



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 12 September 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 12 September 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Crown Prosecution Service

Shaun Davies:[\[4455\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, if she will publish the number of cases awaiting charging decisions by the Crown Prosecution Service, broken down by (a) whether they are (i) summary only, (ii) either way and (iii) indictable only offences and (b) by Crown Prosecution Service region.

Sarah Sackman:

Management information is held showing the number of cases with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) which are awaiting a pre-charge decision.

The table below shows the overall number of cases which were awaiting a charging decision or administrative triage (completed on files sent by the police to the CPS for a charging decision) as of 25 March 2024. This data is provided in line with the last quarterly data release in March 2024.

25/03/2024

Cymru Wales	1,354
East Midlands	1,107
East Of England	868
London North	803
London South	833
Merseyside and Cheshire	733
North East	852
North West	1,088
South East	912
South West	1,167
Thames & Chiltern	759
Wessex	631
West Midlands	1,571
Yorkshire & Humberside	1,019

25/03/2024

Total **13,697**

Data Source: CPS Pre-Charge Decision Workload Report

These figures do not include cases that have been referred to the CPS but that are currently with the police to action, having been sent back to them with a request for further information.

This count is of the number of cases, not suspects. A single case may cover one suspect or several.

No data is available in the report showing whether the alleged offences are summary, either-way or indictable only. To obtain this information would require a manual review at disproportionate cost.

■ Knives: Crime**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** **[4767]**

To ask the Solicitor General, what steps she is taking to help increase prosecution rates for knife crime.

Sarah Sackman:

This Government is committed to halving knife crime in the next decade as set out in our Safer Streets Mission.

From Tuesday 24 September, it will be illegal to own zombie-style knives and machetes as they will be added to the list of dangerous prohibited items already banned, including zombie knives, butterfly knives, Samurai swords, and push daggers. The Government will also legislate to ban ninja swords and strengthen rules to prevent online sales of knives.

The Crown Prosecution Service and National Police Chiefs' Council also work closely to prevent and tackle knife crime. Guidance setting out their joint approach to knife crime offending can be found here: [Offensive Weapons, Knife Crime Practical Guidance | The Crown Prosecution Service \(cps.gov.uk\)](#).

BUSINESS AND TRADE**■ Arms Trade: Exports****Rachael Maskell:** **[4532]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether it is possible to introduce restrictions under the Open General export licensing regime to prevent export of arms to countries deemed at risk of using them for purposes that would violate international humanitarian law without disrupting export to approved recipients.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Open General Licences (OGLs) are pre-published licences that permit the export of specified items to specified destinations, following an online registration. These licences do not have any approved named recipients, however what they permit and to which destinations must be consistent with the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (SELC). If this assessment changes for either, then the OGL is amended, typically by removing the destination of concern. Removal of a destination from an OGL does not prevent an exporter from applying for a Standard Individual Export Licence – which would be assessed on its own merits against the SELC.

Rachael Maskell:[\[4533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what capacity his Department has for monitoring the end-user destination of arms exported under the Open General license regime; and what assessment he has made of the compatibility of those licenses with the end-use monitoring obligations of the Export Control Joint Unit.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The scope and terms of Open General Licences (OGLs) are chosen so they are consistent with the SELC. OGLs are typically offered for low risk destinations and low risk items. If our assessment of the risks relating to an OGL changes, then the OGL is amended or revoked. We would expect exporters to apply for a Standard Individual Export Licence where OGLs are not available and we would then be able to make a detailed assessment taking into account the specifics of the application before deciding whether or not to issue a licence.

The UK's approach is designed to enable a rigorous risk assessment to be carried out before a licence is issued to consider whether goods might be used in a way which is inconsistent with the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (SELC). The UK does not carry out end-use verification checks overseas after a licence is issued.

■ Conditions of Employment**Chris Law:**[\[4740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps the planned Fair Work Agency will take to strengthen the enforcement of workplace rights.

Justin Madders:

The current system of employment rights is fragmented and confusing for workers and businesses alike. We are creating the Fair Work Agency to deliver a much-needed upgrade to enforcement of workers' rights. It will bring together existing enforcement functions to create a strong, recognisable single brand so individuals and businesses know where to go for help. It will also have strong powers to inspect workplaces and take action against employers who are deliberately breaking the law.

■ Employment: Endometriosis and Periods

Alistair Strathern: [\[4891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Employment Bill will include (a) endometriosis and (b) other menstrual health conditions.

Justin Madders:

The Government has set out its immediate priorities for reforming employment law in the Plan to Make Work Pay. The Plan includes a number of measures which may help people manage endometriosis and other menstrual conditions at work - including making sure people can benefit from flexible working and ensuring flexibility is a genuine default.

Some of the measures in Make Work Pay will be delivered through an Employment Bill. The Government will confirm the contents of that Bill in due course.

■ F-35 Aircraft: Israel

Andy McDonald: [\[4217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Written Statement of 2 September 2024, HCWS64, whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in other countries in the F-35 global supply chain on the potential merits of suspending indirect exports of F35s to Israel.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The F-35 programme is the largest international collaborative defence programme in the world. The UK cannot make changes to the F-35 programme unilaterally – any change requires agreement across all Partner Nations. Regular discussions with programme partners on the operation of the programme are ongoing.

■ Foster Care: Conditions of Employment

Mary Glendon: [\[4366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to give worker status to foster carers.

Justin Madders:

As set out in our Plan to Make Work Pay, we will consult on a simpler two-tier employment status framework that differentiates between workers and the genuinely self-employed. We will confirm plans for this in due course.

I pay tribute to the vital efforts of foster carers, who carry out a challenging role that requires skill, dedication and love. This government will ensure more children can receive loving care in foster families.

We will work with councils and fostering services to ensure foster carers receive the support they need and deserve, but there are no plans to give worker status to foster carers.

■ Public Sector: Trade Unions

John Glen: [\[4654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 902 on Public sector: trade unions, whether it is the Government's policy to (a) amend and (b) repeal the check-off provisions from the (i) Trade Union Act 2016 and (ii) The Trade Union (Deduction of Union Subscriptions from Wages in the Public Sector) Regulations 2024.

Justin Madders:

The Government is committed to repealing the Trade Union Act 2016. Further information on implementing this will be outlined in due course.

■ Strike Ballots

John Glen: [\[4661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of ending the Trade Union Act 2016 requirement for industrial action ballot thresholds on trends in the level of industrial action.

Justin Madders:

The Government is committed to repealing the Trade Union Act 2016. Further information on implementing this will be outlined in due course.

■ UK Trade with EU: Exports

Valerie Vaz: [\[4361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions he has had with businesses that trade with the EU on the potential impact of inconsistent application of border controls on the (a) time taken for goods to clear EU customs and (b) cost of exporting goods.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Government is committed to tackling barriers to trade, including reducing frictions at the UK Border.

To do this we need effective dialogue with businesses. Minister Thomas and I recently hosted a roundtable to gather businesses' views on how to improve the UK-EU trading relationship. My officials are also engaging with businesses to understand the barriers they face and how we can support them to grow and export to the EU.

DBT is also working across government to understand how initiatives like the UK Single Trade Window and the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) can improve the passage of goods.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Civil Service Commission: Conflict of Interests****Andrew Griffith:**[\[4898\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what policies the Civil Service Commission has in place to avoid conflicts of interest when investigating its sponsoring department.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) is an executive non-departmental public body established in statute by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (2010) to provide assurance that civil servants are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition and to help safeguard an impartial Civil Service. The Commission is independent of Government and of the Civil Service.

The Commission acts in accordance with its legislation and takes direction from the independent First Civil Service Commissioner and the independent Civil Service Commissioners, who are appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition following the principles set out in the CSC's Recruitment Principles and in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

■ Civil Service Commission: Secondment**Andrew Griffith:**[\[4842\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which team in the Cabinet Office discharges statutory or contractual duties owed to Cabinet Office employees by the Cabinet Office as their employer whilst they are on secondment to the Civil Service Commission.

Georgia Gould:

Staff recruited by the Civil Service Commission are employed by the Cabinet Office and seconded to the Commission for the duration of the time in their role. The Civil Service Commission is independent; its staff operate under the direction of the First Civil Service Commissioner and the Civil Service Commissioners.

As Cabinet Office employees, staff in the Civil Service Commission are subject to Cabinet Office contractual terms and conditions (for example in relation to salary and leave entitlements) and are supported in the application of these by the Cabinet Office's corporate functions.

■ Kate Owen**Andrew Griffith:**[\[4559\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the terms were for the secondment of Kate Owen as Interim Chief Executive of the Civil Service Commission; and when the secondment will end.

Georgia Gould:

The published Civil Service Commission 2022/2023 Annual Report shows the current Interim Chief Executive began the role on 15 May 2023. An external recruitment

process to appoint a permanent Chief Executive was launched in May 2024 and is expected to conclude in September 2024.

■ Lord Alli

John Glen: [4651]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) the Prime Minister, (b) the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, (c) a civil servant, (d) a special adviser (i) requested and (ii) authorised the allocation of a Downing Street pass to Lord Alli.

Nick Timothy: [4868]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the names of people issued with a security pass to access Downing Street since 4 July 2024, excluding special advisers and civil servants.

John Glen: [5011]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, on what date Lord Alli was given a Downing Street pass; and on what date it was returned.

John Glen: [5024]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, on how many days Lord Alli used his Downing Street pass since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Rt Hon Member and Hon Member to the answer given by the then Prime Minister on 7 February 2017, Official Report, PQ 62542.

■ Overseas Trade: Taiwan

Andrew Rosindell: [4185]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the value of trade was between the UK and Taiwan in (a) each year since 2020 and (b) the latest period for which data is available.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 04/09/2024 is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ4185.pdf]

■ Propriety and Constitution Group

Andrew Griffith: [4841]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the role of the Propriety and Constitution Group is in his Department's relationship with the Civil Service Commission.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) is an executive non-departmental public body established in statute by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (2010). The Commission is independent.

The Cabinet Office, through the Propriety and Constitution Group, sponsors the Civil Service Commission and has appropriate sponsorship arrangements in place to carry out this function whilst safeguarding its independence. The governance and accountability arrangements for the Commission are set out in its 'Governance Statement' in the latest Annual Report and Accounts, which can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-commission-annual-report-and-accounts-202223>

DEFENCE■ **Army Reserve: Northern Ireland****Robin Swann:****[4824]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the employment tribunal decision entitled Major C Milroy v Advocate-General for Scotland of 5 August 2024, reference 4103202/2020, whether he plans to provide pensions to army reservists (a) from and (b) who served in Northern Ireland.

Al Carns:

The Ministry of Defence is currently in discussion with legal counsel on the implications of the judgment and the possibility of appealing.

EDUCATION■ **Apprentices: Gateshead Central and Whickham****Mark Ferguson:****[3282]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeships started in Gateshead Central and Whickham constituency in each of the last five years.

Janet Daby:

Apprenticeship starts are published at parliamentary constituency level in the Apprenticeships official statistics, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/apprenticeships>. Data for Gateshead Central and Whickham by academic year from 2018/19 to 2022/23 can be found in the dataset called 'Geography - New Parliamentary Constituency Breakdowns'.

■ **Apprentices: Knowsley****Anneliese Midgley:****[3292]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeships have started in Knowsley constituency in each of the last 10 years.

Janet Daby:

Apprenticeship starts are published at parliamentary constituency level in the Apprenticeships official statistics, which is available here; <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/apprenticeships>. Data for Knowsley for the academic years 2013/14 to 2022/23 can be found in the dataset called 'Geography LA, PCON and Region - Starts since May 2010 and 2015'.

Business and Criminology: BTEC Qualifications**Siân Berry:****[3628]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students took the (a) BTEC Level 3 National Diploma in Business and (b) WJEC Level 3 Applied Diploma in Criminology in (i) Brighton and Hove and (ii) the UK in the 2023-24 academic year; and whether students will be able to enrol on these courses in the 2025-26 academic year.

Janet Daby:

The full-year participation data for the 2023/24 academic year is expected to be available in November 2024. After this point the department will be in a position to provide additional breakdowns.

Regarding student enrolment for the 2025/26 academic year, on 24 July 2024 the Secretary of State announced that the department is conducting a short, internal review of Post-16 qualifications reform at Level 3 and below. Defunding decisions for 2025 onwards will be confirmed after the short review and we will set out the position before the end of December 2024.

Children in Care: Education and Mental Health**Dan Carden:****[3770]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies of the report by Kinship entitled *Forgotten: Support for kinship children's education and mental health*, published August 2024.

Janet Daby:

The government is determined to give every child the opportunities they deserve. It knows that many children in kinship care need extra support, including in school. The department is working to ensure their needs are met, and that they have the best possible opportunity to succeed.

Children in kinship care can currently access pupil premium funding if they have been entitled to free school meals within the last six years and can receive pupil premium plus funding if they have left local authority care through a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order. Children cared for under one of these orders are also eligible for school admissions through the Fair Access Protocol.

From September 2024, the role of Virtual School Heads has been expanded to include championing the education, attendance and attainment of children in kinship

care, ensuring that more children in kinship care receive the help they need to thrive at school.

The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund, helps adoptive and Special Guardianship Order children, and their families, access therapeutic interventions related to trauma and attachment. Since the fund was established in 2015, it has provided over £400 million in funding to support more than 50,000 children.

This government is considering how to most effectively transform the children's social care system to deliver better outcomes for children and families, including how best to support kinship children and families.

■ Children: Poverty

Michelle Welsh:

[3907]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to help alleviate child poverty in Sherwood Forest constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Tackling child poverty everywhere is at the heart of breaking down barriers to opportunity and improving the life chances for every child. For too many children, living in poverty robs them of the opportunity to learn and to prosper.

Child poverty has gone up by 700,000 since 2010, with over four million children now growing up in a low-income family. This not only harms children's lives now, but it also damages their future prospects and holds back our society and economy.

On 17 July 2024, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced the appointment of the Secretary of State for Work and Pension and the Secretary of State for Education to be the joint leads of a new ministerial taskforce to begin work on a child poverty strategy.

The ministerial taskforce, which met for the first time on 14 August 2024, will harness all available levers to drive forward short-term and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty, with a child poverty strategy published in spring next year. Further details on the taskforce can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/child-poverty-taskforce-kicks-off-urgent-work-to-publish-strategy-in-spring>.

The proposed Children's Wellbeing Bill will ensure education and children's social care systems transform life chances for millions of children and young people in England.

The department will remove barriers to opportunity to ensure the school system is fair for every child. As announced in the King's Speech, under the Children's Wellbeing Bill, every primary school in England, will offer a free breakfast club. They will play an important role in driving up standards of attendance and attainment, ensuring children are able to listen and concentrate throughout the school day. Alongside removing a barrier to opportunity for every child and supporting families with the cost of living, breakfast clubs will also offer parents more choices in childcare. To ensure that every

child, no matter their background, is well prepared for the school day, the department will limit the number of branded uniform items that a school can require.

In addition to free school meals and the over £2.9 billion pupil premium funding, the department has also provided over £200 million of funding this year to all local authorities across England to deliver the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme in their area. This is to ensure that over the longer school holidays, children from disadvantaged backgrounds and low-income families are able to take up free childcare spaces, which offer healthy meals and enriching activities, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning. This summer, the department anticipated that over three million HAF places would be provided to young people in this country.

■ Department for Education: Communication

Neil O'Brien: **[3076]**

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

Janet Daby:

The department uses marketing to support the delivery of strategic aims and government priorities, including to recruit teachers and early years professionals, reform the skills landscape, and drive take up of products and services like apprenticeships, T Levels and childcare entitlements.

The department's total spend on advertising and communications was £48 million in 2023/24. More information on the department's accounts for 2023/24, the last year for which data is available, can be found in the link below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a78085ce1fd0da7b592e80/DfE_consolidated_annual_report_and_accounts_2023_to_2024_-_web-optimised_version.pdf.

■ Education: Fees and Charges

Yuan Yang: **[3589]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the three years eligibility period for home fees for (a) UK nationals returning from abroad and (b) British Nationals Overseas passport-holders.

Janet Daby:

To qualify for home fee status in England, a person must have settled status or 'a recognised connection' to the UK, and in the case of persons with settled status, be ordinarily resident in the UK for three years.

UK nationals are settled in the UK once they return from abroad, and therefore qualify for home fee status and student finance once they have resided in the UK for three years prior to the start of their course.

The three year lawful residence rule is a long established feature of the student support system. It applies irrespective of nationality or country of origin, and it applies

to all the eligibility categories in the Student Support Regulations with the exception of those with a protection based need. It ensures that the support provided by the taxpayer is targeted at those who have a substantial and recent connection with the UK.

Hong Kong British National Overseas status holders qualify for home fee status and student finance once they have acquired settled status in the UK, which is usually after five years of residence. Most persons who acquire settled status in this way will automatically meet the three year ordinary residence requirement for student finance.

■ Further Education: Finance

Nadia Whittome: [\[3238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of funding for the further education sector.

Janet Daby:

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

FE funding, including its adequacy, will be considered as part of the upcoming Spending Review.

■ Further Education: Pay

Clive Lewis: [\[2953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of levels of pay in further education institutions on recruitment and retention.

Clive Lewis: [\[2954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing 16 to 19 funding to colleges to help fund pay deals.

Janet Daby:

The government recognises how critical further education (FE) teachers are to unlocking opportunity, tackling disadvantage and equipping learners with the skills needed to secure high value work and boost employer productivity. While the government does not set or recommend pay in the FE sector, it is clear that remuneration is an important factor in teacher recruitment and retention.

The government continues to invest in FE teachers, including through additional funding of around £600 million across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas. This will support FE providers to recruit and retain high quality teachers in critical subject areas where vacancy rates are high.

■ Further Education: Teachers**Nadia Whittome:** [\[3237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of trends in the retention of teachers in further education colleges.

Janet Daby:

The department is committed to supporting further education (FE) providers to recruit, retain and develop the high-quality teachers they need to deliver the best possible outcomes for their learners, including as a key part of our commitment to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers across colleges and schools.

To improve retention, the department is delivering Targeted Retention Incentive payments to eligible new and early career FE teachers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and priority technical subjects.

The FE Workforce Data Collection, first published in 2023, will provide valuable year-on-year information on the FE Workforce, including demographic and pay data. In the long term, this valuable insight will allow the department to monitor trends in recruitment and retention and ensure that we are providing the best support to FE teachers and providers.

■ Higher Education: Finance**Andrew Cooper:** [\[3527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support a sustainable funding model for Higher Education.

Janet Daby:

The government is determined that the higher education (HE) funding system should deliver for our economy, for universities and for students. The department will look carefully at all options and come forward with proposals. The department is committed to supporting the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university.

The department also recognises the immediate financial strain that some HE providers are under. As such, the department continues to work closely with the Office for Students (OfS), the independent regulator of HE in England, to monitor emerging risks and to ensure there are robust plans in place to mitigate them. The department has already appointed Sir David Behan as interim chair to oversee the important work of refocusing the OfS' role to concentrate on key priorities, including the financial stability of the HE sector.

■ Keele University: Domestic Visits**Adam Jogee:** [\[3463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to visit (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme and (b) Keele University.

Janet Daby:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and other governmental Ministers visit a wide variety of education settings across a broad geography. Ministers are grateful to receive many invitations to different establishments and will continue to regularly visit nurseries, schools, colleges and universities.

Local Government Finance**Tom Hayes:**[\[4493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the funding of the (a) High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant and (b) servicing of the debt incurred by local authorities.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government is acutely aware not only of the financial pressures that local authorities are facing because of the increasing cost of supporting young people with complex needs, but also the pressures that the government as a whole is facing because of the financial situation it has inherited. This government is acting as quickly as it can to respond to the cost pressures in the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system, and is working to consider SEND reforms, including how it can help councils manage the impacts of dedicated schools grant (DSG) deficits on their accounts. This government will also take decisions on local authorities' DSG allocations for next year as quickly as it can.

Local Skills Improvement Plans**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[3665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to continue (a) funding and (b) support for Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Janet Daby:

Local Skills Improvement Plans are a valuable source of information for local skills training providers, employers and stakeholders, and will provide important intelligence for the newly established Skills England.

The current grant-funding period for the designated employer representative bodies leading the development, implementation and review of each Local Skills Improvement Plan runs until March 2025. Future funding arrangements for Local Skills Improvement Plans will be considered as part of the current Spending Review.

Private Education: Fees and Charges**Joy Morrissey:**[\[4422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department will take steps to support children who receive bursaries and scholarships at independent schools who are adversely affected by the introduction of VAT on such schools.

Stephen Morgan:

The department is not expecting these changes to have a significant effect on bursaries across the private school sector as a whole. The department expects that charitable schools across the UK will want to continue to demonstrate wider public benefit through the provision of means-tested bursaries and through partnerships with state-funded schools after these changes are made.

Skills England: Chambers of Commerce**Julia Buckley:**[\[3499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to include the Chambers of Commerce in the Skills England programme.

Janet Daby:

The department has set out its plan and ambitions for Skills England. Work is now underway to develop how it will deliver, and the department has already been clear that working with a wide range of stakeholders will be central to this. This includes the British Chambers of Commerce as well as other key organisations. The department will publish its first report in due course, which will be followed by a series of engagement activities.

Students: Loans**Andrew Cooper:**[\[3524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing measures to support students with the cost of student loans.

Janet Daby:

UK higher education (HE) creates opportunity, is an engine for growth in our economy and supports local communities. The department is committed to supporting the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university. The department is determined that the HE funding system should deliver for our economy, for universities and for students.

The student loan system already supports students. Unlike commercial alternatives, student loans are available to all eligible students, regardless of background or financial history. The student loan system supports eligible students by providing up front tuition fee loans to meet the full costs of tuition. In addition, eligible students qualify for loans to contribute towards students living costs while attending university, with the highest levels of support paid to students from the lowest income families and those eligible for benefits.

Additionally after study, student loan borrowers are protected. Borrowers only make repayments when earning over the relevant student loan repayment threshold. At the end of the loan term, any outstanding loan debt, including interest accrued, will be written off with no detriment to the borrower.

■ Training: Taxation

Gareth Bacon: [\[3139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of implementing proposals for a growth and skills levy.

Gareth Bacon: [\[3140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of the growth and skills levy on non-levy paying companies.

Gareth Bacon: [\[3141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the financial impact of the proposed growth and skills levy on (a) non-levy paying companies, (b) the apprenticeship budget and (c) overall apprenticeship spending.

Gareth Bacon: [\[3142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the economic impact of growth and skills levy proposals to allow levy-paying companies to retain 50% of their contributions.

Gareth Bacon: [\[3143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 18 October 2023 to Question 201370 on Apprentices: Finance, how she plans to fund the policy of allowing levy-paying companies to retain 50% of their contributions under the Growth and Skills levy.

Gareth Bacon: [\[3144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on funding the retention of 50% of the contributions of apprenticeship levy-paying companies.

Janet Daby:

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

The department is working across government to develop the design of the Growth and Skills Levy and will set out more detail in due course. This will include further information on the role of Skills England in ensuring that levy-funded training delivers value for money and meets the needs of levy paying and non-levy paying businesses.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Insulation: Housing**

Rachael Maskell: [4379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how he determines schedules for insulating homes of pensioners.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Current Government energy efficiency schemes are targeted at low-income consumers and those in the least energy efficient households. Eligibility requirements can be found on gov.uk, www.gov.uk/government/collections/find-energy-grants-for-you-home-help-to-heat.

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

■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme

Ben Lake: [4408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with the Mineworkers Pension Scheme Trustees on potential reforms to the Mineworkers Pensions Scheme.

Sarah Jones:

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

David Baines: [4827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to (a) review the surplus arrangements and (b) transfer the investment reserve fund to members of the Mineworkers Pension Scheme.

Sarah Jones:

Our Manifesto committed to reviewing the surplus sharing arrangements and transferring the Investment Reserve back to scheme members. We are committed to ending the injustice of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme and work on delivering these commitments is already underway.

■ Nuclear Power

Jerome Mayhew: [4251]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential contribution of nuclear energy to his net zero goals in 2050; and if he will provide a roadmap for the deployment of nuclear assets.

Michael Shanks:

Nuclear energy, as one of the most reliable, secure, low-carbon sources of home-produced energy, is an essential part of our journey to net zero. Our manifesto made it clear that we support new nuclear, both large-scale, such as Hinkley Point C and Sizewell C, and Small Modular Reactors.

■ Nuclear Power Stations: Construction**Llinos Medi:**[\[4840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many responses were received in relation to the Prior Information Notice issued to explore building a further large-scale nuclear power station; from which parties those responses were received; and whether Wylfa is the designated site for the next gigawatt project.

Michael Shanks:

Considerations for a further large-scale project are at an exploratory stage with the Prior Information Notice forming part of this work. The Prior Information Notice has now closed, with 10 responses, and we are continuing to engage with the organisations that responded. The names of these organisations are commercially sensitive. No decision has yet been taken on whether to pursue a future large-scale project, but we want Wylfa to play an important role in new nuclear in the UK and we will set out our plans for the site in due course.

■ Nuclear Power: Supply Chains**Jerome Mayhew:**[\[4252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the development of a UK nuclear supply chain.

Michael Shanks:

To meet our current and future nuclear ambitions, we will work with the civil nuclear sector to ensure the UK has a resilient supply chain with the required capabilities and capacity across a range of activities from the front-end fuel cycle to waste management.

To do so, we will continue to engage with industry to identify barriers to entry and opportunities for working together to improve the attractiveness of working in the nuclear sector.

■ Small Modular Reactors: Procurement**Jerome Mayhew:**[\[4250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to announce the results of the Small Modular Reactor competition.

Michael Shanks:

Great British Nuclear was established in 2023 as an expert nuclear delivery. It is currently running a small modular reactor technology selection process. This is a live

procurement and is ongoing; the window for submitting tenders has now closed and Great British Nuclear is now evaluating bids, with further updates to follow in due course.

■ Wylfa Power Station

Aphra Brandreth: [\[4502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether it remains his Department's policy that Wylfa is the preferred site for a large-scale nuclear development.

Michael Shanks:

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Pippa Heylings: [\[4470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's policy is on the National Air Control Programme.

Emma Hardy:

No decisions have yet been taken in respect of the National Air Pollution Control Plan or any replacement.

In line with our statutory obligations we will continue to publish data setting out whether the UK has achieved its emission targets and whether it is on track to achieve future emission targets.

■ Animal Welfare: South West

Claire Hazelgrove: [\[3612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the increase in animal cruelty incidents in the South West in the last 12 months; and what steps his Department is taking to help tackle this increase.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra monitors animal welfare offences on a national basis based on data provided by the Ministry of Justice. Defra regularly meets the RSPCA and other stakeholders to discuss animal welfare issues affecting the sector including any trends in animal welfare offences.

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

In addition, the Online Safety Act 2023 requires social media firms to remove online content that could facilitate animal cruelty. Ofcom is currently consulting on how these new requirements should be implemented.

■ Asian Longhorned Tick

Mark Pritchard:

[\[2784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect (a) the food supply chain, (b) livestock and (c) public health from the Asian longhorned tick.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UKHSA has been running a tick surveillance scheme (TSS) since 2004 which encourages people to send in ticks for identification. The Animal and Plant Health Agency and our veterinary investigation centres are part of this scheme, particularly through our Centre of Expertise for Extensively Managed Livestock. The TSS has so far not detected the Asian Longhorned Tick.

We recognise that over the last few years there has been an expansion in certain tick populations of our livestock and managed deer populations, which can mean both public and animal health risks of tick borne diseases are increasing. In response, we have funded a £6.5 million research programme with BBSRC on vector borne diseases which includes several projects on ticks, livestock and climate impacts.

■ Bluetongue Disease: South Suffolk

James Cartlidge:

[\[4386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the spread of bluetongue disease on South Suffolk constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

Bluetongue serotype 3 (BTV-3) was detected in the EU for the first time in autumn 2023 and it will take time to fully understand the impacts of this disease on the sector. We continue to investigate all reports of suspicion of disease and are monitoring the evidence of impacts domestically and on the continent.

In the meantime, we continue to attempt to prevent its spread. We acted quickly to contain disease when the first case this season was detected on 26 August, implementing zones with movement controls on susceptible livestock to prevent spread in East Anglia, and more recently in East Riding.

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

Defra and APHA continue surveillance of susceptible animals and epidemiological assessments, remaining vigilant for any changes, and will continue to work closely with key industry stakeholders to respond to developments and ensure that keepers have the information they need.

■ BSE: Disease Control

Richard Fuller: [\[2798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the (a) efficacy and (b) adequacy of the Over Thirty Months Scheme for cattle.

Daniel Zeichner:

While cases of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in the UK are now rare, the confirmation of a new case in Scotland in May highlighted the continued importance of the robust BSE control measures we have in place that have greatly reduced the incidence of BSE in the UK. These controls include the Over Thirty Months (OTM) rule, which acts as a safeguard to both human and animal health. The OTM rule requires the removal at slaughter from cattle aged over thirty months old, tissues which are designated by the World Animal Health Organisation (WOAH) as Specified Risk Material (SRM), because they contain the highest level of potential BSE infectivity. The removal of SRM from cattle aged over thirty months is an internationally recognised requirement.

No assessment of the OTM rule is currently planned while we await the outcome of the recent application that England, Wales, and Scotland have made to WOAH to have our BSE risk status reduced from 'controlled' to 'negligible'.

■ Fisheries

Steve Darling: [\[3336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to protect fishing grounds in the context of the increase in (a) offshore wind energy developments and (b) protected areas.

Emma Hardy:

Food security is national security.

That is why the new Government will always back our great British fishing industry. We are engaging with industry and across Government on the spatial prioritisation programme to champion to protect the fishing sector.

We will go further by tearing down unnecessary trade barriers that block our fishing exports and push for more fish to be caught in British waters.

■ Flood Control: Cambridgeshire

Charlotte Cane:

[4124]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the risk of flooding in the Fens in East Cambridgeshire.

Emma Hardy:

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

This Government will improve resilience and preparation across central government, local authorities, local communities and emergency services to better protect communities across the UK. We will launch a new Flood Resilience Taskforce to turbocharge the delivery of new flood defences, drainage systems and natural flood management schemes.

In the short-term, the Environment Agency are working hard to sustain the current standard of service in the Fenland area. £172m in capital investment has been committed between 2021/22 - 2026/27 across the area, with £23.93m of this in the East Cambridgeshire area.

In parallel, work is progressing to develop a long-term adaptive plan for flood infrastructure in the Fens. The 'Fens 2100+' is a £9.8m programme to develop a Fens-wide flood resilience investment strategy that achieves long-term value for money and generates regional and national benefits. It's being developed with, and for, Flood Risk Management Authorities so they can plan for the next 20-25 years of flood risk management. This investment strategy will be completed in 2025.

Further information can be found here: [Fens2100+ - Environment Agency - Citizen Space \(environment-agency.gov.uk\)](#).

■ Flood Control: Hertfordshire

Lewis Cocking:

[4080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has allocated funding for flood defences in Hertfordshire.

Emma Hardy:

The Government has allocated capital grants for new flood defences as well as maintenance funding for existing flood defence assets in Hertfordshire.

For the financial year 24/25 (April 2024 - March 2025), the Environment Agency's allocated funding for asset maintenance in Hertfordshire is £1,040,280. This figure covers their expected maintenance on flood defence assets and main river channels under their permitted powers, including vegetation management, operational checks on flood defence assets, treatment of invasive non-native species, mechanical and electrical inspections, and inspection and maintenance of public safety measures.

In addition, as of 4 September 2024, £6,480,444 of Grant in Aid has been allocated to capital flood defence projects in Hertfordshire for the financial year 24/25.

■ Flood Control: Loughborough

Dr Jeevun Sandher:

[3580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Flood Resilience Task Force is taking to help protect communities in Loughborough constituency from flood damage.

Emma Hardy:

To ensure that communities are better protected from flooding, Defra has established a ministerially led cross-Governmental Flood Resilience Taskforce, with the first meeting taking place in September. The Flood Resilience Taskforce will ensure that preparedness and resilience to flooding is reviewed regularly before the start of the main flood season; and that it is continuously improved to ensure optimum protection to people, homes and businesses.

In advance of the winter flood season, the Environment Agency has been directed to carry out maintenance of its flood defence assets across Loughborough. This includes monthly operational checks of structures including outfalls / control gates, weekly operational checks and clearance of debris screens. A structural survey of the flood wall at Quorn is also scheduled for this autumn.

■ Horticulture: Peat

Sarah Green:

[4272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning the sale of peat for use in the amateur gardening sector.

Mary Creagh:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only. Defra is committed to protecting our nature-rich habitats, including peat bogs, and is looking at next steps regarding measures to ban horticultural peat. The Department will continue to work alongside the horticultural sector to accelerate progress on the peat free transition.

■ Hunting

Clive Lewis:

[2956]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a timeline to bring forward legislative measures to end 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.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[3663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to end 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.

■ Land Drainage

David Simmonds:

[\[3831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's timetable is for implementing Schedule 3 of the Flood & Water Management Act 2010; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing thresholds at which those measures would be applied to help reduce the potential impact on small-scale developers.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is considering how best to implement its ambitions on sustainable drainage.

■ Neonicotinoids: Water

Jayne Kirkham:

[\[4504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to reduce the levels of fipronil and imidacloprid in UK waters.

Emma Hardy:

The Government and Regulators are engaging with pharmaceutical companies to improve information on use and disposal of their products to help minimise the risk to the environment and human health.

The Environment Agency (EA) is also working with the Royal Veterinary College to investigate levels of these pharmaceuticals in waters where dogs swim, and to improve pet owners' understanding of their environmental risks.

The EA is a member of the cross-Government Pharmaceuticals in the Environment Group. Fipronil and imidacloprid in UK surface waters has been a priority for this group since April 2023. The group has focused on identifying the sources of fipronil

and imidacloprid detected in UK surface waters to work towards reducing these levels.

The EA is actively involved in monitoring, research, educational outreach, and engagement with multiple stakeholders to address environmental concerns about these pharmaceuticals.

More monitoring data and research are needed to better understand the potential environmental hazards and risks of alternative treatments to imidacloprid and fipronil spot-on products and inform options for taking further action.

■ Plants: Imports

Gregory Stafford: [\[4516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on the adequacy of EU export regulations for preventing the importation of diseased plants into the UK.

Daniel Zeichner:

The [Trade Specialised Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary \(SPS\) measures](#), set up under the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, provides a platform for information sharing and discussion on each of the Parties' import and export requirements. It is using this mechanism that Defra could raise questions regarding the EU's export regulations as they relate to plant health measures, if it were deemed necessary and appropriate to the circumstance.

Non-compliant consignments imported into Great Britain from any country, including EU Member States, are monitored daily. Defra works together with the country concerned to identify and resolve any recurring issues. Between 01 January 2023 and 31 August 2024, Defra has notified the EU of 3525 non-compliant consignments. More data on EU non-compliances can be found on the [UK Plant Health Portal](#).

■ Plastics: EU Law

Alex Sobel: [\[3774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the Bridge to Busan declaration.

Mary Creagh:

The Bridge to Busan is a political declaration to raise ambition on addressing primary plastic polymers. It aims to achieve the goal of ending plastic pollution in the context of the plastic pollution treaty, currently being negotiated by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. As a founding member of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution, the United Kingdom is calling for binding provisions in the treaty to restrain and reduce the production and consumption of primary plastic polymers to sustainable levels.

■ Plastics: Treaties**Alex Sobel:** [\[3775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to send a representative from his Department to the fourth intergovernmental negotiation meeting for the Global Plastics Treaty in November 2024.

Emma Hardy:

Yes, officials will attend the fifth session, due to be held in November in Busan, South Korea.

■ Sewage: Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard**Alex Mayer:** [\[3436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the number of sewage discharges into waterways there have been in Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard constituency in the last 12 months.

Emma Hardy:

Anglian Water provides [data on storm overflow discharges](#) in near real time on their website. The Environment Agency will publish the 2024 Event Duration Monitoring data, showing how long and how often storm overflows have been used, in March 2025. The data for previous years is available [here](#).

The Secretary of State recently met with water company bosses, including Anglian Water, to make it clear that water firms will be held accountable for their performance for customers and the environment. Furthermore, after writing to Ofwat, the Secretary of State has secured agreement that funding for vital infrastructure investment is ringfenced and can only be spent on upgrades benefiting customers and the environment. Ofwat will also ensure that when money for investment is not spent, companies refund customers, with money never allowed to be diverted for bonuses, dividends or salary increases.

The Government also announced a new Water (Special Measures) Bill, which will turn around the performance of water companies, in the King's Speech. The Bill will strengthen regulation, give the water regulator new powers to ban the payment of bonuses if environmental standards are not met and increase accountability for water executives. These are the first critical steps in enabling a long-term and transformative reset of the entire water sector.

I would also refer the hon. Member to the Written Statement made by the Secretary of State on 18 July, [HCWS3](#).

■ Thames Water: Billing**Mr Joshua Reynolds:** [\[3925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of proposed increases to water bills by Thames Water in the period to 2030 on households in relative poverty.

Emma Hardy:

We understand the financial pressures hardworking families are currently facing, especially as many people have been impacted by cost-of-living challenges.

Firmer action should have been taken over the last fourteen years to ensure money was spent on fixing the water and sewage system, not syphoned off for bonuses and dividend payments.

I am angry that over a decade of Conservative failure means customers will now have to pay higher bills to fix the system - this didn't need to happen.

But while I can't undo the failure of the past – I can stop it happening again.

That is why I have announced reforms to ensure that funding for vital infrastructure will now be ringfenced, meaning it can only be spent on upgrades that benefit customers and the environment, not diverted to pay bonuses, dividends or salary increases.

Where money for investment isn't spent, companies will refund it to their customers.

We are going further to work with the sector to ensure support is available for vulnerable customers who are struggling to pay their bills. All water companies, including Thames Water, offer affordability support for households who struggle to pay their bills in full including WaterSure and social tariffs, payment holidays, payment matching, benefit entitlement checks and financial advice referral arrangements.

■ Water Charges**Sarah Gibson:****[3559]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that water companies reduce water bills; and what steps he is taking to ensure that water companies do not pass the costs of (a) any fines incurred, (b) debts and (c) infrastructure upgrades on to customers.

Emma Hardy:

This Government has been clear that vital infrastructure investment is ringfenced and can only be spent on upgrades benefiting customers and the environment. When money for investment is not spent, companies must refund customers, with money never allowed to be diverted for bonuses, dividends or salary increases.

New infrastructure will need to be paid for, and while water companies can attract private investment, this will also need to come from customer bills. It is Ofwat's responsibility to independently scrutinise water company plans to ensure that the prices water companies charge their customers are fair and proportionate.

We have inherited a water system spilling record levels of sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas. Water companies must take action to turn this around and Ofwat must ensure customers do not pay twice for upgrades.

■ Water Charges: Infrastructure**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[4768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that proposed increases to consumer water bills are used for infrastructure investment.

Emma Hardy:

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Chippenham, Sarah Gibson, on 12 September 2024, [PQ 3559](#).

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Alaa Abdel Fattah****Marsha De Cordova:** [\[4777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Egyptian counterpart on the release of Alaa Abd el-Fattah.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

HMG Ministers and officials at the British Embassy in Cairo continue to raise Mr Alaa Abd El-Fattah's case with the Egyptian government at the highest levels. They have been consistently clear in calling for his release and continue to press for urgent consular access. The Foreign Secretary raised Mr El-Fattah's case with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty on 7 August and the Prime Minister raised Mr El-Fattah's case with President Sisi on 8 August.

■ Bangladesh: Press Freedom**Ruth Jones:** [\[4929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Bangladeshi counterparts on the safety of journalists.

Catherine West:

The UK recognises the fundamental value of journalism in creating free and open societies, enabling people to learn about and understand their rights and holding governments to account. The British High Commission in Bangladesh regularly meet with journalists through the UK Government's engagement with the Media Freedom Coalition. The UK works with partners in the Media Freedom Coalition to advocate for media freedom and the safety of journalists. The UK raised protection of journalists and media freedom during the 44th Universal Periodic Review of Bangladesh in November 2023.

■ China: National Security**Blair McDougall:** [\[4469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report entitled China: The top ten priorities for early Labour government action published by the Coalition on Secure Technology and the Council on Geostrategy China Observatory in September 2024, what steps he is taking to (a) tackle vulnerabilities, (b) redirect critical economic supply chains and (c) otherwise reduce dependencies.

Catherine West:

Building economic security is fully compatible with a push for growth. In an age of insecurity, a more resilient economy is essential to avoid geopolitical or climatic shocks leading to economic damage on the living standards of working people. Enhancing economic security helps safeguard longer-term growth, and strengthening and securing global supply chains is essential to the UK's future economic resilience.

■ Foreign Relations: China**Blair McDougall:** [\[4467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the report entitled China: The top ten priorities for early Labour government action published by the Coalition on Secure Technology and the Council on Geostrategy China Observatory in September 2024.

Catherine West:

This Government will bring a consistent, long-term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, driven by the national interest. We will co-operate where we can, including on global net zero, health and trade; compete where we have different interests; and challenge where we must, to protect our national security and values. We will improve the UK's capability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities China poses through an audit of the UK's relationship with China as a bilateral and global actor.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**Mr Calvin Bailey:** [\[4459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of changes in the level of (a) humanitarian access, (b) protection of humanitarian facilities and personnel and (c) accountability in relation to violence against humanitarian facilities and personnel in Gaza since 5 July 2024; and what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on those issues.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to the House on 2 September, it is the assessment of this Government that Israel could reasonably do more to ensure that

life-saving food and medical supplies reach civilians in Gaza. I raised this concern with Israeli Ambassador to the UK Tzipi Hotovely during our meeting on 24 July, making clear that significantly more aid needed to be delivered for Israel to fulfil its commitment to 'flood' Gaza with aid.

We continue to press Israel for safe distribution of aid and an improved deconfliction mechanism to keep humanitarian operations safe from military operations. We have been clear that if Israel's personnel are responsible for incidents, they should be held accountable. All parties must abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law. This was raised by the Foreign Secretary in his visit to Israel on 16 August.

■ **Gaza: Israel**

Andy McDonald:

[\[4214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement entitled Middle East Update of 2 September 2024, Official Report, column 37, what information his Department holds on whether Israeli F-35 jets have been used to commit violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK's robust export licensing criteria states that the government will not issue export licences if the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of International Humanitarian Law. On this basis, we have suspended certain export licences for items that could be used in the current conflict in Gaza. The UK is the only producer and supplier of certain critical components of the F-35, including a global pool of spare parts used to sustain and repair aircraft in service. Any suspension to Israel alone is not possible without undermining the programme overall, which would have serious implications for international peace and security.

■ **Iraq: Politics and Government**

Ruth Jones:

[\[4892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of Iranian-backed militias on the stability of the Nineveh Plains; and what steps his Department is taking to support the indigenous Christian communities in that region.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

It is vital that the Government of Iraq keep Iraqi militia groups in line and ensure democracy is adhered to. We are closely monitoring the impact of developments in Nineveh on the safety of Nineveh's Christian community.

The UK is firmly committed to protecting the Christian community and other ethnic and religious minorities and are strong advocates of greater Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Iraq. We regularly engage with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on this issue, in particular the importance that

minorities are included in national and local government as well as reconciliation efforts.

Ruth Jones: [\[4893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help tackle and (b) recent discussions he has had with the Iraqi Prime Minister on the influence of external forces on regional governance in the Nineveh Plains.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

HMA Baghdad has regular engagement with diplomatic colleagues as well as the Prime Minister of Iraq. We are closely monitoring the impact of these developments on the safety of Nineveh's Christian community.

The UK is firmly committed to protecting the Christian community and other ethnic and religious minorities and are strong advocates of greater Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Iraq. We regularly engage with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on this issue, in particular the importance that minorities are included in national and local government as well as reconciliation efforts.

Ruth Jones: [\[4894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking with (a) the US and (b) other international partners to help (i) tackle the destabilisation of the Nineveh Plains by Iranian-backed militias and (ii) ensure the protection of (A) Christians and (B) other vulnerable communities in that region.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

HMA Baghdad regularly engages with diplomatic colleagues in Iraq on a variety of topics, including the destabilising effects of militias in Iraq. It is vital that these groups are kept in line. We are closely monitoring the impact of developments in Nineveh on the safety of the region's Christian community, as well as other vulnerable communities.

The UK is firmly committed to protecting the Christian community and other ethnic and religious minorities and are strong advocates of greater Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Iraq. We regularly engage with the Government on this issue, in particular the importance that minorities are included in national and local government as well as reconciliation efforts.

■ Israel: Arms Trade

Andy McDonald: [\[4213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement entitled Middle East Update of 2 September 2024, Official Report, column 37, what assessment he has made of whether equipment relating to licenses that have not been suspended could be used in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK assesses export licences against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (SELC), which state that a licence will not be granted for an item if the Government determines there is a clear risk that it might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law. The export licences that were suspended by the government on 2 September effectively cover all arms exports for use in the current conflict in Gaza, except for those components for F-35 aircraft which, for reasons outlined in the Foreign Secretary's Statement and the Business and Trade Secretary's Written Ministerial Statement, have been excluded from the suspension.

Andy McDonald:[\[4215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral contribution of 2 September 2024 on Middle East, Official Report, column 37, what discussions he had with his counterpart in the US Government prior to his decision not to suspend export licences for F-35 fighter jet components.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary regularly speaks to his US counterpart about a wide range of issues. Our licencing decisions are based on our own processes and are not led by the decisions of others.

Andy McDonald:[\[4216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement of 2 September 2024 on Middle East Update, Official Report, column 37, if he will hold discussions with counterparts in other countries involved in the F-35 global supply chain on the potential merits of collectively withholding export licenses for F-35s to Israel.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Our licencing decisions are based on our own processes. At the present time exports to the F-35 Programme will be excluded from this suspension, except where the exports would go direct to Israel, for the reasons set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement on 2 September.

■ Israel: Palestinians**Mr Calvin Bailey:**[\[4457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on (a) escalating violence, (b) compliance with international humanitarian law by Israeli forces and (c) accountability for recent settler violence in the occupied West Bank.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We continue to call on Israeli authorities to exercise restraint, adhere to international law, and clamp down on the actions of those who seek to inflame tensions. The Government is deeply concerned by the ongoing IDF military operation in the

occupied West Bank and the attacks from Palestinian militants. It is in no one's interest for further conflict and instability to spread in the West Bank.

The UK strongly condemns settler violence and provocative remarks such as those made by Israel's National Security Minister Ben-Gvir, which threaten the status quo of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem. The Foreign Secretary was clear with PM Netanyahu on his visit to Israel and the OPTs in July that the Israeli government must clamp down on settler violence and end settlement expansion. The UK has sanctioned eight people responsible for perpetrating and inciting human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank, and two entities. We keep all these issues under review and continue to discuss them with our closest allies.

Mr Calvin Bailey:

[\[4458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on compliance with (a) the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and (b) other provisions of international law by the Israeli authorities in the treatment of Palestinian detainees in Israeli custody.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Government is concerned by credible claims of mistreatment of detainees, which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) cannot investigate, having been denied access to places of detention. The treatment of detainees was a factor taken into account in our decision on arms export licences, as set out in the summary of the international humanitarian law (IHL) process, decision and the factors taken into account [<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summary-of-the-international-humanitarian-law-ihl-process-decision-and-the-factors-taken-into-account#:~:text=The%20government%20has%20conducted%20a%20thorough%20review%20of%20Israel%E2%80%99s%20compliance>].

The Foreign Secretary made an Oral Statement to update the House on this decision on 2 September. The Foreign Secretary has repeatedly called for Israel to allow the ICRC access to detainees in accordance with International Humanitarian Law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The UK unequivocally condemns all violations and abuses, including sexual violence and violence against children, and calls for all reports to be fully investigated to ensure justice for victims and survivors. The arrest and detention of children should follow due process, in line with international juvenile justice standards.

■ Sudan: Humanitarian Situation

Sarah Champion:

[\[4367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking as penholder on Sudan to support the development of options for the deployment of a civilian protection mission for that country in coordination with the (a) African Union, (b) UN and (c) Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

Anneliese Dodds:

We have used our position as penholder at the UN Security Council to call meetings to call for a ceasefire, and for all warring parties to protect civilians in Sudan. On 13 June, the UNSC adopted a UK-led resolution 2736 demanding a halt to the Rapid Support Forces' siege of El Fasher and requesting the Secretary-General to provide recommendations on the protection of civilians. The UK is engaging closely with the UN on the development of those recommendations which will be released in October ahead of the next 120-day meeting on Sudan. I met with the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa to discuss pathways to ceasefire negotiations and we will continue to work alongside our international partners, including those in the region such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the AU, to urge the warring parties to engage constructively to secure a ceasefire.

Uganda: Politics and Government**Alex Sobel:**[\[4248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the current political situation in Uganda.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK works with the Government of Uganda on a range of shared interests including trade, development, humanitarian support and regional security. We engage as a critical friend, and regularly raise concerns about governance and human rights issues with the Ugandan authorities.

Venezuela: Elections**Sammy Wilson:**[\[4344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has taken recent steps to call on the Venezuelan National Election Council to publish the voting records from the Presidential election in that country.

Catherine West:

The UK does not accept the legitimacy of the administration put in place by Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela in 2018. The UN was clear the outcome of the Venezuelan elections in July this year cannot be deemed credible without the National Electoral Council publishing full results. The Foreign Secretary has publicly called for the swift and transparent publication of full, detailed results to ensure that the outcome reflects the votes and the will of the Venezuelan people; this was echoed in a G7 statement on 31 July. The UK also joined a coalition of countries in signing a Dominican Republic-led regional statement on 16 August demanding an end to repression and respect for human rights.

The UK continues to pay testament to the millions of Venezuelans who turned out to vote in the presidential election on 28 July. Along with the UN and international allies, we remain deeply concerned about allegations of serious irregularities in the declared

results. Despite repeated calls, Venezuela's National Electoral Council has still not produced full results or credible evidence of a victory for Nicolas Maduro. Publicly available records appear to show Edmundo Gonzalez secured the most votes by a significant margin.

The UK continues to work with international partners to achieve a peaceful solution in Venezuela. Dialogue remains the only solution to ensure that the will of all Venezuelans is respected.

■ Western Sahara: Politics and Government

Dr Andrew Murrison: [\[4190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of supporting Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara, in line with the amended diplomatic positions of (a) France, (b) the US, (c) Israel and (d) Spain.

Dr Andrew Murrison: [\[4191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the obstacles to recognising Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara (a) in general and (b) in relation to British Overseas Territories.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Successive UK Governments have regarded the status of Western Sahara as undetermined. The UK supports UN-led efforts to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise. The UK continues to support UN-led efforts and, in particular, the work of Staffan de Mistura as Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Western Sahara. Officials regularly discuss Western Sahara with international partners, including the UN, Morocco, and Algeria; we continue to encourage constructive engagement with the political process.

■ Yazidis: Genocide

Ms Julie Minns: [\[900395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to help ensure the perpetrators of genocide and other crimes against Yazidis in 2014 are (a) investigated and (b) prosecuted.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK acknowledges acts of genocide were committed by Da'esh against Yazidis. The UK played a leading role in establishing the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD). UNITAD has collated and processed considerable evidence of Da'esh atrocities since 2017. It has contributed to addressing the legacy of Da'esh in Iraq, by generating high-quality evidence which has supported trials in third countries, and building capacity within the Iraqi judicial system. The UK will continue working with Iraq and international partners to ensure that Da'esh are held accountable for the crimes they have committed following UNITAD's closure.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Care Quality Commission: Inspections****James Cartlidge:**[\[4390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to end the use of one or two word ratings used by the Care Quality Commission.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 10 September 2024]: The Department is thoroughly reviewing the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and as part of that work, we have asked the CQC to improve the transparency of their ratings. The Department has not yet made a decision on changing the CQC's ratings system.

■ Cervical Cancer: Older People**Munira Wilson:**[\[4936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing women over the age of 65 to request a cervical smear.

Munira Wilson:[\[4939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of extending the cervical screening programme beyond the age of 65.

Andrew Gwynne:

There are currently no plans to make an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of extending the age of the National Health Service's cervical screening programme beyond 65 years old. The UK National Screening Committee reviewed the evidence to screen women over 65 years old for cervical cancer in 2019, and due to the lack of evidence, no recommendation was made on changing the age at which women exit the programme.

People over the age of 65 years old who have not had a positive human papillomavirus (HPV) cervical screening result recently are not invited back for screening. Evidence suggests that it is very unlikely that they will develop cervical cancer over the age of 65 years old if they are HPV negative.

Anyone aged 65 years old or older continues to be screened within the NHS cervical screening programme if one of the last three screening tests was abnormal. In addition, people aged over 65 years old who have never had cervical screening, or who have not had a screening since they turned 50 years old, are able to request a cervical screening test through their general practice.

■ Dental Services: Ashfield**Lee Anderson:**[\[4415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) provide funding and (b) improve access to NHS dental practices in Ashfield constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

Responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population, has been delegated to integrated care boards (ICB) across England. For the Ashfield constituency, this is the NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB.

The Government plans to tackle the challenges patients face when trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and to recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists. The Government will also introduce a supervised tooth-brushing scheme for three- to five-year-olds, targeting the areas of highest need.

■ Dental Services: Children**Saqib Bhatti:**[\[4440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to continue the previous Government's commitment to deliver fluoride varnish treatments to more than 165,000 children in under-served areas.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 10 September 2024]: We are currently reviewing the previous Government's Dental Recovery Plan, Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry, including proposals to deliver fluoride varnish treatments to more than 165,000 children in under-served areas, and what elements can be taken forward effectively. We will implement our Dental Rescue Plan, including introducing a supervised tooth-brushing scheme for three- to five-year-olds which targets the areas of highest need, and prioritise initiatives that will see the biggest impact on access to National Health Service dental care.

■ Dental Services: Rural Areas**Saqib Bhatti:**[\[3181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to dentistry in rural areas.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 4 September 2024]: We are aware of the challenges faced in accessing a dentist particularly in more rural and coastal areas. This Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access NHS dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

We also know that the most common reason children aged five to nine are admitted to hospital is to have rotting teeth removed. That is why we will also introduce a

supervised tooth-brushing scheme for children aged three to five, targeting the areas of highest need.

From 1 April 2023, the responsibility for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards across England.

■ General Practitioners: Contracts

Mike Martin:

[\[4496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to review the GP contract.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 11 September 2024]: We hugely value the critical role that general practitioners (GPs) play. We want to work with doctors to get the National Health Service back on its feet, so it works for patients and staff. Our plan to restore GPs will require both investment and reform.

The GP contract is reviewed and amended annually following consultation with relevant stakeholders, and we will begin the process in the coming months. Further detail will be made available to relevant stakeholders in due course.

■ Genito-urinary Medicine

Adam Jogee:

[\[4790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of creating a new Sexual Health Strategy.

Andrew Gwynne:

We are committed to improving sexual health in England for the whole population, and are currently considering the next steps in doing so. My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has commissioned officials for advice on how to progress the development of a new HIV Action Plan, which we aim to publish by summer 2025.

The Government is also committed to prioritising women's health as we build a National Health Service fit for the future. We are considering how to take forward the Women's Health Strategy for England.

■ Hospices: Finance

Lee Anderson:

[\[4414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of increasing funding for hospices.

Stephen Kinnock:

Palliative care services are included in the list of services an integrated care board (ICB) must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs

in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

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

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

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

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

■ **Mental Health Services: Children**

James Wild: [\[4428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of neurodevelopmental assessments for children in (a) England and (b) Norfolk.

James Wild: [\[4429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to increase the level of funding for neurodevelopmental services.

James Wild: [\[4430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to neurodevelopmental assessments.

James Wild: [\[4432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for neurodevelopmental services.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is currently considering the next steps to improve diagnostic assessments and support for autistic people and people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). It is the responsibility of the integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including autism and ADHD services, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to help ICBs and the National Health Service to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people, and adults referred to an autism assessment service. The guidance also sets out what support should be available before an assessment and what support should follow a recent diagnosis of autism. In 2024/25, £4.3 million is available nationally to improve services for autistic children and young people, including autism assessment services.

In respect of ADHD, we are supporting a cross-sector taskforce that NHS England has launched into challenges in ADHD service provision, to help provide a joined-up approach in response to concerns around rising demand.

James Wild:

[\[4431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools programme on (a) access to neurodevelopmental assessments and (b) outcomes for neurodivergent children.

Stephen Kinnock:

On 22 November 2023, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Education, and NHS England launched a joint project, Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools. This project had £13 million of funding to test an innovative delivery model to improve access to specialist support in mainstream primary schools, upskilling those settings to meet a range of neurodiverse needs. The programme is ongoing, with delivery due to be completed by 31 March 2025. The programme is being evaluated, and learning will inform future policy development around how schools support neurodiverse children.

■ Mental Health Services: Prisons

Rachael Maskell:

[\[4001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) improve mental health services in prison and (b) ensure continuity with previous mental health interventions.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England is undertaking the development of a full Health and Justice mental health pathway review and strategy update, considering pre custody, in custody and post custody care. This review is working at pace and is co-produced with people with lived experience. The work is undertaking significant engagement across partner agencies, national policy leads, commissioners and partner agencies.

Ensuring continuity of care for people released from prison back into the community is vital to help them maintain the health gains they made in prison, reduce health inequalities and tackle reoffending. The National Health Service's RECONNECT programme is a care after custody service that seeks to improve the continuity of care of people leaving prison with an identified health need. RECONNECT starts working with people before they leave prison and helps them to make the transition to

community-based services that will provide the health and care support that they need.

■ Pharmacy: Contracts

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[3379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the main differences will be between the (a) existing scope of the Pharmacy First programme and (b) proposed scope of the Community Pharmacy Prescribing Service.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[3383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made with Community Pharmacy England on the new pharmacy contract.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[3384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the (a) drug prices, (b) appliance prices, (c) fees paid to pharmacy contractors and (d) allowances paid to pharmacy contractors in the drug tariff.

Stephen Kinnock:

Pharmacy First was launched on 31 January 2024. This service uses Patient Group Directions to enable pharmacists to supply certain prescription-only medication, where appropriate, based on specific eligibility criteria, and in line with best practice. Patients should be referred to a prescriber, such as a general practitioner, for treatment, if they meet one of the exclusion criteria.

Any pharmacist prescribing services will build on Pharmacy First and will be delivered by pharmacists that have undertaken additional training to become independent prescribers. This will enable them to provide support and prescribe medication for a wider range of conditions and cohorts of patients. NHS England is working with all integrated care boards to pilot how prescribing can work in community pharmacy.

The consultation with Community Pharmacy England on the national funding and contractual framework arrangements for 2024/25 was not concluded by the previous government, and we are looking at this as a matter of urgency.

Drug Tariff payments are reviewed regularly with adjustments made on a regular basis to reimbursement prices for medicines and appliances, and fees, when appropriate.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Adam Jogee: [\[4826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits of introducing national screening for prostate cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

Screening for prostate cancer is currently not recommended by the UK National Screening Committees (UK NSC). This is because of the inaccuracy of the current

best test, the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). A PSA-based screening programme could harm men, as some of them would be diagnosed with a cancer that would not have caused them problems during their life. This would lead to additional tests and treatments which can also have harmful side effects.

The UK NSC is currently carrying out an evidence review for prostate cancer screening, which includes different potential ways of screening the whole population from 40 years of age onwards, and targeted screening programme aimed at groups of men identified as being at higher than average risk, such as those with a family history, carriers of the BRCA2 gene, or based on ethnicity.

■ **Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[4583]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the respiratory syncytial virus vaccination programme does not include people who are 80 or older.

Andrew Gwynne:

The respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programme for adults turning 75 years old began on 1 September 2024 in England, alongside a one-off catch-up programme to rapidly vaccinate all those already aged 75 to 79 years old. Older adults will remain eligible until the day before their 80th birthday, except for people who turn 80 years old in the first year, who have until 31 August 2025 to get vaccinated.

When a new vaccination programme is introduced, the Government must make difficult decisions on who to offer the vaccine to. These decisions are based on advice the Department receives from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which includes evidence of the impact a vaccination has in different groups, as well as the capacity of the system to deliver the programme alongside all other healthcare priorities.

The structure of an immunisation programme is dynamic and the JCVI will continue to review the data available on who should be offered an RSV immunisation. It was noted in the JCVI's advice from June 2023 that 'an extension to the initial programme would be considered when there is more certainty about protection in the very elderly and the real-world impact of the programme in the 75- to 80-year-olds'. The JCVI's statement on the introduction of an RSV vaccination programme is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rsv-immunisation-programme-jcvi-advice-7-june-2023/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv-immunisation-programme-for-infants-and-older-adults-jcvi-full-statement-11-september-2023>

■ **Streptococcus: Screening**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[4602]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 15 January 2024 to Question 8936 on Streptococcus: Screening, when he expects to

receive the response of the UK National Screening Committee's findings on the outcome of the Group B Streptococcus trials.

Andrew Gwynne:

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) funded the GBS3 trial. It is looking at whether testing all pregnant women for Group B Streptococcus and giving them antibiotics reduces the risk of infection in newborn babies, compared to the current strategy in place in the United Kingdom. The current strategy in the UK is to offer antibiotics during labour to women who are considered at raised risk of their baby developing a Group B Streptococcus infection.

Recruitment to the trial ended in May 2024. The researchers are analysing the data, and a report is expected in Summer 2025. The UK National Screening Committee Secretariat is in close and regular contact with the researchers. The committee will review its recommendation considering the evidence from the trial, after the report is presented.

HOME OFFICE

■ Anti-social Behaviour and Noise: Shipley

Anna Dixon:

[\[4309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle (a) anti-social behaviour and (b) noise disturbances in Shipley constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission

We will put thousands of neighbourhood police and community support officers back into local communities, so that residents have somewhere to turn to when things go wrong.

We will crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets and in city centres by introducing tougher powers via a Crime and Policing Bill, including a new Respect Order to tackle repeat offending.

There is a statutory regime for dealing with a range of nuisances including noise. Local authority environmental health departments are the main enforcers of the noise nuisance regime. It is for individual local authorities to determine the detailed arrangements of the services they provide taking into account their assessment of local needs and circumstances.

■ Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service: Finance

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[4480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of an increase in the annual budget of

Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service to provide operational coverage to the new homes to be built during this Parliament.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The final Local Government Settlement 2024/25 has determined that overall fire and rescue authorities will receive around £2.87 billion this year to continue protecting our communities at the highest standard. Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Authority will have core spending power of £38.5 million with an increase of £2.1 million or 5.9 per cent in cash terms compared to 2023/24.

It is the responsibility of each fire and rescue authority to determine how to allocate that funding based on its analysis of risk and local circumstances. Decisions on future local authority funding will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement.

In the meantime, the Government will continue to work closely with stakeholders across the sector to ensure fire and rescue services can keep the public safe.

■ **Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: Staff**

John McDonnell:

[\[4167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff at the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority work in (a) Scotland and (b) Northern Ireland.

Jess Phillips:

There are two Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) officers who work in Northern Ireland and one officer who works in Scotland. The GLAA can deploy their officers working in other regions to support the officers in Northern Ireland and Scotland in undertaking regulatory activity when there is capacity and a need to do so.

■ **Gloucestershire Constabulary: Police Community Support Officers**

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[4839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timetable is for additional Police Community Support Officers being in post in Gloucestershire constabulary.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to strengthening neighbourhood policing as part of its Safer Streets Mission, That is why we are working with policing to introduce a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, providing a more visible police presence in town centres, recruiting thousands of extra additional police officers, PCSOs and Special Constables, We will set out our plans for the Guarantee, and the recruitment of additional officers, shortly.

■ Immigration Controls: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:****[4175]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many raids were carried out by Border Force in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire in each of the last five years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Our published data on enforcement visits is available at:

[Statistics relating to Illegal Migration - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Information about enforcement visits by constituency is not currently available in our published data.

■ Police: Contact**Siân Berry:****[4508]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to (a) monitor and (b) maintain standards of police conduct.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Policing is subject to a highly regulated police complaints and disciplinary system, which includes oversight responsibilities for both local policing bodies and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). The Government has committed to strengthening standards on police vetting and misconduct

This year, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) commenced its new police integrity inspection programme for forces within England and Wales. This programme assesses forces' effectiveness on professional standards, vetting and counter corruption arrangements

The Government also publishes data annually as part its police misconduct statistical series, covering conduct matters, misconduct proceedings and appeals to the Police Appeals Tribunal.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Armed Forces: Right to Buy Scheme****James Cartlidge:****[4752]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of how many (a) serving armed forces personnel and (b) veterans have benefitted from the Right to Buy scheme in each of the last five financial years.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government does not hold information on the number of serving armed forces personnel, or veterans, who have benefitted from the Right to Buy.

People who live in armed forces accommodation do not have the Right to Buy. The Right to Buy is only available to secure council tenants, and to some housing association tenants who were living in the home when it transferred from a council to a housing association, known as the Preserved Right to Buy . Any period spent in armed forces accommodation by eligible social housing tenants prior to applying can, however, count towards the minimum public sector tenancy qualifying period for Right to Buy and towards the discount entitlement.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Jodie Gosling: [\[4960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information her Department holds on levels of prevalence of aluminium composite material cladding on buildings in Nuneaton constituency.

Rushanara Ali:

There are no buildings in the Nuneaton constituency that have been identified with unsafe cladding.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Cities of London and Westminster

Rachel Blake: [\[3576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information her Department holds on the number of short-term lets in Cities of London and Westminster constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

Current data on short-term lets is limited. This is why we are introducing a registration scheme for short-term lets in England which will give local authorities access to valuable data to help address housing impacts and protect the spirit of our communities.

We recognise that whilst short-term lets and second homes can benefit the tourist economy, we need to protect local communities, including ensuring the availability of housing to rent or buy. We are currently considering how best to achieve these aims.

■ Homelessness

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[4782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's timetable is for (a) establishing and (b) the first meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping; and how frequently she expects that group to 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.

■ Housing: Bricks**Alistair Strathern:** [\[4279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to mandate that swift bricks are required to be added to all new houses.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is considering what action may be appropriate to drive up rates of swift brick installation in new build properties.

■ Housing: Construction**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[4282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to take steps to upgrade roads to enable housing targets to be met.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government recognises the vital role that transport infrastructure plays in facilitating new housing development. A range of funding programmes exist to support the delivery of infrastructure, including roads, to support the delivery of new housing including the £4.2 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund and the £1.5 billion Brownfield, Infrastructure and Land fund.

■ Housing: Young People**Sarah Green:** [\[4561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of restricting the sale of a proportion of new homes to those under 30.

Matthew Pennycook:

This Government wants to help first-time buyers of all ages. In addition to increasing the supply of homes of all tenures, the Government has committed to introducing a permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme and to giving first-time buyers the first chance to buy homes.

■ Investment Opportunity Fund**David Simmonds:** [\[3246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of ending the Investment Opportunity Fund on trends in (a) domestic growth and (b) direct investment into the UK.

Alex Norris:

Economic growth is the number one mission of this Government. The Government has committed to delivering productivity growth in every part of the country, making everyone, not just a few, better off. As part of this, Government will work in partnership with local leaders to develop ambitious, long-term Local Growth Plans

reflecting their local strengths and opportunities to support the national growth mission and new Industrial Strategy.

Immediate action to fix the foundations of the economy is the only way to rebuild Britain and make every person and every part of the country better off. We are being honest about those schemes that we cannot afford to deliver so that we can fix the foundations of our economy by addressing spending pressures and repairing the public finances.

The Investment Opportunity Fund, which was launched at Autumn Statement 2023, has yet to provide support to any projects.

■ Right to Buy Scheme

Ayoub Khan: [\[4158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will review the Right to Buy policy for social housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government believe it is right that those social tenants who have lived in their homes for many years retain the right to purchase their property at a reasonable discount. As such, we will not be ending the Right to Buy scheme.

We are, however, committed to better protecting our existing stock of social rented homes and are currently reviewing the increased right to buy discounts introduced in 2012. We will bring forward secondary legislation to implement changes in the autumn.

We also intend to review Right to Buy more widely, including looking at eligibility criteria and protections for newly-built social housing. A consultation of these wider changes will be brought forward in the autumn.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Costs

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[4781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information her Department holds on the potential cost to local authorities for providing temporary accommodation for homeless people in the 2024-25 financial year.

Jess Brown-Fuller: [\[4909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the viability of potential options available to her Department for supporting local authorities that cannot provide a sufficient amount of temporary accommodation for people without a home and are consequently relying on hotels.

Jess Brown-Fuller: [\[4910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to provide financial support to local authorities that are acquiring new temporary accommodation, in the context of increases in levels of demand.

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[4911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the impact of increases in the cost of temporary accommodation on the fiscal position of district councils.

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](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing-england-2023-to-2024-individual-local-authority-data-outturn) (www.gov.uk).

We must address homelessness levels and deliver long term solutions. The Government will look at these issues carefully and will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with mayors, councils and key stakeholders across the country to get us back on track to ending homelessness once and for all.

More widely, we are taking action to tackle the root causes of homelessness. This includes delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation, building 1.5 million new homes over the next Parliament, and abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions which will prevent private renters being exploited and discriminated against and empower people to challenge unreasonable rent increases. The Government has also confirmed £450 million for a third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund which will support local authorities to obtain better quality temporary accommodation for homeless families.

JUSTICE

■ Civil Disorder: Custodial Treatment

Sir John Hayes:

[3944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the number of people jailed for violent disorder offences this summer who will be released after serving 40% of their sentence.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The change to the automatic release point for eligible Standard Determinate Sentences (SDS40) is an ongoing change the Government was forced to introduce. We cannot predict who will enter custody or the sentences they will receive from the independent judiciary. Sentencing is complex and so factors including concurrent/consecutive sentences, sentence lengths, and particular offences will determine how long each offender spends in custody.

Certain offences have also been excluded from the SDS change. This includes sex offences irrespective of sentence length; serious violent offences with a sentence of

four years or more; specified offences linked to domestic abuse irrespective of sentence length (including stalking, coercive or controlling behaviour and non-fatal strangulation); as well as offences concerning national security. The change will also not apply to sentences subject to release at the discretion of the Parole Board or to offences which currently attract automatic release from an SDS at the two-thirds point (certain serious sexual and violent offences).

Estimating the number of people jailed for violent disorder offences this summer who will be released after serving 40% of their sentence would therefore not be possible due to the complexities of sentencing which is ongoing.

■ **HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Standards**

Andrew Rosindell:

[4182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for tribunal hearings.

Heidi Alexander:

We are working to reduce the outstanding caseload in the First-tier Tribunal and the Upper Tribunal including the Employment Tribunal and Employment Appeal Tribunal. Reducing outstanding caseloads is the key measure to bringing down the waiting times for tribunal hearings.

HMCTS continues to invest in improving tribunal productivity through the recruitment of additional Judges, deployment of Legal Officers to actively manage cases, the development of modern case management systems and the use of remote hearing technology.

Data on Tribunals performance is published by the Ministry of Justice on a quarterly basis. Receipts, disposals and the outstanding caseload for individual Chambers in the First-tier Tribunal and Upper Tribunal, the Employment Tribunal and the Employment Appeal Tribunal can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics>.

■ **Prisoners' Release: Kent**

Mike Martin:

[4495]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people will be released early from prison due to overcapacity in Kent in September 2024; and how many units of accommodation are available for those people.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

As the allocation process is still in progress, the total number of individuals in Kent to be released from custody at 40% of their standard determinate sentence is not yet known. It is also therefore not possible to ascertain how many units of accommodation would be needed.

Certain offences have been excluded from the SDS change. This includes sex offences irrespective of sentence length; serious violent offences with a sentence of

four years or more; specified offences linked to domestic abuse irrespective of sentence length (including stalking, coercive or controlling behaviour and non-fatal strangulation); as well as offences concerning national security. The change will also not apply to sentences subject to release at the discretion of the Parole Board, or to offences which currently attract automatic release from a standard determinate sentence at the two-thirds point (certain serious sexual and violent offences).

Once released, offenders will be subject to the same set of strict license conditions that would have applied had they been released at a 50% automatic release point. They 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.

Any who are at risk of being homeless upon release can be referred to H M Prison & Probation Service's Community Accommodation Service, which can provide up to 12 weeks' temporary accommodation, and we are working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to mitigate any impact on local authorities, as well as taking practical steps to minimise the chances that individuals are released homeless.

■ **Sexual Offences: Victim Support Schemes**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[4402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to support victims of sexual assault.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government is deeply committed to supporting victims of sexual assault. To do so, we must improve the justice system's response to these crimes. We must relentlessly target the most prolific and harmful perpetrators; better support victims and survivors; and ensure timely and effective justice.

To do this, the Government has committed to:

- Increasing the powers of the Victims' Commissioner, ensuring that victims get the information that they need throughout their justice system journey.
- Introducing specialist rape and sexual offence teams in every police force, providing the capacity and capability our police forces need to respond to these offences.
- Introducing independent legal advocates to rape victims, ensuring that victims know and can uphold their rights.
- Fast tracking rape cases through the courts, driving down waiting times for victims of these abhorrent offences.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner****Alex Burghart:**[\[4763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he plans to appoint a new Veterans' Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

We are committed to continuing to support veterans in Northern Ireland, including through the Veterans Welfare Service NI and the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. We will set out next steps for the appointment of a new Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner in due course.

Robin Swann:[\[4797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make the Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner a full time post.

Hilary Benn:

We will set out next steps for the appointment of a new Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner in due course.

■ Patrick Finucane**Alex Burghart:**[\[4764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 3049 on Patrick Finucane, if he will publish copies of his letters to (a) Mrs Finucane and (b) the Court of Appeal.

Hilary Benn:

On Wednesday 11 September, I made an oral statement to Parliament announcing the Government's intention to establish an independent inquiry into the death of Patrick Finucane. I have notified the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal of this decision and Mrs Geraldine Finucane's agreement to it.

The matter is still live before the Court. As such, I do not currently intend to publish these letters. Should I choose to publish them in future, I would seek Mrs Finucane's and the Court's approval to do so.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Artificial Intelligence: Innovation****Saqib Bhatti:**[\[4850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to support the Manchester Prize.

Feryal Clark:

The Secretary of State was delighted to meet the Manchester Prize Round 1 finalists at a DSIT-hosted workshop. Hearing how their projects were progressing and understanding how these solutions could benefit the UK public and stimulate economic growth underlined the importance of the Manchester Prize to supporting innovation. DSIT has awarded these teams with £100,000 in funding, and an additional £90,000 for spending on compute, to develop solutions capable of winning the £1 million grand prize in early 2025.

We are also supporting teams with a non-financial package to maximise their chances of developing successful solutions, including access to relevant public sector organisations, innovator workshops and guidance on mitigating the ethical risks associated with their solutions. Even for teams who don't ultimately win the grand prize, this package of support is designed to place them in a strong position to grow and succeed.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Risk Assessment**Saqib Bhatti:**[\[4849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to introduce an AI risk register.

Feryal Clark:

In Autumn 2023, DSIT set up the Central AI Risk Function (CAIRF), which brings together policymakers and AI experts with a mission to continuously identify, assess and prepare for risks associated with AI. One of the CAIRF's critical responsibilities is to develop and maintain the UK Government's AI Risk Register. The register was introduced in 2023 and identifies individual risks associated with AI that could impact the UK spanning national security, the economy and society. The register helps the Government track these risks and reduce their impact and likelihood.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Recruitment**Andrew Griffith:**[\[4846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 2 August 2024 to Question 1990 on Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Public Appointments, for what reason the Answer was amended using the editorial process; and what the amendment was.

Feryal Clark:

The answer was amended to correct an administrative error. The amendment corrected the exception number cited in the response - this was previously listed as exception 4, when it should have been listed as exception 1.

■ Horizon Europe

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[4852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to increase participation in Horizon Europe.

Feryal Clark:

This Government is committed to maximising UK participation in Horizon Europe. The Government is working with key stakeholders on plans to boost UK participation and encourage the international R&D community to collaborate with UK organisations. This includes funding support (pump priming) delivered through the British Academy and Innovate UK, to encourage effective uptake in opportunities. The Government continues to raise awareness of Horizon Europe, including via the roadshow series, most recently hosted in Birmingham and Glasgow. The next event will be in Northern Ireland in October. DSIT also encourages the R&D community to actively engage in their own initiatives aimed at enhancing participation.

■ Semiconductors: Trade Promotion

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[4851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to lead a semiconductor business delegation abroad.

Feryal Clark:

Given the global nature of semiconductor supply chains, creating opportunities for businesses to establish international relationships is crucial for the UK's growth. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology works to make these connections. The National Technology Advisor, Dr Dave Smith, recently led the UK delegation to SEMICON Taiwan. This included representation from a Department for Business and Trade Mission and an Innovate UK Global Business Innovation Programme – both featuring UK semiconductor businesses. The Department will also work with the Department for Business and Trade ahead of the upcoming trade mission to India in November.

TRANSPORT

■ Bus Services: Aldershot

Alex Baker:

[\[4915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she (a) is taking and (b) plans to take steps to help ensure that councils provide access to bus services for isolated communities in Aldershot constituency.

Simon Lightwood:

The government has set out an action plan for improving the bus network, centred around putting control of local bus services into the hands of communities to give them the tools they need to plan and deliver services in a way that suits their needs.

On 9 September, the government announced important first steps towards delivering this aim by laying a statutory instrument to 'open up' bus franchising to all local transport authorities (LTAs), and publishing a consultation document on proposed updates to streamline bus franchising guidance that will speed up and lower the cost of franchising for LTAs.

As announced in the King's Speech, the government will also introduce a new Buses Bill later this year that will build on the progress of this first package of measures, and help bring to an end the postcode lottery of bus services by giving local leaders the freedom to take decisions to deliver their local transport priorities and ensure networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them, including in rural areas in Aldershot and across England.

■ Driving Tests: Buckinghamshire

Sarah Green:

[\[4562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for practical driving tests in Buckinghamshire.

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.

■ M25: A3

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[4864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with National Highways on (a) the expected completion date for works on the Painshill junction of the M25 and A3 and (b) the steps being taken to (i) ensure the timely completion of that work and (ii) minimise disruption in the area.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways are due to complete the main works at the Painshill roundabout and junction 10 of the M25 by Summer 2025 however, there will be other minor works including environmental enhancements that will be completed towards the end of 2025.

To ensure timely completion of works, National Highways are closely monitoring the construction programme and are working with the supply chain, local authorities, and utility providers to ensure the programme is on schedule. Additionally, to minimise disruption National Highways are undertaking some of the works overnight and at weekends when traffic volumes are low, and they are also retaining the number of lanes available during the day to maintain traffic flows. Furthermore, National Highways are promoting information about road closures in advance to allow customer to use alternative routes or other forms of transport when necessary.

■ **Railway Stations: Huntingdon**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[4478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of building a new railway station at Alconbury Weald in Huntingdon constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department is aware of long-standing local aspirations for an East Coast Main Line station at Alconbury Weald that would align with the new housing being developed in the area. The Secretary of State announced that she has commissioned an internal review of the Department's capital portfolio. This will support the development of a long-term strategy for transport, that delivers a modern and integrated network with people at its heart. It will consider a fundamental reset to how we approach capital projects, to ensure that transport infrastructure can be delivered efficiently and on time, supporting our strategic objectives. I encourage any project proposal to consider how the scheme links to wider government commitments concerning economic growth, but regret that I am not yet able to comment on individual schemes or proposals at this time.

■ **Railways: Aldershot**

Alex Baker:

[\[4916\]](#)

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

Simon Lightwood:

Department officials maintain contact with train operators to ensure an appropriate level of service is provided to meet passenger demand, and this is reviewed regularly. The recent establishment of Shadow Great British Railways paves the way for the creation of Great British Railways and will deliver a unified railway providing a stronger, more reliable railway for the benefit of passengers.

■ **Roads: Aldershot**

Alex Baker:

[\[4917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that potholes are fixed promptly in Aldershot constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network. Hampshire County Council (HCC) is the local highway authority for the Aldershot constituency, and it is therefore responsible for the maintenance of the local road network. HCC will receive £37.7 million from this Department during 2024/25 to enable it to carry out its local highway maintenance responsibilities. Funding for future years is a matter for the Spending Review.

TREASURY**■ Freight: Northern Ireland**

Robin Swann: [\[4510\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 3923 Parcels: Northern Ireland, what new mechanisms for business to business her Department discussed with freight operators in Northern Ireland in its engagement with businesses and parcel carriers.

Robin Swann: [\[4511\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 3923 Parcels: Northern Ireland, what new support for fast parcel operations between Great Britain and Northern Ireland her Department discussed with freight operators in Northern Ireland in its engagement with businesses and parcel carriers.

James Murray:

As per the answer to Question 3923, the Government has carried out extensive engagement with businesses on a regular basis (including freight operators, parcel carriers and other businesses) since the Windsor framework was agreed in February 2023. This has included detailed technical discussion on moving parcels from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in a manner that provides continuity for businesses. The Government continues to provide focused technical and delivery support to ensure a smooth transition to the new Windsor Framework arrangements.

■ Hospitality Industry: Business Rates

Stuart Andrew: [\[4356\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information the Valuation Office Agency holds on the number of hereditaments there are with the (a) 227 Public Houses/Pub Restaurants (Inc. Lodge) (National Scheme), (b) 226 Public Houses/Pub Restaurants (National Scheme), (c) 234 Restaurants, (d) 238 Roadside Restaurants (National Scheme), (e) 409 Cafes, (f) 500 Cafes/Restaurants Within/Part of Specialist Property, (g) 060 Clubhouses, (h) 061 Licensed Sports, Social and Private Members Clubs, (i) 062 Coaching Inns, (j) 303 Bars (Valued on Floor Space) and (k) 199 G Night Clubs and Discotheques special category code in each local authority.

Stuart Andrew: [4357]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average rateable value was for hereditaments with the (a) 227 Public Houses/Pub Restaurants (Inc. Lodge) (National Scheme), (b) 226 Public Houses/Pub Restaurants (National Scheme), (c) 234 Restaurants, (d) 238 Roadside Restaurants (National Scheme), (e) 409 Cafes, (f) 500 Cafes/Restaurants Within/Part of Specialist Property, (g) 060 Clubhouses, (h) 061 Licensed Sports, Social and Private Members Clubs, (i) 062 Coaching Inns, (j) 303 Bars (Valued on Floor Space) and (k) 199 G Night Clubs and Discotheques special category code in each local authority in (i) England and (ii) Wales in the latest period for which data is available.

Stuart Andrew: [4358]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average business rates charge was for hereditaments with the (a) 227 Public Houses/Pub Restaurants (Inc. Lodge) (National Scheme), (b) 226 Public Houses/Pub Restaurants (National Scheme), (c) 234 Restaurants, (d) 238 Roadside Restaurants (National Scheme), (e) 409 Cafes, (f) 500 Cafes/Restaurants Within/Part of Specialist Property, (g) 060 Clubhouses, (h) 061 Licensed Sports, Social and Private Members Clubs, (i) 062 Coaching Inns, (j) 303 Bars (Valued on Floor Space) and (k) 199 G Night Clubs and Discotheques special category code in each local authority in (i) England and (ii) Wales in the latest period for which data is available.

James Murray:

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is responsible for assessing all non-domestic properties for business rates purposes and determining each property's rateable value (RV). Non-domestic properties are assigned a special category code (SCat), as a descriptor for different categories of property.

For transparency, the VOA publishes official statistics on the number of properties recorded in each Scat by local authority area. These can be found on VOA's '[Non-domestic rating: stock of properties, 2024](#)' statistics page on gov.uk, under '[Stock SCat Tables by region, county, local authority district and rateable value band, 2024](#)' table 'SOP_SCAT_LA_counts_all'.

The VOA also publishes the total RV by Scat and local authority area in table 'SOP_SCAT_LA_rv_all'. The data published in these tables can be used to calculate the average RV.

The VOA does not calculate business rates bills or hold data on average business rates charges. The responsibility for the billing and liability of Council Tax lies with the local (billing) authority.

Stuart Andrew: [4360]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what business rate reliefs will be available in (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26 to (i) pubs, (ii) restaurants and (iii) nightclubs; and what the thresholds and eligibility requirements are for each.

James Murray:

The full set of business rate reliefs available in 2024-25 and the eligibility criteria for them can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). This includes:

- The 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) Relief which offers 75% rate relief up to a limit of £110,000 per RHL business.
- Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) which provides 100% rate relief for eligible properties with rateable values below £12,000 with tapered relief available for eligible properties with rateable values between £12,000-£15,000.

Any decisions on future tax policy will be announced by the Chancellor at a fiscal event.

Income Tax: Tax Allowances**Grahame Morris:****[4626]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the amount of revenue that removal of the personal allowance from additional rate taxpayers would raise.

James Murray:

Additional rate taxpayers do not currently benefit from the personal allowance as it is tapered away when a person has income over £100,000 and is fully removed for those paying the additional rate. Therefore this would have no exchequer impact.

In 2024-2025, the income limit for personal allowance is £100,000. For every £2 of additional income above the limit, the personal allowance decreases by £1, and reaches £0 at an income level of £125,140. The additional rate of income tax is paid on income over £125,140. All income tax rates and allowances are provided in the following publication: [Income Tax rates and allowances for current and previous tax years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/income-tax-rates-and-allowances-for-current-and-previous-tax-years)

Private Education: Business Rates**James Cartlidge:****[4393]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September to Question 3748 on Private Education: Business Rates, what estimate she has made of the amount of revenue that will be raised in each remaining year of the current Parliament as a result of removing the eligibility of private schools in England to business rates charitable rates relief.

James Cartlidge:**[4394]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 3748 on Private Education: Business Rates, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of removing the eligibility of private schools to business rates relief on those schools in South Suffolk constituency.

James Murray:

As announced on 29 July 2024, the government will legislate to remove the eligibility of private schools in England to business rates charitable rates relief. The Government will confirm the introduction of these tax policy changes at Budget, at which point the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) will certify the Government's costings for these measures. The changes will raise revenue that will help to deliver the Government's commitments relating to education and young people.

The Government has carefully considered the impact that these changes will have on pupils and their families across both the state and private sector, as well as the impact they will have on state and private schools.

James Cartlidge:[\[4753\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the average annual cost per school of abolishing business rates relief for fee-paying schools.

James Murray:

As announced on 29 July 2024, the government will legislate to remove the eligibility of private schools in England to business rates charitable rates relief. The Government will confirm the introduction of these tax policy changes at Budget, at which point the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) will certify the Government's costings for these measures. The revenue raised will help to deliver the Government's commitments relating to education and young people.

■ Private Education: Special Educational Needs**Alicia Kearns:**[\[3155\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether children in independent schools on waiting lists for an educational, health and care plan assessment will have VAT added to school fees.

James Murray:

On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

This policy will not impact pupils with the most acute additional needs, where their needs can only be met in private schools. For instance, in England, where a child's place in a private school is funded by their Local Authority (LA) because it is named in their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The fees of pupils waiting for an EHCP will be subject to VAT. However, LAs aim to process all EHCP applications in time for the start of the next school year so that parents can make an informed decision as to which school they send their child to. In certain circumstances, the LA is able to prepay one term's fees if the EHCP is not yet complete, but the outcome is foreseeable. Likewise, some private schools will forgo the first term's fees for pupils that are expected to be granted an EHCP in the future.

■ Private Education: VAT

Damian Hinds: [\[4196\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an estimate of the maximum number of pupils that could move from independent to state schools for there to be a net increase in revenues to the Exchequer arising from her policy on levying VAT on independent school fees.

Damian Hinds: [\[4197\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether specialist post-16 institutions will be exempt from VAT.

James Cartlidge: [\[4227\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential economic impact of the introduction of VAT on independent schools in South Suffolk constituency.

James Cartlidge: [\[4228\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the introduction of VAT on independent schools on employment in such schools in South Suffolk constituency.

James Murray:

On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

Specialist Post-16 Institutions (SPIs) offer a unique mix of education, health, and social care services. The Treasury is working with the Department for Education and the SPI sector to establish the future VAT treatment of these institutions. This will be communicated when the Government confirms the introduction of this policy at Budget.

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

Damian Hinds: [\[4349\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the imposition of VAT on independent school fees on the number of children who are home schooled.

James Murray:

On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

The Government does not expect fees to go up by 20% as a result of this policy change, and the Government expects private schools to take steps to minimise fee increases.

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

Damian Hinds:

[\[4621\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department is providing the Office for Budget Responsibility with input assumptions on (a) the price elasticity of demand for independent sector education and (b) the number of children likely to move to state sector schools as a result of the imposition of VAT on independent schools.

James Murray:

On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

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

■ Public Houses: Business Rates

Stuart Andrew:

[\[4354\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Valuation Office Agency takes account of the (a) presence and (b) size of a pub garden when valuing a pub for business rates; and whether the size of the garden is recorded by Agency.

James Murray:

The VOA is responsible for assessing all non-domestic properties for business rates purposes to determine their rateable value (RV). The RV of any non-domestic (business) property represents the annual rent the property would achieve if let on the open market at a valuation date which is set in law. For the current RVs, which came into effect on 1 April 2023, the set valuation date is 1 April 2021.

The valuation of public houses for rating purposes is on a rental comparison basis. Rents are analysed using fair maintainable trade (FMT) as a unit of comparison.

A pub's trading potential looks at what it could realistically generate, if run by a reasonably efficient operator. Its potential turnover, also known as FMT, is generally determined by considering income streams from drinks, food, and other areas of trade such as accommodation.

The absence or presence of a pub garden will be reflected in the overall FMT for each pub. It is not possible to identify the extent to which the beer garden contributes to the total RV therefore the size of pub gardens is not recorded.

■ Shisha Bars

Stuart Andrew: [\[4355\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in what Special Category code the Valuation Office Agency classifies shisha bars; and how many shisha bars there are in each local authority in England.

James Murray:

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is responsible for assessing all non-domestic properties for business rates purposes.

The categorisation of properties is determined by the characteristics of the property, rather than the occupier. The special category code assigned to shisha bars is dependent on the type of property they occupy.

There is no designated special category code for shisha bars and it is not possible to separately identify these properties from the data and statistics the VOA publishes.

■ Tax Burden

Lewis Cocking: [\[4288\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to reduce the tax burden on working people.

James Murray:

The Government wants to keep taxes as low as possible on working people and will do so by delivering sustainable growth through economic stability and sound public finances. The upcoming Budget on 30 October will set out reforms to fix the foundations, so that we can rebuild Britain and make working people better off.

■ Treasury: Civil Servants

Laura Trott: [\[4795\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the civil service grade is of the Head of Business Engagement in her Department.

James Murray:

The Treasury does not comment on individual appointments at Deputy Director level or below.

■ Treasury: Directors

Laura Trott: [\[4796\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who the non-executive directors are in her Department.

James Murray:

The information regarding the non-executive directors for HM Treasury can be found in the Annual Report and Accounts and on the front page of [HMTreasury.gov.uk](https://www.hmtreasury.gov.uk).

■ Voluntary Organisations: Mileage Allowances**Ben Lake:**[\[4765\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment has she made of the potential impact of uprating mileage allowance scheme rates on the travel costs of people working in the voluntary sector.

Ben Lake:[\[4766\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the potential impact of abolishing the mileage allowance scheme reduced rate for over 10,000 miles of travel in the tax year on the travel costs of people working in the voluntary sector.

James Murray:

Approved Mileage Allowance Payments (AMAPs) are used by employers to reimburse an employee's expenses for business mileage in their private vehicle. These rates are also used by self-employed drivers to claim tax relief on business mileage (simplified motoring expenses) and can be used by organisations to reimburse volunteers who use their own vehicle for voluntary purposes.

Voluntary organisations reimbursing volunteers can either use the AMAP rates or can reimburse the actual cost incurred where the volunteer drivers can evidence such costs without a tax liability arising. Any reimbursement above the AMAP rates would be subject to Income Tax unless the driver can show evidence of the expenditure. It is ultimately up to the voluntary organisation to determine the amount they reimburse to volunteers.

In estimating typical motoring costs per business mile HMRC use a variety of information. This includes information from the AA, the National Travel Survey, the Association of British Insurers and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (fuel prices). The AMAP rate is intended to reflect both running costs (such as fuel) and a proportion of standing costs (such as insurance, MOT and depreciation).

As with all taxes and allowances, the Government keeps the AMAP rate under review. Any changes to are announced by the Chancellor at fiscal events, taking into account the wider economic and fiscal context.

■ Wealth: Taxation**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[4419\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a wealth tax.

James Murray:

There are several long-standing taxes on assets and wealth that generate substantial revenue for the government.

The government is committed to making sure everyone pays their fair share of tax, helping us to fund public services whilst staying within the Chancellor's fiscal rules. This includes progressing the government's manifesto policies to close tax loopholes and tackle tax avoidance. These policies will make the tax system fairer and support government priorities including funding the NHS and schools and supporting the UK's transition to clean energy.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Means-tested Benefits and Winter Fuel Payment: North West Norfolk

James Wild:

[3128]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in North West Norfolk constituency (a) received winter fuel payments and (b) were eligible for (i) pension credit and (ii) other means tested benefits in 2023-4.

Emma Reynolds:

Annual statistics on the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients and households by local authority and by Westminster parliamentary constituency are made publicly available via [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). The latest release contains data on individual and household level statistics for winter 2022 to 2023. For Winter 2022 to 2023, 24,157 people received a Winter Fuel Payment in North West Norfolk constituency.

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022). However, these statistics are only available at Great Britain level and cannot be broken down to smaller geographical areas.

Other means-tested benefits available to pensioners to enable them to receive a Winter Fuel Payment are: Income Support, Jobseekers' Allowance (income-based), Employment and Support Allowance (income-related), and Universal Credit. Take-up statistics for Universal Credit are not available. Since the introduction of Universal Credit, it is no longer possible to make a new claim to other legacy means-tested benefits. We are therefore unable to estimate the number of pensioners who are eligible to claim other means-tested benefits.

■ Pension Credit

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[2696]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people (a) claimed and (b) were eligible to claim Pension Credit in each of the last three financial years.

Emma Reynolds:

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022).

[of take-up: financial year ending 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). These statistics were suspended for financial year ending (FYE) 2021 due to data issues following the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. More recent caseload statistics are made publicly available via [DWP Stat-xplore](#). These are published quarterly. It should be noted that any numbers regarding eligibility are estimates based on the number of Pension Credit recipients in each of the last three financial years and the estimated number of Pension Credit entitled non-recipients in each of the last three financial years).

FYE	NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS (MILLIONS)
2020	1.49
2021	1.41
2022	1.35

FYE	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE ELIGIBLE (MILLIONS)
2020	2.26
2021	Not available
2022	2.15

Dr Luke Evans:

[3121]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of her Department's Service Modernisation Programme in (a) encouraging more people to apply for pension credit and (b) improving the customer service experience when applying for pension credit.

Emma Reynolds:

The modernisation of Retirement Services, which includes Pension Credit, forms a key part of DWP's Service Modernisation Programme. An objective of the team is to understand how the application process should operate in the future and understand the opportunities on how services can be accessed easier and faster for citizens. We are utilising end user research to improve the customer experience on all Pension Credit application routes and using information held internally to reduce the number of questions the citizen must answer. As part of our modernisation, we are engaging with leading external organisations to understand what improvements could be made to help increase Pension Credit take up and improve ease of application.

Alex Mayer: [3414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of pensioners that are (a) eligible and (b) not claiming Pension Credit by constituency.

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022). However, these statistics are only available at Great Britain level and cannot be broken down to smaller geographical areas.

Rachael Maskell: [3731]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the time it will take to ensure all eligible individuals receive Pension Credit.

Rachael Maskell: [4375]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the time taken for all eligible pensioners to apply for Pension Credit.

Emma Reynolds:

The responsibility to make a claim to Pension Credit is with individuals, and we can only encourage them to apply. We encourage all pensioners who may be eligible for Pension Credit to use the Pension Credit Calculator to check eligibility and to use our online Pension Credit claims process, via telephone or paper claims.

The Government is determined to ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need. As part of 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.

The latest available take-up estimates Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) cover the financial year 2021/2022 and suggest an overall Pension Credit take-up rate of 63%. The next take-up estimates covering the financial year 2022/2023 are due to be published in October.

Mr Gregory Campbell:**[3952]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's press release entitled You could get Pension Credit: Week of Action to drive take up, published on 1 September 2024, whether she has a target of the (a) number and (b) proportion of pensioners that are not in receipt of Pension Credit who will successfully apply by the close of the campaign.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: No targets have been set, the Government wants everyone eligible for Pension Credit but not currently claiming it to receive the benefits they are entitled to.

DWP launched the Pension Credit Week of Action on 2 September, joining 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 also work with external partners, local authorities and the Devolved Governments to boost the take-up of Pension Credit.

Mel Stride:**[3957]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people in receipt of the State Pension were (a) in receipt of and (b) eligible for Pension Credit on 3 September 2024; and if she will make an estimate of the number and proportion of people in receipt of the State Pension that will be (i) in receipt of and (ii) eligible for Pension Credit in each of the next five years.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: Benefit combinations statistics are routinely published and made publicly available via DWP Stat-xplore. Due to the suspension of State Pension statistics, the latest available data covers the period up to May 2023. At May 2023, there were 1,228,563 people in receipt of the State Pension and Pension Credit in England and Wales and 127,219 people in receipt of the State Pension and Pension Credit in Scotland. This represents around 12% of all people in receipt of the State Pension in England and Wales at May 2023 and around 13% of all people in receipt of the State Pension in Scotland at May 2023.

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022). It is estimated that up

to 880,000 families who were entitled to receive Pension Credit did not claim the benefit. However, from this data, we are unable to estimate how many of those who are eligible for Pension Credit are also in receipt of the State Pension.

Benefit expenditure and caseload tables are published annually and are available at: [Benefit expenditure and caseload tables 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/benefit-expenditure-and-caseload-tables-2024). The table below shows the estimate of the Pension Credit caseload in Great Britain for the next five years. These estimates will include those who are in receipt of the State Pension, as well as those who are not.

2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
1,347,000	1,314,000	1,249,000	1,150,000	1,056,000

We do not hold data about Pension Credit eligibility for the next five years.

Rachael Maskell:

[4376]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of asking local authorities to contact every pensioner on Housing Benefit to encourage them to take up Pension Credit; and if she will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of whether local authorities have sufficient resources to undertake that task.

Emma Reynolds:

The Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions wrote to all local authorities on 20th August. The letter acknowledged the vital role local authorities play in supporting their communities. The Government recognises that many local authorities already do a huge amount of work to promote benefit take-up. We are asking that local authorities support our national Pension Credit campaign and help us reach those eligible pensioners who have not claimed Pension Credit, so they continue to receive an annual Winter Fuel Payment.

Building on last year's 'Invitation to Claim' trial, the Department will be directly contacting approximately 120,000 pensioner households who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and who may also be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit.

We will be inviting these households to apply for Pension Credit before the 21 December backdating deadline, in order to ensure that if they are eligible they will also qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment.

Rachael Maskell:

[4377]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what his deadline is for writing to Housing Benefit claimants on taking up Pension Credit; and what further steps he plans to take in respect of increasing uptake.

Emma Reynolds:

Building on last year's 'Invitation to Claim' trial, we will be directly contacting approximately 120,000 pensioner households who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and who may also be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit.

We will be inviting these households to apply for Pension Credit before the 21 December backdating deadline, in order to ensure that if they are eligible they will also qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment.

Rachael Maskell:[\[4385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support people eligible for Pension Credit to claim it.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department has introduced the ability to make an online claim. This is in addition to telephone and paper claims. DWP Agents and third-party organisations are available to support customers with the application process. The Department is implementing a Pension Credit uptake campaign to encourage an estimate of up to 880,000 citizens who may be entitled to apply.

Siân Berry:[\[4575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential (a) impact of non-take up of Pension Credit by eligible people on their ability to meet fuel costs this winter and (b) merits of providing an automatic Pension Credit assessment for people who reach State Pension age with an opt-out option for people who (i) know they do not qualify and (ii) choose not to claim.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government is determined to protect the poorest pensioners and target support to those in greatest need. Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged over 80.

We want those eligible for Pension Credit but not currently claiming it to receive the benefits they are entitled to, including the Winter Fuel Payment. That's why we have launched a nationwide campaign, joining forces with key partners and stakeholders to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim. Our campaign is also aimed at those who can influence, encourage and support their older family members and friends to apply.

Although it is not possible to automatically assess everyone reaching State Pension age for Pension Credit, we will be directly contacting approximately 120,000 pensioner households currently receiving Housing Benefit and who we have identified – based on the data we have – may be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit.

David Baines:

[\[4848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's press release entitled You could get Pension Credit – Week of Action to drive take up, published on 1 September 2024, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of that campaign on trends in the level of applications for Pension Credit.

Emma Reynolds:

The department has secured funding to support increased staffing and fund our communications strategy to support our programme of activity to drive up Pension Credit claims. The latest data available shows we have received around 38,500 Pension Credit claims in the 5 weeks since the announcement on 29th July (which is up to and including w/c 26th August).

This represents a 115% increase in Pension Credit claims received by the Department in the past 5 weeks compared to the 5 weeks before.

■ Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payment

Rachael Maskell:

[\[4378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to take steps to enable people who are unable to claim Pension Credit to receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

Only pensioner households entitled to Pension Credit, or the other qualifying benefits, Universal Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit will get a Winter Fuel Payment from winter 2024/25. This approach retains support for pensioners on low incomes.

■ Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payment: Liverpool Riverside

Kim Johnson:

[\[3188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of pensioners living in (a) relative and (b) absolute poverty that are not in receipt of Pension Credit in Liverpool Riverside constituency; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of proposed changes to the eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment on those numbers.

Emma Reynolds:

Information on number of pensioners living in (a) relative and (b) absolute poverty that are not in receipt of Pension Credit in Liverpool Riverside constituency is not held.

■ Pension Credit: Aylesbury

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[4579]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of pensioners eligible for Pension Credit in Aylesbury constituency; and what steps she is taking to encourage the take-up of Pension Credit in that constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

The latest available Pension Credit take-up statistics, which includes estimates of the number of households eligible for but not claiming Pension Credit, cover the financial year 2021 to 2022 and are available at: [Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022). However, these statistics are only available at Great Britain level and cannot be broken down to smaller geographical areas.

Last week we held a Pension Credit Awareness Week of Action – joining forces with a range of partners such as Age UK, Citizens Advice, local authorities and organisations such as British Gas to promote Pension Credit and encourage take-up. The “Week of Action” had widespread national and regional media coverage.

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 campaign messaging will also focus on encouraging pensioners to apply for Pension Credit before 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 are working with external partners, local authorities, and the Devolved Governments to boost the take-up of Pension Credit.

■ Pension Credit: East Midlands

Dr Luke Evans:

[3118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to encourage pension credit take up in (a) Leicestershire and (b) the East Midlands.

Emma Reynolds:

The Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions wrote to all local authorities on 20 August. The letter acknowledged the vital role local authorities play in supporting their communities. The Government recognises that many local authorities already do a huge amount of work to promote benefit take-up. We are asking that local authorities support our national Pension Credit campaign and help us reach those eligible pensioners who have not claimed Pension Credit, so they continue to receive an annual Winter Fuel Payment.

Building on last year’s ‘Invitation to Claim’ trial, the Department will be directly contacting approximately 120,000 pensioner households who are in receipt of

Housing Benefit and who may also be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit.

We will be inviting these households to apply for Pension Credit before the 21 December backdating deadline, in order to ensure that if they are eligible they will also qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment.

As part of the last week's 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 (including Nottingham Post and Leicester Mercury, and a range of local East Midlands radio stations including Greatest Hits Radio, Smooth Radio and Gold). 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.

■ Pension Credit: Expenditure

Paula Barker:

[4038]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of all people eligible for Pension Credit claiming it.

Emma Reynolds:

The estimated total cost if all people eligible for Pension Credit claimed is around £7.6 billion, for Financial Year Ending (FYE) 2022, for Great Britain.

This has been calculated by adding the benefit expenditure for Pension Credit for 2021/2022 (Pension Credit claimed by eligible pensioners) and the estimate of pension credit unclaimed by eligible pensioners in FYE 2022.

As published in DWP Pension Credit Take-up statistics, an estimate of up to 880,000 families who were entitled to receive PC did not claim the benefit, and the estimate of Pension Credit unclaimed by eligible pensioners in FYE 2022 is £2.1 billion. The pension credit expenditure was an estimated £5.5 billion in 2021/2022.

Source:

[Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022)

[Benefit expenditure and caseload tables 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/benefit-expenditure-and-caseload-tables-2024)

■ Pension Credit: Newcastle-under-Lyme**Adam Jogee:**[\[3458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with (a) Staffordshire County Council and (b) Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council on their potential role in increasing the number of people claiming pension credit in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Adam Jogee:[\[3479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps she has taken to help increase take-up of Pension Credit in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

The Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions wrote to all local authorities on 20 August. The letter acknowledged the vital role local authorities play in supporting their communities. The Government recognises that many local authorities already do a huge amount of work to promote benefit take-up. We are asking that local authorities support our national Pension Credit campaign and help us reach those eligible pensioners who have not claimed Pension Credit, so they continue to receive an annual Winter Fuel Payment.

Building on last year's 'Invitation to Claim' trial, the Department will be directly contacting approximately 120,000 pensioner households who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and who may also be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit.

We will be inviting these households to apply for Pension Credit before the 21 December backdating deadline, in order to ensure that if they are eligible they will also qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment.

As part of last week's 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 paid marketing campaign on a range of channels (including print advertising in the Stoke Sentinel and regional radio advertising - including on Greatest Hits Radio - Staffordshire and Cheshire). The campaign will target potential pension-age customers, as well as the influencers who can encourage and support them to apply, such as friends and family.

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

■ Pension Credit: South Ribble**Mr Paul Foster:** [\[4466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are in receipt of Pension Credit in South Ribble constituency; and if she will make an estimate of the number of people who are not claiming Pension Credit but are eligible in that constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

Caseload statistics are routinely published and made publicly available via [DWP Stat-xplore](#). At February 2024, there were 1,528 people claiming Pension Credit in South Ribble constituency.

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.

■ Pensioners: Income**Dr Caroline Johnson:** [\[4400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of pensioners who have an income lower than the (a) minimum and (b) living wage.

Emma Reynolds:

The National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage are hourly rates. Pensioners do not receive their income at an hourly rate. As such, the requested information is not available.

■ State Retirement Pensions**Jim Shannon:** [\[4207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she is taking steps to move those in receipt of the old state pension to the new one to help prevent financial hardship in winter 2024-25.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government has no plans to move people from the old State Pension system to the new State Pension system.

It is not the case that everyone receiving the new State Pension (i.e. those reaching State Pension age on or after 6 April 2016) will receive more than those under the old State Pension system. Both systems reflect the National Insurance record of the individual. Therefore, the amount people receive varies.

■ State Retirement Pensions and Winter Fuel Payment

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[4296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of people who will be in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment by constituency from 1 April 2025; and what the total value of the (a) Winter Fuel Payment and (b) State Pension uprating will be by constituency from 1 April 2025.

Emma Reynolds:

We cannot estimate the number of people who will be in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment by constituency from 1 April 2025.

The Secretary of State will undertake her annual statutory review of benefits and State Pensions for the next financial year ahead of the Autumn Budget. This means that we cannot estimate what the total value of the Winter Fuel Payment and State Pension uprating will be by constituency from 1 April 2025.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Uprating

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[4295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the total uprated value of the State Pension will be from 1 April 2025, by constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government is committed to the Triple Lock, which means that in April 2025, the basic and new State pension will increase by the higher of the growth in average earnings, price increases or 2.5%.

The relevant percentage increase applied to the State Pension in April 2025 is subject to a statutory review conducted by the Secretary of State. The review will typically begin in October, once the relevant indices have been published by the Office for National Statistics. On completion of the review, the Secretary of State will lay a statement in Parliament.

■ Universal Credit: Aldershot

Alex Baker:

[\[4919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claims were subject to deductions in Aldershot constituency in the most recent month for which data is available.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The requested information will be published as part of Universal Credit Official Statistics in November 2024.

■ Universal Credit: Hampshire

Alex Baker: [\[4918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are recipients of Universal Credit in (a) Aldershot constituency and (b) Hampshire.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Official statistics for the number of [people on Universal Credit](#) are published each month on [Stat-Xplore](#), with breakdowns available by various geographies including [Westminster Parliamentary Constituency](#) and local authority. The latest statistics are to August 2024.

Users can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest and, if needed, can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

■ Winter Fuel Payment

Caroline Voaden: [\[3542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has been made of the potential impact of the decision to change eligibility requirements for the winter fuel payment on the public purse.

Emma Reynolds:

In 2022/23, 11.4 million people in 8.4 million households in Great Britain received a Winter Fuel Payment, at a total cost of £2 billion.

The Government estimates that linking entitlement to receipt of Pension Credit and other relevant DWP income-related benefits will reduce expenditure by around £1.4 billion in 2024/25 and £1.5bn in 2025/26.

Caroline Voaden: [\[3543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the feasibility of expanding eligibility for the winter fuel payment to include low-income households not in receipt of Pension Credit.

Emma Reynolds:

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

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

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

We have linked Winter Fuel Payments eligibility to Pension Credit and other qualifying benefits – but not Housing Benefit – because we can pay the majority of eligible recipients automatically based on information held in the Department.

Housing Benefit is not included as a qualifying benefit since the amount that someone receives is based not only on personal circumstances but also on the amount of their rent.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing a Winter Fuel Payment for older people (a) based on Council Tax Band and (b) as a payment liable to tax.

Emma Reynolds:

It would not be possible to pay winter fuel payments to pensioners according to their council tax band as my department does not hold data on people's council tax banding. Additionally, council tax band is not always an accurate reflection of someone's income.

Matters of taxation are for His Majesty's Treasury. The tax treatment of social security benefits is based on the type of payment and why it is provided. In general, benefits that are designed to replace income are taxable, including the State Pension. Benefits that meet specific costs, such as Winter Fuel Payments, are not taxable.

Mel Stride:

[\[3964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people previously entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment in winter 2024-25 will not receive one due to the Social Fund Winter Fuel Payment Regulations 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

Around an estimated 10 million people in Great Britain previously entitled to Winter Fuel Payment will not receive it due to the policy reform. These are based on the 22/23 Winter Fuel Payment statistics and Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics (sources shown below).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of Pension Credit recipients for Great Britain from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for Great Britain. This is essentially the number of Winter Fuel Payment claimants pre-policy change not claiming Pension Credit, as an estimate of those who will no longer receive Winter fuel payment.

Please note that the above figures do not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up we might see as a result of the Government's Pension Credit Awareness Campaign. We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

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

Furthermore, Pension Credit claimants are the majority of those that will be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments, not all. There are other pensioners who are eligible for Winter Fuel Payments (as they claim other means tested benefits) but they are not considered in these figures as it is not possible to do so.

Source:

The Winter Fuel Payments statistics are published here: [Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023)

Pension Credit data is published here: [Pension Credit – Data from May 2018](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pension-credit-data-from-may-2018)

Paula Barker: [4039]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the proposed saving is from the reduction in the franchise of the Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

The savings were estimated in Fixing the Foundations as Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) Winter Fuel Payments (WFP) savings of £1.4bn, for 2024/2025, for Great Britain. These included an assumption about increased take-up of Pension Credit which is in line with the highest levels it has achieved historically. WFPs are classified as AME. Estimated savings are sensitive to forecasted take up of Pension Credit. Final savings will be certified and published by the Office for Budget responsibility at the Autumn Budget on the 30th October Budget, taking account of any behavioural response.

Paula Barker: [4040]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the campaign to increase the uptake of Pension Credit on proposed savings from reductions in the Winter Fuel Allowance.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government estimates that linking entitlement to receipt of Pension Credit and other relevant DWP income-related benefits will reduce expenditure by around £1.4 billion in 2024/25 and £1.5bn in 2025/26.

The responsibility to make a claim to Pension Credit is with individuals, and we can only encourage them to apply. We encourage all pensioners who may be eligible for Pension Credit to use the Pension Credit Calculator to check eligibility and to use our online Pension Credit claims process, via telephone or paper claims.

The Government is determined to ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need. As part of 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.

The latest available take-up estimates Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) cover the financial year 2021/2022 and suggest an overall Pension Credit take-up rate of 63%. The next take-up estimates covering the financial year 2022/2023 are due to be published in October.

Paula Barker:

[\[4041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the administrative cost to her Department will be to means-test Winter Fuel payments.

Emma Reynolds:

The department will deliver this year's winter fuel payments within the existing planned headcount and budget. This is due to linking eligibility to Winter Fuel with existing means tested benefits rather than means testing Winter Fuel separately.

In terms of administrative costs, in 2022/23 the Department for Work and Pensions spent £2.6m on the administration of Winter Fuel Payments. It is currently assessing the delivery costs current and future years.

Mel Stride:

[\[4193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Explanatory Memorandum on the Social Fund Winter Fuel Payment Regulations 2024, what was the (a) evidential basis was and (b) methodological process used to ascertain there will be no impact on charities or voluntary bodies from reducing winter fuel allowance support for pensioners.

Emma Reynolds:

A full Impact Assessment has not been prepared for the Social Fund Winter Fuel Payment Regulations 2024 because there is no significant new impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies beyond their existing obligations, because they are out of scope of the legislation.

The evidential basis was based on best assessment at the time that the change would impact individual households and have no significant impact on charities or voluntary bodies.

Mel Stride:

[\[4194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Social Fund Winter Fuel Payment Regulations 2024, whether (a) a regulatory impact assessment, (b) an equality impact assessment, (c) an environmental principles assessment and (d) a family test assessment was produced for the policy.

Emma Reynolds:

A regulatory impact assessment has not been produced for this legislation because the effect is on individuals and private households rather than businesses or voluntary sector organisations.

A Family Test assessment, an environmental principles assessment and an equality analysis were produced as part of the Government's decision-making process in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duties.

Mel Stride:[\[4195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the answer of 12 August 2024, to Question HL421 on Employment, whether a strengthened equality impact assessment has been produced for the Social Fund Winter Fuel Payment Regulations 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

An equality analysis was produced as part of the Government's decision-making process in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duties.

Sarah Champion:[\[4530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending Winter Fuel Payment eligibility to people receiving Attendance Allowance.

Emma Reynolds:

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

Pensioners in receipt of Attendance Allowance and on a low-income may qualify for Pension Credit if all other eligibility criteria are met. Moreover, pensioners on low incomes and in receipt of Attendance Allowance can qualify for an additional amount in Pension Credit, providing they meet the other eligibility criteria.

Entitlement to Attendance Allowance is based on the on-going need for frequent personal care and attention, or supervision to ensure personal safety, rather than on the individual's medical condition. It is paid out of general taxation and is a tax-free, non-contributory, and non-means-tested benefit so is not affected by other income or savings.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Arundel and South Downs**Andrew Griffith:**[\[4560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who will be affected by the decision to amend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment in Arundel and South Downs constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

It is estimated that around 26,033 people in Arundel and South Downs constituency will be affected by the decision to amend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment. This is based on Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics and 22-23 for Winter Fuel Payments statistics (sources below).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of Pension Credit recipients for Arundel and South Downs constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for Arundel and South Downs constituency. This is essentially the number of Winter Fuel Payment claimants pre-policy change not claiming Pension Credit, as an estimate of those who will no longer receive Winter fuel payment. The Pension Credit data that is used is based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024, in order to be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payments statistics.

Also, the above figures do not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up we might see as a result of the Pensions Credit Awareness campaign. We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

The published Pension Credit figures refer to households rather than individuals, so the number of individuals claiming Pension Credit, will be higher. This means that the estimates provided above will overstate the number of pensioners affected by the decision to amend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment.

In addition to that, Pension Credit claimants are the majority of those that will be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments, not all. There are other pensioners who are eligible for Winter Fuel Payments (as they claim other means tested benefits) but they are not considered in these figures as it is not possible to do so.

Sources:

The Winter Fuel Payments statistics are published here: [Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023)

Pension Credit data is published here: [Pension Credit – Data from May 2018](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pension-credit-data-from-may-2018)

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Carers**Manuela Perteghella:****[3878]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an estimate of how many unpaid carers of state pension age will be affected by the removal of the universal entitlement to Winter Fuel Payments.

Emma Reynolds:

Carers over State Pension age on low incomes can claim income-related benefits, such as Pension Credit. This can be paid to carers at a higher rate than those without caring responsibilities through the additional amount for carers. The additional amount for carers in Pension Credit is £45.60 a week, around £2,400 a year, and around 100,000 carers receive it as a part of their Pension Credit award.

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.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Eligibility

Dr Luke Evans: [\[3120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the equality impact assessment for changes to winter fuel payment entitlement.

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 an equality analysis in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements. However, it is not the convention for equality analyses to be published alongside secondary legislation.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Gosport

Dame Caroline Dinéage: [\[2858\]](#)

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 will lose their winter fuel payment.

Emma Reynolds:

The estimated number of pensioner households in Gosport constituency who will lose Winter Fuel Payments is 13,577. This is based on Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics and 22/23 Winter Fuel Payment statistics, (sources below).

The estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of Pension Credit recipients for Gosport Constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for Gosport constituency. Please note that Pension Credit claimants are the majority of those that will be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments, not all. There are other pensioners who are eligible for Winter Fuel Payments (as they claim other means tested benefits) but they are not considered in these figures as it is not possible to do so.

Please note that the Pension Credit data is based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024 in order to be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payments statistics.

Furthermore, the above does not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up we might see as a result of the Government's Pension Credit Campaign. We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

Sources used:

[winter-fuel-payments-household-2022-to-2023.ods \(live.com\)](#)

[Stat-Xplore - Table View \(dwp.gov.uk\)](#) (Feb-24 data)

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Low Incomes and Vulnerable Adults

Manuela Perteghella:

[3877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the removal of the universal entitlement to Winter Fuel Payments on (a) vulnerable and (b) low income pensioners.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government took account of the equality impacts in reaching its decision to link Winter Fuel Payments to receipt of Pension Credit and other qualifying income-related benefits in England and Wales from winter 2024-25.

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.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Motor Neurone Disease

Ben Maguire:

[3653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of changing eligibility requirements for the winter fuel payment on the affordability of energy for people with motor neurone disease.

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.

For those with long-term illnesses, the “extra costs” disability benefits, namely Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA), provide a tax free, non-income-related contribution towards the extra costs people with a long-term health condition can face, such as additional heating costs. They are paid monthly throughout the year. AA can be worth up to £5,600 a year and recipients are free to use their benefit according to their own priorities.

Receipt of AA can provide a passport to additional amounts in means-tested benefits (notably Pension Credit and Housing Benefit) for those on low incomes providing they meet the other eligibility criteria.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister: [\[4322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with Ministers in the Department for Communities in the Northern Ireland Executive on (a) eligibility for the winter fuel allowance and (b) that Department's access to administrative data used for the payment of winter fuel payments.

Emma Reynolds:

Ministers in the two Departments have discussed eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments in England and Wales, as part of continuing engagement between the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

Winter Fuel Payments are a transferred matter in Northern Ireland, but the delivery infrastructure is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions. This includes the use of administrative data necessary to make the payments on behalf of the Department for Communities.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: South Ribble

Mr Paul Foster: [\[4465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in South Ribble constituency received a winter fuel payment in the 2023-24 financial year.

Emma Reynolds:

Annual statistics on the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients and households by local authority and by Westminster parliamentary constituency are made publicly available via [GOV.UK](#). The latest release contains data on individual and household level statistics for winter 2022 to 2023. For Winter 2022 to 2023, 22,044 people received a Winter Fuel Payment in South Ribble constituency.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: South Suffolk

James Cartlidge: [\[4230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in South Suffolk constituency are in receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance.

Emma Reynolds:

Annual statistics on the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients and households by local authority and by Westminster parliamentary constituency are made publicly available via [GOV.UK](#). The latest release contains data on individual and household level statistics for winter 2022 to 2023. For Winter 2022 to 2023, 24,610 people received a Winter Fuel Payment in South Suffolk constituency.

■ Youth Services: Employment

Neil Coyle:

[\[4728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential role of (a) small and medium sized enterprises and (b) community interest companies in helping to deliver the Youth Guarantee.

Alison McGovern:

Our plan to get Britain Working includes a Youth Guarantee for all young people aged 18-21 to ensure that they can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or employment support. This will sit alongside; a new national jobs and careers service to help get more people into work, work health and skills plans for the economically inactive, and the launch of Skills England to open new opportunities for young people.

We have not yet made any assessment on the potential role of small and medium sized enterprises and community interest companies in helping to deliver the Youth Guarantee. In the early development stages, we will engage with our stakeholders who represent young people on the design and delivery of the Youth Guarantee.

We will set out further detail in the upcoming 'Get Britain Working' White Paper.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Winter Fuel Payment

Mel Stride:

[\[3958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Table 2 of the policy paper published on 29 July 2024 entitled Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25, whether the savings from targeting Winter Fuel Payments at recipients of Pension Credit and certain other means-tested benefits from winter 2024-25 take account of the potential impact of that policy on the number of people in receipt of Pension Credit.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 9 September 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Emma Reynolds:

The Department for Work and Pensions has indicated that it will not be possible to answer this question within the usual time period. An answer is being prepared and will be provided as soon as it is available.

The savings were estimated in Fixing the Foundations as Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) Winter Fuel Payments (WFP) savings of £1.4bn, for 2024/2025, for Great Britain. These included an assumption about increased take-up of Pension Credit which is in line with the highest levels it has achieved historically. WFPs are classified as AME. Estimated savings are sensitive to forecasted take up of Pension Credit. Final savings will be certified and published by the Office for Budget responsibility at the Autumn Budget on the 30th October Budget, taking account of any behavioural response.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Procurement Act 2023 Update**

Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Office (Georgia Gould): [\[HCWS90\]](#)

The Procurement Act 2023 aims to create a simpler and more transparent regime for public sector procurement that will deliver better value for money, and reduce costs for business and the public sector. This Government will use this legal framework to deliver greater value for money and improved social value, which will help raise standards, drive economic growth and open up public procurement to new entrants such as small businesses and social enterprises.

Under the Act, the previous administration published a National Procurement Policy Statement to which contracting authorities will have to have regard. But this Statement does not meet the challenge of applying the full potential of public procurement to deliver value for money, economic growth, and social value. I have therefore taken the decision to begin the vital work of producing a new National Procurement Policy Statement that clearly sets out this Government's priorities for public procurement in support of our missions.

It is crucial that the new regime in the Procurement Act goes live with a bold and ambitious Statement that drives delivery of the Government's missions, and therefore, I am proposing a short delay to the commencement of the Act to February 2025 so this work can be completed. I am confident that the extra time to prepare will allow for a more seamless transition, ensuring a smoother and more effective implementation process for both contracting authorities and suppliers.

Letters to withdraw the previous administration's Statement will be issued to both Houses shortly and the Government intends to make regulations to set a new date for the commencement of the Procurement Act 2023 of 24 February 2025.

I have also written to the relevant Ministers in the Welsh Government and the Northern Irish Executive seeking their agreement to the new date and assuring them of my commitment to working together in implementing the Procurement Act.

DEFENCE

■ **Recent developments in the AUKUS strategic partnership**

Secretary of State for Defence (John Healey): [\[HCWS92\]](#)

AUKUS is a groundbreaking strategic defence and security partnership, and a clear demonstration of our long-term commitment to support the security and stability of the Indo-pacific region and beyond. Against an increasingly unpredictable, interconnected landscape, with a war in Europe and rising tensions in the Middle East, partnerships with our closest allies are vital to deterring our adversaries and maintaining that strategic

advantage. The following statement is to update the House on AUKUS developments since this Government was elected.

Built on decades of integration, sharing and cooperation on defence and technology between our three nations, it is particularly significant that we secured landmark export control changes to benefit AUKUS partners last month. This marks a historic breakthrough in defence trade collaboration between AUKUS nations, which will streamline future cooperation, create jobs and boost growth.

On 16 August 2024, the Government published the UK's AUKUS Nations Open General Licence. Combined with a new exemption to the US International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) for the UK and Australia, alongside further national exemptions for the UK and US in Australia's export control framework, this is a milestone moment in deepening the potential of our tri-nation partnership. Taken together, these changes will significantly ease our licencing requirements for the export and sharing of certain defence products within and between the UK, US and Australia, including advanced capabilities, technical data, and defence services.

These groundbreaking reforms will facilitate faster and more efficient collaboration between our scientists, engineers, and defence industries. These changes alone will support up to £500 million in UK defence exports each year, generating billions of dollars of trade across all three nations – improving access to international trade with our closest allies, whilst driving economic growth in communities across the UK.

We can also report further progress in delivering on the ambitious pathway to support Australia's acquisition of a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability.

On 5 August 2024, AUKUS partners signed a trilateral Agreement on Cooperation Related to Naval Nuclear Propulsion. This is a significant step that will facilitate the sharing of submarine naval nuclear propulsion information between partners as well as enabling the future transfer of material and equipment to Australia for the safe and secure construction, operation and sustainment of this important capability. The Agreement was laid in Parliament on 2 September 2024, as part of the UK ratification process; it is undergoing similar processes in the US and Australia.

This Agreement reaffirms and is consistent with partners' respective non-proliferation commitments: our cooperation will continue to be undertaken in a way that is fully consistent with our international obligations and sets the highest non-proliferation standard whilst protecting classified and controlled information, material and equipment.

As part of our and the US's support to Australia, AUKUS partners commenced the Submarine Tendered Maintenance Period at HMAS Stirling in Australia, on 23 August 2024. This represents another important advance for the partnership, with Australian personnel, supported by a U.S. Submarine Tender and observed by Royal Navy officers, participating for the first time in the maintenance of a nuclear-powered submarine – to ensure Australia are on track to operate, maintain and regulate their future conventionally-armed nuclear-powered submarine (SSN) capability.

AUKUS is making significant progress. As a long-term strategic partnership, it is appropriate that this Government considers how best to deliver on the UK's considerable ambition for AUKUS and to maximise the benefits of this national endeavour.

To capitalise on the full suite of economic and security benefits of AUKUS, Sir Stephen Lovegrove has been appointed as the UK Government's AUKUS Adviser, to assess UK progress against AUKUS goals. Sir Stephen has invaluable experience, having served as Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence and as National Security Adviser at the time of the AUKUS announcement in September 2021.

The AUKUS report will be completed rapidly and will set out any existing barriers to success alongside areas of opportunity the UK could be taking advantage of, ensuring defence and economic benefits are properly considered. Sir Stephen's findings will be presented to the Prime Minister, the Defence Secretary, the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor, with the report's conclusions reflected in the broader Strategic Defence Review already underway.

AUKUS is the most significant defence, security, and diplomatic arrangement the UK has entered in the past 60 years. This Government is fully committed to this national endeavour: working with partners, stakeholders and industry to achieve the maximum economic and security benefits possible, while upholding stability, peace, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ **Annual report on the exercise of powers over the Office for Nuclear Regulation 2023-24**

Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Ed Miliband): [\[HCWS88\]](#)

My noble Friend, Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, has today made the following statement:

Later today, the annual report to Parliament setting out the use of the Secretary of State's powers exercised to the Office for Nuclear Regulation during the year, will be published. This is in accordance with Section 108(1) of the Energy Act 2013.

■ **Statement by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero**

Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Ed Miliband): [\[HCWS96\]](#)

It is deeply disappointing to learn that Petroineos has confirmed its previous decision to close the oil refining operation at Grangemouth. All of my thoughts are with the workers and their families and the wider Grangemouth community.

The site will now convert to an import terminal, which will continue to provide a secure and flexible fuel supply for Scotland.

The government will stand with the workforce in these difficult times. That is why we are announcing a package of investment to help the workforce find good, alternative jobs, invest in the community and deliver a viable industrial future for the Grangemouth site, with potential for future support from the National Wealth Fund.

Since taking office, I have taken joint action with the Scottish Government to urgently engage with the company and its shareholders, leaving no stone unturned to find a viable long-term future for the site. As it is clear that there is no viable commercial future for the current refinery operations, the UK and Scottish Governments have today announced a package that seeks to chart a new future for Grangemouth.. This includes:

- £100 million package for Falkirk and Grangemouth, including £20 million in joint funding from the UK and Scottish Governments announced today, on top of £80 million in joint funding from the two governments for the Falkirk and Grangemouth Growth Deal. This funding will support the community and its workers, investing in local energy projects to create new opportunities for growth in the region.
- Investment in the site's long-term future. The £1.5 million joint-funded Project Willow study has identified a shortlist of three credible options to begin building a new long-term industry at the refinery site, including low carbon hydrogen, clean eFuels and sustainable aviation fuels. We will work with the community to seek a commercially viable proposition, with the potential for future support from the National Wealth Fund.
- Immediate career support for workers. The UK and Scottish Governments will provide tailored support that will help affected workers in finding new employment – and Grangemouth will be among the first areas that the new Office for Clean Energy Jobs will work with to help deliver a just transition.

Alongside the Scottish Government, I will also be holding an extraordinary meeting of the Grangemouth Future Industry Board today to discuss next steps with local industry leaders, Falkirk Council, and trade bodies and unions.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Hong Kong Six-monthly Report

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Mr David Lammy): [\[HCWS94\]](#)

The latest Six-monthly Report on the implementation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong was published today, and is attached. It covers the period from 1 January – 30 June 2024. The report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. A copy is also available on the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/six-monthly-report-on-hong-kong-january-to-june-2024>. I commend the report to the House.

Attachments:

1. Six-Monthly Report on Hong Kong January-June 2024 [Six-Monthly Report on Hong Kong January - June 2024.pdf]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Implementation of advertising restrictions for less healthy food and drink on television and online**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention (Andrew Gwynne): [\[HCWS93\]](#)

I wish to update the House on the Government's progress to deliver our Manifesto commitment to implement restrictions on junk food advertising on TV and online.

The country wants to see our broken NHS fixed. Our Health Mission makes clear that this requires a prevention revolution, tackling the drivers of preventable illness and reducing demand on health services. One of these pressures is the childhood obesity crisis, setting up children for an unhealthy life and generating yet greater pressures on the NHS. More than one in five children in England are overweight or living with obesity by the time they start primary school, and this rises to more than one third by the time they leave. We want to tackle the problem head on and that includes implementing the restrictions on junk food advertising on TV and online without further delay. We will introduce a 9pm watershed on TV advertising, and a total ban on paid-for online advertising. These restrictions will help protect children from being exposed to advertising of less healthy food and drinks, which evidence shows influences their dietary preferences from a young age.

I am today confirming that we have published the Government's response to the 2022 consultation on the draft secondary legislation. This is a key milestone which confirms the definitions for the products, businesses and services in scope of the restrictions. This provides the clarity that businesses have been calling for and will support them to prepare for the restrictions coming into force across the UK on 1 October 2025.

As part of our response, we will clarify how the regulations will apply to Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) which delivers television live over the internet. Our proposal is to make clear in the regulations that IPTV services regulated by Ofcom will be subject to the broadcast 9pm watershed in the same way as other TV and Ofcom-regulated on-demand programme services. This requires clarification within the secondary legislation and, in line with our statutory duty to consult, we are launching a targeted consultation which is open for four weeks from today.

These steps mean we can move forward to laying the final legislation and publishing guidance. I will provide a further update to the House when the secondary legislation is laid to implement the advertising restrictions on 1 October 2025.

The Government's response to the 2022 consultation and the IPTV consultation have been published on GOV.UK.

HOME OFFICE**■ Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill****The Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis):**[\[HCWS98\]](#)

The Government has today introduced the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill to the House of Commons.

The Government would like to pay tribute to the 22 victims of the horrific Manchester Arena attack in 2017, and to Figen Murray, mother of one of the victims, Martyn Hett. Her campaigning has been crucial in driving this Bill forward

Against the backdrop of an increasingly complex, evolving and enduring threat picture, the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill will deliver on the Government's manifesto commitment to "strengthen the security of public events and venues".

The Bill seeks to improve protective security and organisational preparedness across the UK. It will require those responsible for certain premises and events to take steps to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack and reduce harm in the event of a terrorist attack occurring. In addition to this, certain larger premises and events must also take additional steps to reduce the vulnerability of the premises to terrorist attacks.

Through the Bill, qualifying premises and events should be better prepared and ready to respond in the event of a terrorist attack.

Bill development

This Government has reflected on the scrutiny provided throughout the Bill's development. As well as the extensive engagement that has taken place with security partners, business and victims' groups including Figen Murray and the Martyn's Law Campaign Team, the Survivors Against Terror, as well as Parliamentarians.

That is why important changes have been made to the Bill to ensure that we can both achieve public protection outcomes and ensure there are no undue burdens on businesses and other organisations:

- We have raised the standard tier threshold from 100 to 200, to create a more appropriate scope of the duty;
- The 'reasonably practicable' standard of requirements, now applicable in both tiers, is designed to allow procedures and measures to be tailored to the specific circumstances of a premises or event. This will enable duty holders to take into consideration what is within their control and the resources they have available to them, as well as what is suitable and appropriate for their premises or event; and
- We have removed the requirements for a specific, prescribed form of training and the completion of a mandatory Standard Terrorism Evaluation form – in recognition that a one size fits all approach is not appropriate and could be onerous.

We are confident these changes ensure the Bill is more appropriate whilst still delivering on its core aim of enhancing public safety.

Bill proposals

Scope

A person will be subject to the main requirements of the Bill if they are responsible for a qualifying premises or events.

A person who has control of premises in connection with their relevant Schedule 1 use is responsible for qualifying premises. For example, the operator of an arena or governing body of a school will be responsible for fulfilling the requirements of the Bill at their respective premises.

A person who will have control of the premises at which an event is to be held in connection with their use for the event will be responsible for a qualifying event.

Control over premises has been utilised in other regulatory regimes, such as fire safety.

Standard duty premises

The Bill establishes a tiered approach linked to the activity that takes place at premises or an event and the number of individuals it is reasonable to expect may be present on the premises at the same time.

Persons responsible for a standard duty premises, i.e. qualifying premises where it is reasonable to expect that between 200 and 799 individuals may be present at the same time, will be required to:

- notify the regulator of their premises; and
- put in place appropriate and reasonably practicable public protection procedures (as set out in Clause 5 of the Bill).

These procedures are to be followed by people working at the premises if an act of terrorism was to occur at the premises or in the immediate vicinity, which may be expected to reduce the risk of physical harm being caused to individuals. This includes ensuring there are procedures in place to provide information to individuals on the premises and to evacuate, invacuate or lockdown the premises.

The requirements for standard duty premises are focused on simple, low-cost activities surrounding policies and procedures, which are to be followed by staff in the event of terrorist attack or suspected terrorist attack occurring. The aim of these requirements is to improve staff preparedness and responses. There is no requirement to put in place physical measures in this tier. Furthermore, the reasonably practicable element will enable standard duty premises to tailor their approach to the resources they have available.

Enhanced duty premises and qualifying events

“Enhanced duty premises” and “qualifying events” are premises or events where it is reasonable to expect that 800 or more individuals may be present on the premises or attend the event at the same time. In addition to the same procedures as standard duty premises, persons responsible for enhanced duty premises and qualifying events will be required to:

- notify the regulator of their premises/event;
- put in place appropriate and reasonably practicable public protection measures that could be expected to reduce both (i) the vulnerability of the premises or event to an act of terrorism occurring at the location, and (ii) the risk of physical harm being caused to individuals if an attack was to occur there or nearby. For example, an enhanced duty premises will be required, insofar as reasonably practicable, to implement measures relating to the monitoring of the premises and their immediate vicinity;
- document the public protection procedures and measures in place, or proposed to put in place, and provide this document to the regulator. This document should include an assessment as to how those procedures and measures may be expected to reduce, so far as is reasonably practicable, vulnerability and risk of harm.

Where the responsible person for an enhanced duty premises or qualifying event is not an individual, they must appoint an individual as a designated senior individual with responsibility for ensuring that the relevant requirements are met.

Special categorisations and exemptions

There will be some limited exclusions and exemptions from the Bill's requirements, in particular where premises are already subject to existing requirements to consider and mitigate threats that achieve comparable security outcomes.

All places of worship will be placed into the standard tier where there are 200 or more individuals present at the same time (even if that number is 800 or greater). The Government considers it is appropriate that such places of worship take forward the standard duty procedures. However, places of worship are different to other premises in scope, in being readily accessible and welcoming to all, without the same commercial drivers as other premises, usually having no restrictions on entry, or staff routinely present. The Government recognises this, and will continue its work with faith communities to respect the unique nature of places of worship and how they operate, whilst considering how we can support them to reduce their vulnerability to terrorism and hate crime. This includes developing measures to better mitigate threats through local police engagement and Government funded work programmes.

Primary, secondary and further education establishments have been placed within the standard tier even if their capacity is greater than 800 individuals. Existing safety and safeguarding requirements at these establishments mean they have a range of appropriate security procedures and access controls measures in place.

However, premises belonging to higher education institutions (e.g. universities) could be in either tier, depending on the number of individuals that can reasonably be expected on the relevant premises. This is because they are, in the main, more freely accessible and so should be subject to the full requirements of the Bill.

The regulator

The Bill establishes a regulator to oversee and enforce compliance of the Bill's requirements. This regulator will operate as a new function of the Security Industry Authority.

As an arm's length body, the Security Industry Authority is operationally independent of the Home Office whilst being accountable to Home Office Ministers. Because the Security Industry Authority is an existing Home Office public safety regulator, we assess that this is the most appropriate way to deliver this critical function. Utilising an existing arm's length body also follows the Cabinet Office guidance and precedent set across Government for establishing new regulators. With its years of experience in inspection and enforcement around public safety at venues, alongside the work it already does with our security partners to promote best practice around counter terrorism protective security.

Sanctions and enforcement

Compliance with the Bill's requirements will be overseen by the Security Industry Authority. The core principle of the regulator's activity will be to support, advise and guide those responsible for premises and events in meeting the requirements of this legislation. Due to the severity of the risk posed by terrorism, it is important that the Security Industry Authority has the necessary tools to investigate suspected non-compliance and, where it is found, remedy serious or persistent non-compliance.

To that end, the Security Industry Authority will have powers to issue a range of civil sanctions such as monetary penalties. Due to the seriousness of some actions and in line with other regimes, the Bill also includes a limited number of underpinning criminal offences - for example, it will be a criminal offence to impersonate an inspector.

The Security Industry Authority must set any penalty at an amount that is reasonable and proportionate and take into account a range of factors including (but not limited to) an organisation's ability to pay.

The Bill also makes amendments to the Licensing Act 2003 and the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 to protect premises plans from being used for the purposes of terrorism.

Dedicated guidance and support will be provided for duty holders to ensure that those in scope have the required information on what to do and how best to do it.

Next steps

We believe it is now time that this cross-party commitment to improve the safety and security of venues in the wake of the Manchester Arena Attack is delivered without further delay. The public rightly deserve to feel safe when visiting public premises and attending events and we see it as reasonable that, in many locations, they should take appropriate, reasonably practicable steps to protect staff and the public from the horrific impacts and effects of terrorism.

I look forward to engaging with you in Parliament on this important piece of legislation. I will be holding a drop-in session in due course, should you wish to learn more about the Bill, and would be happy to answer any of your questions. Details will be provided shortly.

The Bill and accompanying documents will be available online here <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3765> and further information, including factsheets on the key elements of the Bill, can be found on gov.uk here www.gov.uk/government/collections/terrorism-protection-of-premises-bill-2024.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Designation of UK Data Infrastructure as Critical National Infrastructure and the Telecoms Supply Chain Diversification Advisory Council Report

Minister of State for Data Protection and Telecoms (Chris Bryant): [\[HCWS89\]](#)

The security and resilience of the UK's data and digital infrastructure are of central importance to the Government's strategic objectives. This statement provides two updates on the Government's approach to safeguarding connectivity and the foundations of the digital economy.

Designating UK Data Infrastructure as Critical National Infrastructure

Data infrastructure - the physical data centres and cloud infrastructure which provide the foundations of the digital economy - faces significant risks and challenges that threaten the day-to-day lives of citizens and other critical infrastructure in the UK. We are today taking a significant step to meet these challenges by designating UK data infrastructure as Critical National Infrastructure (CNI), putting our digital foundations in the same category as Energy and Water.

Data infrastructure underpins essential services that are critical to the UK economy and our way of life and will only become more vital as technologies like AI require greater data centre and cloud capacity. The data it contains is highly valuable, and as such attracts security threats from cyber and physical attacks. Data centres are also vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which is increasing the risk of environmental hazards like flooding, heatwaves, and other extreme weather that can disrupt operations and result in a compromise or loss of crucial services.

Although the sector already has high standards, CNI designation enables better mitigation of risks the sector faces through an improvement to the Government's visibility and engagement with the data centre and cloud service industry. It signals the Government's intention to better partner with the UK's data infrastructure sector to work together to mitigate these. We will also explore further how to ensure the right conditions are in place to drive necessary capacity expansion to support economic growth and innovation.

As the Department responsible for monitoring, protecting and enhancing the security and resilience of data infrastructure, DSIT will be working to better understand industry operators' existing risk mitigations and identify areas for Government support. Data infrastructure will be managed under existing cross-Government CNI structures led by the Cabinet Office, as a sub-sector of Communications. We will work closely in a joined-up approach with internal colleagues, other Government Departments and their respective CNI sectors, such as Energy and Water, contributing to cross-sector work and planning.

I am confident that these measures, taken together and implemented in close consultation with industry, will provide a high level of security and resilience for this increasingly critical infrastructure, giving confidence to the public and investors, and supporting the growth of the UK economy.

Telecoms Supply Chain Diversification Advisory Council Report

In addition, I want to thank the independent Telecoms Supply Chain Diversification Advisory Council, who will today publish a new report setting out recommendations to government on telecoms diversification policy.

A healthy and diverse supply chain for the technology that goes into our telecoms networks is essential for resilience – ensuring that UK network operators can deliver good, reliable connectivity for all. Concentration of that supply chain into a very small number of companies means the UK network is more vulnerable to disruption and means that outages, when they occur, may have greater impact. It is important that we take action to address this, working closely with international partners and allies.

I will review the Council's recommendations carefully and will provide a government response and update to this House on our efforts to maintain secure telecoms networks, supported by a healthy, diverse supply chain. I value the ongoing collaboration of the technology vendors and UK operators that have been engaging productively with government on this matter.

A copy of the report will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

I look forward to continuing work to strengthen, secure and expand our data and digital infrastructure, working with stakeholders across the economy and international partners.

TRANSPORT

■ **Bus Retrofit Performance Report**

Secretary of State for Transport (Louise Haigh):

[\[HCWS97\]](#)

Today, I am providing an update regarding the retrofitting of buses with Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) technology to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x).

Through a series of trials between 2013 and 2015, the previous Government explored the potential of reducing emissions or improving fuel economy in older buses and other large vehicles through a range of retrofit technologies. Retrofitting SCR technology was found to be the most effective in reducing the levels of NO_x emitted from older buses. Allowing for some variation based on the Euro standard of the retrofitted bus, reduction of NO_x using SCR technology in trials averaged around 90%.

The Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme (CVRAS) was launched in 2017 to accredit retrofit technologies that could reduce NO_x emissions from buses to close to Euro VI levels. Between 2017 and 2019, £64m was allocated to the Clean Bus Technology Fund for bus upgrades and retrofits. A further £31m was provided to local

authorities in the government's NO₂ Programme. Approximately 9,000 buses in England have been retrofitted with CVRAS-accredited SCR technology.

In 2021, the Government was made aware of new evidence from Scotland suggesting that real-world emission reductions from retrofitted buses were lower than expected. In 2022 a roadside monitoring campaign was commissioned to measure NO_x emissions from retrofitted buses in three areas in England which reported in early 2023. The findings were similar to those in Scotland. Government funding for bus retrofits was paused in April 2023 while further research was carried out to understand the causes of poor performance and assess the scope for improvement.

This research was overseen by the Department for Transport (DfT) and Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) Chief Scientific Advisers, assisted by an external independent expert group. Today I have placed the Bus Retrofit Performance Report, containing the findings of this research, in the Libraries of both Houses. This performance report was commissioned by the Government and finalised in November 2023. In the interest of transparency, I am now releasing this report today.

The report concludes that real-world performance of bus retrofit SCR technology is highly variable, achieving 80-90% NO_x reductions in some cases, but having a minimal effect in others. There is an average 11% reduction in NO_x emissions overall from retrofitted buses compared to non-retrofitted Euro V buses, which is significantly lower than the 80% reduction anticipated.

The research shows that a number of contributing factors can lead to poor performance, including incorrect functioning of retrofit systems; the condition of bus engines; and low catalyst operating temperatures. Based on these findings, I am announcing today a permanent end to further government funding for retrofit and the closure of the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme to further accreditations.

Moving forward, we will work with bus operators and retrofit suppliers to encourage a step-change in monitoring and maintenance of retrofit systems to get the best possible performance from the retrofitted buses currently in service. This will include ensuring that buses are providing live data showing retrofit performance, so that operators and depots can prioritise and target essential maintenance on the poorest performing buses. Providing this data will be a condition of the buses remaining on the list of CVRAS-accredited vehicles.

Air pollution is the biggest environmental threat to human health, and this Government recognises the need to take preventative public health measures to tackle the biggest killers and support people to live longer, healthier lives. We will continue to work closely with the relevant local authorities to identify alternative measures to deliver compliance with legal NO₂ limits in the shortest possible time.

■ Development consent decision extension

Secretary of State for Transport (Louise Haigh):

[\[HCWS91\]](#)

This statement confirms that it has been necessary to extend the deadline for the decision for the London Luton Airport Development Consent Order under the Planning Act 2008.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, a decision must be made within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless the power under section 107(3) to extend the deadline is exercised and a Statement is made to Parliament announcing the new deadline.

The Examining Authority's report on the London Luton Airport Development Consent Order application was received on 10 May 2024. The current deadline for a decision is 4 October 2024, having been extended from 10 August 2024 to 4 October 2024 by way of [Written Ministerial Statement dated 24 May 2024](#).

The deadline for the decision is to be further extended to 3 January 2025 (an extension of 3 months). The reason for the extension is to enable the Applicant further time to provide requested information, and for that information to be considered, including by Interested Parties, before the final determination of the application.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to give development consent for the above application.

TREASURY

■ Fiscal Risks and Sustainability Report 2024

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rachel Reeves):

[\[HCWS95\]](#)

This government's number one mission is to grow the economy. Sustainable public finances support the stability necessary for a successful economy. The stability that allows a family to buy their own home, for a business to thrive and for a government to invest in public services. The Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR) *Fiscal Risks and Sustainability* (FRS) report [\[CP 1142\]](#), laid today and based on the previous government's Spring Budget policies, shows the substantial longer-term challenges to the sustainability of the public finances.

As set out in the public spending audit [\[CP 1133\]](#) laid in July, the previous government left a challenging fiscal inheritance, with a projected overspend of £22 billion. This government has already taken action to begin fixing the foundations, including £5.5 billion in public spending savings for 2024-25. Further difficult decisions will be needed at the Autumn Budget across spending, welfare and tax in order to meet the fiscal rules and to support sustainable economic growth. This is the responsible thing to do to fix the foundations of our economy and bring back economic stability.

Sustained economic growth is the only route to the improved prosperity that the UK needs. Had the UK grown at the average rate of other OECD economies over the last 13

years, the economy would have been over £140 billion larger and this could have brought in an additional £58 billion in tax revenues in the last year alone. Growth is therefore this government's defining mission and one pillar underpinning this mission is stability. Economic stability will allow us to grow the economy, maintain sustainable public finances, and keep taxes, inflation and mortgages as low as possible.

Economic stability requires respecting the institutions that are guarantors of our stability and we have already demonstrated our commitment to strengthening independent institutions, including the OBR. In July, I announced the most significant set of changes to our fiscal framework since the inception of the OBR. This included introducing the Budget Responsibility Act, ensuring any major future fiscal announcements will be subject to an independent assessment by the OBR, as well as confirming that Spending Reviews will take place every two years with a minimum duration of three years in order to improve value for money, the planning of public expenditure and provide greater budgetary certainty. The government is also committed to robust fiscal rules which will ensure the public finances are always managed responsibly.

The FRS builds on previous years' analysis, examining the risks posed to the public finances by climate change damage, health spending and debt sustainability. The OBR's analysis shows that the UK will face significant costs from climate-related damage, even in a scenario where the UK and the rest of the world continue with current mitigation commitments. The costs would be more severe if these commitments are not met, which is why one of the government's missions is to make the UK a clean energy superpower. The government has already acted to remove the de-facto ban on onshore wind, approve three major solar projects, and significantly increase the budget for the sixth Contracts for Difference round. The government will work with the private sector through the newly founded Great British Energy, capitalised with £8.3 billion. Preparing for the future also means adapting to the effects of climate change. Without action, flooding, coastal erosion and other climate hazards will pose greater risks to lives, livelihoods and people's wellbeing. The government will explore how to further strengthen our approach to developing the country's resilience to climate change, working to improve resilience and preparation across central government, local authorities, local communities, and emergency services.

The FRS sets out that rising health spending is forecast to be the single most important driver of public debt increasing over the next 50 years. It also shows that a healthier population brings economic and fiscal benefits. The health mission will ensure that we build an NHS fit for the future that is there when people need it, with fewer lives lost to the biggest health-related killers, in a fairer Britain where everyone lives well for longer.

The final chapter of the report assesses the UK's debt sustainability. Public debt is projected to reach 274% of GDP in 2073-74, based on a number of long-term spending pressures and the previous government's policies remaining unchanged. However, boosting the productive potential of the economy can help to reduce this rise in debt, with the OBR's analysis showing that every 0.1% increase in annual productivity growth would reduce the increase in the debt-to-GDP ratio by 25 percentage points. A full one percentage point increase in annual productivity growth to 2.5%, equivalent to a return to

pre-financial crisis rates of productivity growth, could keep debt below 100% of GDP throughout the next 50 years. This underlines the importance of tackling the UK's weak productivity performance through the government's growth mission. Since the launch of the growth mission in July, the government has wasted no time in making progress and has already announced several growth-enhancing policies, guided by the principles of stability, investment and reform.

Economic shocks have been the most significant driver of rising debt in recent years. Through the Spending Review process, the government will take forward work on a number of priority themes, including a greater focus on long-termism and prevention, to improve the resilience of the economy to future shocks.

The FRS highlights the challenging fiscal outlook faced by this and future governments, and underlines the importance of growth and stability. I am grateful to the staff of the OBR for the work and expertise that has gone into this report, which fulfils the body's obligations in the Charter for Budget Responsibility to examine and report on the sustainability of, and risks to, the public finances. The government will respond to the FRS in the spring.