heating – upgrading millions of homes over this Parliament. Our long-term plan will protect billpayers permanently, reduce fuel poverty, and get the UK back on track to meet our climate goals.

In making a decision on Winter Fuel Payment eligibility, the Government had regard to the equality analysis in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements.

**■ Pension Credit****Neil Duncan-Jordan:****[2698]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people over state pension age have been (a) assessed as spending more than 10% of their income on fuel (b) assessed as being eligible for pension credit and (c) receiving pension credit for the financial year 2023-24.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero published the latest Fuel Poverty Statistics for England in February 2023 on gov.uk here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics#2023-statistics>

Table 22 of this publication provides statistics on the number of fuel poor households by age of youngest person in household in 2023 using the Low Income Low Energy

Efficiency (LILEE) fuel poverty metric. Available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-detailed-tables-2024-2023-data>

Statistics on the number of households that spend more than 10% of their income on fuel costs can be found in Annex D of Fuel Poverty Annual report, covering all households. The figures in this annex are not broken down by age groups.

In 2021/22 (the latest year for which statistics are available) 2.15million people were estimated to be eligible for Pension Credit. Based on the most recent data (November 2023) 1.4million households in Great Britain currently receive Pension Credit.

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[3119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that the pension credit application process is (a) streamlined and (b) user friendly to complete.

**Clive Lewis:** [\[3732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of simplifying the application process for Pension Credit.

**Emma Reynolds:**

We are streamlining all Pension Credit application routes by using information held internally to reduce the number of questions the citizen must answer.

A key objective of DWP's Service Modernisation Programme is to utilise end user research to understand how the application process should operate in the future and consider the opportunities on how services can be more user friendly and easily accessible for citizens.

**Adam Jogee:** [\[3478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the (a) accessibility and (b) other aspects of the application process for Pension Credit.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Department is in the process of modernising the Pension Credit delivery and consideration of accessibility, having previously undertaken an assessment of the application process and introduced online claims, in addition to telephone and paper claims. DWP Agents and third-party organisations being available to support customers with the application process, and ease of the application process, form core elements of our transformational design activities.

**Mel Stride:** [\[3960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of pensioners have an annual State Pension income which exceeds the income threshold for eligibility for the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit; and what estimate she has made of that number and proportion in each of the next five years.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The income threshold for eligibility for the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit is dependent on personal circumstances. Therefore it is not possible to produce a robust estimate of how many pensioners exceed this due to State Pension income.

**Mel Stride:****[3961]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pensioners receive the State Pension as their only income and are not (a) in receipt of and (b) eligible for Pension Credit.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The number of pensioners in receipt of state pension only is too small for robust analysis. Any pensioners in receipt of low amounts of State Pension would likely be eligible for other state support, subject to their individual financial and personal circumstances.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply.

**Mel Stride:****[3965]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) people and (b) households are (i) in receipt of and (ii) entitled to Pension Credit in each parliamentary constituency.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Statistics showing how many households are in receipt of Pension credit in each Parliamentary constituency can be obtained from the published data on Stat Xplore here: [Pension Credit – Data from May 2018](#). Please note that the published Pension Credit figures refer to households, so the number of individuals will be higher (i.e., taking account of households where it is a couple claiming Pension Credit).

In published DWP Pension Credit Take-up statistics, it is estimated that up to 880,000 households who were entitled to receive Pension Credit did not claim the benefit. However, these statistics are only available at Great Britain level and cannot be broken down to smaller geographical areas. The latest available Pension Credit take-up statistics for Great Britain cover the financial year 2021 to 2022 and are available at: [Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The published Pension Credit caseload for Great Britain, for financial year 2021/2022 shows that an estimated eligible 1,410,000 households received pension credit. This is obtained from the latest published Benefit expenditure and caseload tables 2024 and is available at: [Benefit expenditure and caseload tables 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

**Jim Shannon:****[3970]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people claim Pension Credit.



**Emma Reynolds:**

Based on the latest published Pension Credit caseload statistics (sources below), in February 2024 there were 1,359,475 households in Great Britain claiming Pension Credit.

The published Pension Credit figures refer to households, so the number of individuals will be higher (i.e., taking account of households where it is a couple claiming Pension Credit).

**Source:**

Pension Credit data is published here: [Pension Credit – Data from May 2018](#)

**■ Pension Credit: Gosport****Dame Caroline Dinage:****[2857]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of households in Gosport constituency who are (a) eligible for and (b) not in receipt of pension credit.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Information relating to Pension Credit eligibility is only available via take-up statistics. The latest available Pension Credit take-up statistics for Great Britain cover the financial year 2021 to 2022 and are available at: [Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). However, these statistics are only available at Great Britain level and cannot be broken down to smaller geographical areas.

**■ Pension Credit: Take-up****Wendy Morton:****[2913]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has allocated additional (a) staff and (b) budget to helping to increase the uptake of Pension Credit.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Department has secured funding for increased staffing and our communications strategy which will support our programme of activity to drive up Pension Credit claims.

The Government is determined to ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need. As part of the Pension Credit Week of Action, we joined forces with national charities, broadcasters and local authorities to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim.

From 16 September, we will be running a national marketing campaign on a range of channels. The campaign will target potential pension-age customers, as well as friends and family who can encourage and support them to apply.

Our future campaign messaging will also focus on encouraging pensioners to apply for Pension Credit before the 21 December 2024, which is the last date for making a successful backdated claim for Pension Credit in order to receive a Winter Fuel Payment.

We will work with external partners, local authorities and the Devolved Governments to boost the take-up of Pension Credit.

## ■ Poverty: Children

**Paula Barker:**

[\[4037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if his Department consult former Prime Minister Gordon Brown on policies to reduce levels of child poverty.

**Alison McGovern:**

Tackling child poverty is at the heart of this Government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity.

The Child Poverty Taskforce, co-chaired by the Work and Pensions and Education Secretaries, has started urgent work to publish the Child Poverty Strategy in Spring and will explore all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty.

The Taskforce will engage external experts throughout the strategy development process including through a rolling programme of meetings, with sessions built thematically to bring together a broad range of experts on specific topics.

The Government also recognises the importance of capturing the experiences of those living in poverty which is why the Taskforce will also draw on findings from wider external engagement events in all regions and nations of the UK. These events will convene a broader range of voices, including bringing in the perspectives of families and children themselves.

We will also consider the record of previous administrations, not least during 1999-2005; the period in which official statistics recorded the fastest reduction in relative after housing costs UK child poverty rates.

## ■ Universal Credit: Fraud

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[4184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of fraudulent Universal Credit claims.

**Andrew Western:**

This government will not tolerate fraud or waste anywhere in public services, including in the social security system.

We are determined to reduce fraud and error and are currently exploring all options on how best to achieve our goal.

Latest estimates, including fraud in Universal Credit, were published earlier this year and can be found here - [Fraud and error in the benefit system: financial year 2023 to 2024 estimates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment

**Mel Stride:** [\[3962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the (a) proportion and (b) value of savings from limiting entitlement to Winter Fuel Payments by pensioner income decile.

**Emma Reynolds:**

Pension Credit recipients can be used as an indicator of those pensioners who will be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments following the change to Winter Fuel Payment entitlement. Information on pensioners' income bands based on whether they are in receipt of Pension Credit is available via published HBAI (Households below average income) statistics.

The statistics can be found using: [Households below average income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) (File name: pensioners-hbai-detailed-breakdown-2022-23-tables, Table name: Table 6.2db (BHC): Quintile distribution of income for pensioners3 by various family and household characteristics, United Kingdom).

The value of savings by income band is not available.

**Siân Berry:** [\[4576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an equalities impact assessment of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Regulations will come into force on 16 September, the first day of the Winter Fuel Payment qualifying week.

In making her decision on Winter Fuel Payment eligibility, the Secretary of State had regard to the equality analysis in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements.

## ■ Winter Fuel Payment: Eligibility

**Kim Johnson:** [\[3186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will commission a equality impact assessment on the proposed changes to the eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment.

**Emma Reynolds:**

The Regulations will come into force on 16 September, the first day of the Winter Fuel Payment qualifying week.

In making a decision on Winter Fuel Payment eligibility, the Government had regard to the equality analysis in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements.

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Grandparents**

**Paula Barker:**

**[3207]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of proposed changes to the Winter Fuel Payment on households where grandparents are the primary care givers to their grandchildren.

**Emma Reynolds:**

This Government is committed to pensioners – everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement.

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control.

Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits.

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. Additional amounts can be included in an award of Pension Credit if a person is responsible for children or young persons who live with them, where the qualifying conditions are satisfied.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Statement from the Secretary of State for Business and Trade

**Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds):** [\[HCWS87\]](#)

The Government has secured an improved deal for the workers impacted by the transformation plans of Tata Steel and is setting out its ambition for a new, UK-wide steel strategy; one which equips our steel-making industry with the right support to adapt and thrive in the new green economy.

I can announce today that we have agreed a process with Tata to assess investment opportunities for new capabilities that will deliver more, secure, long-term jobs than the deal that we inherited. And I will report back to the House on progress.

Tata Steel have agreed to offer a comprehensive training programme for up to 500 employees as an alternative for those at risk of compulsory redundancy. This would be on full pay for one month, then £27,000 per annum per employee for 11 months. Tata will fund those costs. Employees will be able to choose from recognised qualifications to develop sought-after skills which will be in high demand in the local economy now and long into the future.

Tata also expects that during the construction of the Electric Arc Furnace at least 500 new jobs could be created, which will tap into the local labour market wherever possible.

The Government has helped to secure improved terms for those at risk of redundancy by working closely with Unions.

Tata Steel's employees are now able set out their expression of interest in the most generous voluntary redundancy package the company has ever offered for a restructuring of this size. Employees will now be paid 2.8 weeks of earnings for each year of service up to a maximum of 25 years.

There is also a minimum redundancy payment of £15,000 pro-rata and a 'retention' payment of £5,000 for employees leaving the business because of these closures. Over 2,000 employees have expressed interest in voluntary redundancy on these terms.

As part of the deal, the company will also be releasing 385 acres of their site for sale or transfer. This is valuable real estate which will help bring in more companies and more employers not just from the steel sector but from a whole host of other industries too.

Taxpayers should know the improved terms for workforce are not dependent on additional money.

Strong conditions are included within the Grant Funding Agreement to clawback investment if Tata Steel reneges on its promises or fails to keep its end of the bargain. For example, there is now an improved grant repayment of £40k for every job Tata Steel does not retain post transformation. It was £30k per job under the previous deal. In the

event of this condition being enacted, this money will be repaid directly to the Government – a powerful incentive to ensure Tata Steel meet their 5,000 UK jobs target.

The Government knows this is the start of a journey towards a greener future for the steelworks in Port Talbot – reducing the site’s carbon emissions by as much as 85% a year. However, decarbonisation should not mean deindustrialisation. As part of the agreement the Government will be working with Tata Steel over the coming weeks and months to consider business cases for further investment and job creation opportunities.

However, the Government’s ambition for steel is so much bigger and broader than one single company. It is about the whole sector. The UK has always been a proud steelmaking nation, with a rich heritage stretching back to the Industrial Revolution. From cars to cranes, ships and scaffolding, British steel has been and is still used the world over, embodying our industrial might and innovation. For years, steel has been a neglected industry in this country. Crude steel production has declined by more than 50% in the last 10 years; some proclaimed the industry’s decline to be inevitable in the 21st century. This Government does not believe that decline is inevitable. While the industry faces challenges today, we want to do everything we can to ensure that it can adapt and grow tomorrow.

That is why I am pleased to announce that the Government will introduce a new Steel Strategy, which will be published in Spring 2025.

Our manifesto announced £2.5 billion for steel, on top of the £500m for this transformation at Port Talbot. Our intention is to use the money we’re investing to increase our UK capabilities so that we can create a more vibrant, competitive steel sector in the UK.

As part of our Steel Strategy, this Government will look seriously at the options to improve steel capabilities across the whole supply chain, including for primary steelmaking in the UK. We are also clear that we won’t be able to prioritise short-term subsidies over long-term jobs. That’s why with the help of independent experts, we will also be reviewing the viability of Direct Reduced Iron in the UK.

Steel is essential to delivering on our net zero goals and building the next generation of green infrastructure – which as Hon members know this Government is passionate about. It’s why, as part of our Steel Strategy, we intend to use the new Procurement Act to drive economic growth and account for social value in the things Government buys and the projects we commission. This work is already underway to increase the role of steel as we build our manufacturing base.

This Government also recognises that for far too long British energy intensive industries, including the steel sector, have been held back by high electricity costs. More often than not, this has made the UK less attractive to international investors. The Government’s clean energy mission will ensure we are no longer exposed to the kinds of gas price shocks we have seen in recent years helping British businesses to compete and win in the global market. To support that ambition, we’re also working with other like-minded nations to tackle global trade distortions, including through our chairing of the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity this year.

The Steel Strategy will be developed and delivered in partnership with the steel sector and trade unions. And it will work in lockstep with the Government's Industrial Strategy. The Government's ambition is to ramp up investment, strengthen our supply chains and create more well-paid jobs in the places where they're most needed.

To drive our partnership on the Steel Strategy forward, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade will shortly meet with industry experts and interested parties to discuss the future of the industry.

This Government cares about steel, the communities it supports and recognises its fundamental importance to the economy.

And supporting steel in this country is about being involved in the detail, shepherding individual plants into the future while protecting the people in them. But it's also about providing a direction of travel. An inspiration for investment and a cause for confidence, so that the sector can play its part in the next ten years and beyond.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Education and Skills Funding Agency

**The Secretary of State for Education (Bridget Phillipson):**

[\[HCWS83\]](#)

Today I am announcing the closure of the Education and Skills Funding Agency on 31 March 2025. The functions of the ESFA will be integrated into the core Department for Education. The ESFA is currently an executive agency of the Department.

This will happen in two stages. Schools Financial Support and Oversight functions will transfer from 1 October 2024 and be brought together with Regions Group, part of the Department. This will provide a single seamless voice to schools and ensure that financial improvement is central to school improvement.

We will then centralise our funding and assurance functions into the Department for Education alongside the closure on 31 March 2025, putting certainty, support and assurance in the core of the department.

Moving the agency functions back into the department will bring benefits to the individuals and organisations we support as well as to the taxpayer. It will enable a single, joined-up approach to funding and regulation to improve accountability.

We will be working closely with our staff, unions, stakeholders across the education sector to finalise and deliver our plans for closing the agency.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Government Response to the Office for Environmental Protection Report on the Implementation of the Water Framework Directive Regulations and River Basin Management Planning in England**

**Minister for Water and Flooding (Emma Hardy):** [\[HCWS86\]](#)

Today the Government is laying before the House its full response to the Office for Environmental Protection's (OEP's) review of the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Regulations and River Basin Management Planning.

The Government welcomes the OEP's recommendations and accepts its key conclusions that not enough progress has been made by previous governments to improve the water environment and meet the WFD objective to restore 75% of water bodies to good ecological status or good ecological potential. We face a major challenge in achieving these objectives due to years of under investment and insufficient action.

This Government is committed to taking action to accelerate progress on improving the water environment. There are systemic issues that require urgent reform of our water system. The government will set out over the coming months its plans to fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good. This will include a review of the framework that underpins our water sector, to ensure it delivers long-term stability, and reflects the needs of customers and the environment. We expect that the OEP's review of the WFD will be an important contribution to inform the review.

The Government Response will be available on GOV.UK.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Publication of the Independent Review of Forensic Pathology following the Hillsborough Disaster**

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper):** [\[HCWS85\]](#)

Today I am publishing the report of an independent review of the forensic pathology response to the Hillsborough disaster, conducted by forensic science expert Mr Glenn Taylor. Sadly, Mr Taylor passed away on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and his report is being published posthumously. I would therefore firstly like to offer sincere condolences to Mr Taylor's widow, and to express my profound gratitude for all of the work that Mr Taylor put in to conducting this review.

Mr Taylor's review was established in 2022, in response to a recommendation in Bishop James Jones' 2017 report on the experiences of families bereaved by the Hillsborough stadium disaster on 15 April 1989. In 2012, the Hillsborough Independent Panel revealed that pathology evidence presented at the first Hillsborough inquests was flawed; this finding led to fresh inquests, and in turn a verdict in 2016 that the 97 men, women and children who tragically lost their lives as a result of the disaster were unlawfully killed. Mr



Taylor's review examined what went wrong with the original pathology reports from the Hillsborough disaster, to ensure that similar mistakes will not be made in future.

In addition to seeking evidence from professionals, Mr Taylor engaged extensively with families who lost loved ones as a result of the Hillsborough disaster, as well as of the devastating Manchester Arena attack on 22 May 2017. I am most grateful to all of those family members who took the time to speak to Mr Taylor about their experiences – their powerful words throughout this report are a stark reminder of the extent to which the State failed them.

Mr Taylor found that “significant progress” has been made in the quality and depth of forensic pathology reports since the Hillsborough disaster. It is clear from this report, however, that there is more to be done and more lessons that still need to be learnt. First, family members are entirely right to expect that the pathology taken in respect of their loved ones will be explained to them and their questions answered. More needs to be done on engagement and support for families. Second, we must build resilience in our pathology services and ensure that we are adequately prepared for any future disaster. And third, we must look again at the structure of pathology in England and Wales, to ensure it best meets our needs as a public service. The Government welcomes Mr Taylor's findings and accepts all his of six recommendations, which it will work at pace to deliver.

To that end, I have today written to the Chair of the Pathology Delivery Board. I have requested that the Board take forward those actions that Mr Taylor identified for it immediately, and that it submits a proposed plan of action to me within 12 months. I have also tasked officials in my department to begin work on actions directed at the Home Office immediately.

I would once again like to extend my sincere thanks to Mr Taylor's wife for his work, and also to his team for their dedicated and sensitive approach to this matter.

The report has been laid before the House and will also be available on GOV.UK.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Government response to the Law Commission's report on Digital Assets

**Minister of State for Justice (Heidi Alexander):**

[\[HCWS84\]](#)

My noble friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede) has today made the following statement:

"I am pleased to inform the House that we are taking forward the Property (Digital Assets etc) Bill via the Law Commission's special procedure. This recommendation was made in the Digital Assets: Final Report published by the Law Commission in June 2023. The Bill will confirm in statute the common law position that certain digital assets can constitute property.

Providing certainty over legal issues around digital assets will encourage the use of English and Welsh law in internationally mobile transactions. The Ministry of Justice

commissioned the digital assets report in 2020 to identify any barriers to the recognition of digital assets as property under English and Welsh private law and to recommend reforms in this area of law. This work is vital to our ambition to maintain English and Welsh law as a global law of choice.

I also accept the second recommendation by the Law Commission to set up an expert group on control of digital assets. The Ministry of Justice has asked the UK Jurisdiction Taskforce (UKJT), an expert group chaired by the Master of the Rolls that produces non-binding guidance on areas of legal uncertainty, to take forward this work as a body that already has an internationally credible voice in the intersection of the law and technology. I believe the UKJT is uniquely placed to convene the expertise needed to consider the issues around control of digital assets.

Finally, the report made recommendations to make statutory amendments to the Financial Collateral Arrangements Regulations and to set up a multi-disciplinary project to formulate a statutory framework for the entering into, operation and enforcement of certain crypto-token and crypto asset collateral arrangements. I understand that my colleagues in HM Treasury are reviewing these recommendations and will provide an update in due course."