



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 4 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:34 P.M., 04 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Adoption Leave

Claire Hazelgrove:

[\[4949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) extending adoption leave to more than one parent and (b) introducing the equivalent of paternity leave for adoptive parents.

Justin Madders:

Employed adoptive parents have broadly the same rights and protections as birth parents. Paternity Leave and Pay already enables employed fathers and partners (including same sex partners) to take up to two weeks leave during the first year following their child's placement for adoption.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Rupert Lowe:

[\[3447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what the cost to the public purse was of the Bounce Back Loans scheme; what proportion of the loans have been (a) returned and (b) written off; and whether all data related to the scheme has been recorded in OSCAR II.

Gareth Thomas:

Businesses have drawn a total of £46.59 billion under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme. 12.97% of facilities by volume have been repaid and 59.44% of facilities by volume are on schedule. 19.77% of facilities by volume have been settled under the Government guarantee. The Department publishes performance data on the COVID-19 loan guarantee schemes on a quarterly basis.

The final year-end outturn is recorded in OSCAR II for years 22-23 and prior. The 23-24 data is still pending final updates based on the finalisation of DBT's accounts for 23-24.

■ Conditions of Employment: Multiple Sclerosis

Chris Law:

[\[4738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he plans to take with Cabinet colleagues to (a) engage and (b) consult with people with multiple sclerosis when developing new employment rights legislation.

Chris Law:

[\[4739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he plans to take through new employment rights legislation to help tackle challenges for people with (a) multiple sclerosis and (b) other fluctuating conditions in the workplace.

Justin Madders:

The Government has been clear that it will consult extensively with a wide range of stakeholders when developing new employment rights legislation. That will include those representing people with multiple sclerosis.

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 with multiple sclerosis and other health conditions at work - including making sure people can benefit from flexible working and ensuring flexibility is a genuine default.

■ Conditions of Employment: Northern Ireland**Jim Shannon:**[\[5057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the provisions of the proposed Employment Rights Bill will extend to Northern Ireland.

Justin Madders:

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

The scope of the Bill is still to be determined and engagement continues with stakeholders with an interest in this legislation. This includes all Devolved Governments including the Northern Ireland Executive. The Plan is a core part of the Government's mission to grow the economy and raise living standards across the country.

■ Cosmetics: Health Hazards**Matt Western:**[\[5096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the safety of talc in cosmetic products.

Justin Madders:

Talc is permitted for use in cosmetics. However, to be sold on the UK market, cosmetics must undergo a safety assessment performed by a qualified safety assessor. The assessment is then reviewed by the manufacturer's nominated "Responsible Person", whose role is to ensure that cosmetics are safe and comply with the law.

If an unacceptable health risk is identified with talc, its status as a permitted ingredient in cosmetic products will be reviewed. The Office for Product Safety and Standards work with local enforcement authorities to take effective enforcement action where products are identified as not meeting the safety requirements.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Equality

Rupert Lowe:

[\[5180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many positions in his Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Justin Madders:

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the Department's annual report and accounts.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Public Appointments

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[5068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 2408 on Department for Business and Trade: Ministers, whether he plans to appoint an adviser for business engagement and trade strategy.

Justin Madders:

There are no current plans to appoint a specific adviser for business engagement and trade strategy.

■ Electronic Commerce

Angus MacDonald:

[\[4955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to inform the public of their rights under the Consumer Contracts Regulations when buying from an online trader.

Justin Madders:

The Government funds the Citizens Advice Consumer Service in England and Wales, providing impartial advice on a range of consumer issues, including buying online. In Scotland, where consumer advice and advocacy are devolved, a similar service is provided by Advice Direct Scotland, funded by the Scottish Government.

■ Employment

John Glen:

[\[5017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Answer of 12 August 2024, to Question HL421, on Employment, what legislative steps he plans to take to introduce statutory rights for trade union equality representatives.

Justin Madders:

The Government is committed to introducing statutory rights for trade union equality representatives to strengthen equality at work for all. Further information including impact assessments will be published in due course.

Foreign Investment in UK**Callum Anderson:**[\[4886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department plans to implement the recommendations of the policy paper entitled The Harrington Review of Foreign Direct Investment, published on 22 November 2023.

Sarah Jones:

The Department for Business & Trade is leading and supporting on many initiatives that deliver the recommendations set out in the Harrington Review. This includes; developing the Industrial Strategy to drive long-term sustainable, inclusive and secure growth through securing investment into crucial sectors of the economy.

We are supporting HM Treasury to develop a National Wealth Fund to mobilise private capital and simplify investor access to financial support. We are supporting regional growth by working with local leaders to realise investment opportunities in every region of the UK, such as working with Mayors in England to develop Local Growth Plans.

Housing: Construction**David Simmonds:**[\[3823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of bricks required to meet his target to build 1.5 million homes by the end of this Parliament that will be (a) manufactured in the UK and (b) imported.

Sarah Jones:

In 2023, 1,626 million bricks (81%) were produced in the UK and 329 million bricks (19%) were imported, according to data from DBT's [Building Materials and Components](#) publication and HMRC's [UK Trade Info](#) service respectively.

[ONS House building data](#) indicates 190,000 UK dwellings were completed in 2023.

Given variables over specific materials that will be used to construct new homes and the extent to which domestic brick production capacity would need to be scaled-up to meet the level of increased demand necessary to meet the target, it is not possible to give more precise estimates than those provided above

Leave: Domestic Abuse**Tom Hayes:**[\[4810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will introduce statutory paid leave for survivors of domestic abuse.

Justin Madders:

The Government does not have any plans to introduce a specific paid leave entitlement at this time. However, depending on the nature of the individual's employment, survivors may be able to access a range of leave entitlements allowing them to take time off from work when they need it.

Being at work is often important for victims, and there is practical support employers can offer which can make a real difference, such as signposting, financial assistance and supporting safety in and around the workplace.

■ New Businesses**Callum Anderson:**[\[4887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to encourage (a) women and (b) people from ethnic minorities to found start-up companies.

Gareth Thomas:

Start-up companies, including those founded by women and people from ethnic minorities, are essential to our economic success.

All businesses can access support through the Business Support Service, the gov.uk website, their local Growth Hub, and Help to Grow.

The Start Up Loans Company, part of the government backed British Business Bank, provides loans and mentoring to new entrepreneurs. Since 2012, over 69,000 loans have been made to women and founders from an ethnic minority background.

■ Office for Investment**Callum Anderson:**[\[4875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department plans to review the Office for Investment's strategy.

Sarah Jones:

The Office for Investment is a small joint unit between 10 Downing Street and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the department responsible for investment into the UK. It is a delivery-focused team whose strategic objectives are fully aligned with those of DBT. It was established to increase the UK's chances of landing the most strategically important investments. It works alongside teams from DBT, the UK's international network, and other departments, providing an additional level of support for a handful of high-value projects which are particularly complex and require cross-government convening to unblock barriers.

Callum Anderson:[\[4877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what initiatives the Office for Investment has introduced to attract investment in small and medium-sized enterprises in the UK.

Sarah Jones:

The service the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) offers is tailored to investors' needs and the value of their projects. The Office for Investment (OfI) focuses on supporting a select number of the highest value investments. For lower value investments DBT provides support through *Expand Your Business*, an online portal designed to address the 'information gap' for foreign investors. The Government also works through the British Business Bank to improve access to investment for small and mid-sized businesses through targeted interventions. The Bank's programmes support over £17 billion of finance to small and high-growth businesses, backing almost 64,000 businesses across the UK.

Callum Anderson:[\[4878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps the Office for Investment has taken to build and strengthen international partnerships that promote inward investment to the UK.

Sarah Jones:

The Government's international investment partnerships will be crucial for driving economic growth in the UK. The Office for Investment continues to work with teams in the Department for Business and Trade and other departments across government to amplify opportunities for collaboration and the pursuit of shared goals through these partnerships, where stability, predictability, and trust are key. The International Investment Summit on 14 October will be a significant next step to deliver this message to our existing and potential new partners.

Callum Anderson:[\[4880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps the Office for Investment is taking in response to global economic trends to maintain the attractiveness of the UK as an investment destination.

Sarah Jones:

To respond to global economic trends and increasing competition for future industries, the Government has announced a set of first steps to improve the UK's attractiveness as an investment destination, including through driving planning reform and launching our new National Wealth Fund and GB Energy. The Office for Investment (OfI) helps to improve the competitiveness of the UK's overall offer for investors through focused support for the most globally mobile investment projects.

■ Office for Investment: Standards**Callum Anderson:**[\[4876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what metrics his Department uses to assess the performance of the Office for Investment; and how it has performed against those metrics in the last year.

Sarah Jones:

The Department for Business and Trade uses a range of metrics and data to review the performance of its investment promotion function, of which the Office for Investment is a part. These include internal evidence, for instance on the number of projects DBT has been involved in, the Gross Value Added, and the number of jobs created, as well as external evidence from various sources. During 2023-24 DBT supported the delivery of 1,018 FDI projects, creating 57,037 jobs and generating an estimated £5.8 billion GVA over the next three years. The department also supported over £7 billion in large capital investments and £0.86 billion in Venture Capital injections.

■ Post Offices: Compensation**Jerome Mayhew:**[\[5111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many full-time civil servants are working on compensation for postmasters.

Gareth Thomas:

Within the Department for Business and Trade, there are currently 60 full time civil servants working on redress for postmasters across the 4 available redress schemes.

Government is determined that all postmasters who suffered as a result of the Horizon scandal receive the full and fair redress they deserve, as swiftly as possible thus we routinely review whether additional staff are needed.

■ Public Houses: Government Assistance**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[4608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to support the pub industry.

Gareth Thomas:

Pubs are at the heart of our communities and play a vital role in supporting economic growth across the UK. That's why it is important for us to act on the challenges that they face, by, for example, reforming business rates to level the playing field for all businesses from hospitality to the high street. The Chancellor has confirmed that she will be making decisions on tax policy at the Budget on 30 October.

In addition, we have established Skills England, a new partnership with employers at its heart and will transform the existing Apprenticeship Levy into a more flexible Growth and Skills Levy to support businesses, including pubs, and boost opportunity.

■ Public Houses: West Dorset**Edward Morello:**[\[5205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help support pubs in West Dorset constituency.

Gareth Thomas:

Pubs, including in West Dorset, are at the heart of our communities and play a vital role in supporting economic growth across the UK. That's why it is important for us to act on the challenges that they face, by reforming business rates to level the playing field for all businesses from hospitality to the high street. The Chancellor has confirmed that she will be making decisions on tax policy at the Budget on 30 October.

We have established Skills England, a new partnership with employers at its heart and will transform the existing Apprenticeship Levy into a more flexible Growth and Skills Levy to support business and boost opportunity.

■ Sexual Offences: Victims**Claire Hazelgrove:**[\[4953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of support available to victims of sexual assault who need to take time off work to attend court and interviews related to the case.

Justin Madders:

Depending on the nature of the individual's employment, victims of sexual assault may be able to access a range of leave entitlements allowing them to take time off from work when they need it. There is also practical support employers can offer which can make a real difference, such as signposting, financial assistance and supporting safety in and around the workplace.

■ Small Businesses: Shipley**Anna Dixon:**[\[4315\]](#)

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

Gareth Thomas:

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

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

■ Ticketmaster

Paula Barker:

[\[5138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department will bring forward proposals to regulate the de facto monopoly of ticket sales by Ticketmaster.

Justin Madders:

Under competition law, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), as the UK's competition authority, is responsible for investigating anti-competitive practices such as an abuse of a dominant position. The Government has ensured that the CMA has significant powers to investigate and act if it finds that businesses are behaving anti-competitively in a market. As an independent authority, the CMA has discretion to investigate competition cases which, according to its prioritisation principles, it considers most appropriate.

With respect to the secondary ticketing market, the Government has committed to introducing new consumer protections in relation to ticket resales and we will be launching a consultation in the autumn to seek views on potential options.

■ Trade Agreements: Crown Dependencies

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[4611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps to ensure that Crown dependencies are represented in trade negotiations.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

This government understands the Crown Dependencies ambition for coverage in UK trade agreements. We will continue to seek to represent the interests of the Crown Dependencies on UK trade negotiations, and we will not act on their behalf without prior consultation. The UK's relationship with the Crown Dependencies should continue in a way that respects their autonomy as well as the UK's constitutional duties and international obligations.

CABINET OFFICE

■ 10 Downing Street: Contracts

John Glen:

[\[5041\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1253 on 10 Downing Street: Contract, whether he plans to insource contracts for the maintenance of (a) 10 Downing Street and (b) 70 Whitehall.

Georgia Gould:

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

■ 10 Downing Street: Shops**John Glen:** [\[5000\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether any changes have been made to the goods on sale in the Downing Street shop since 4 July 2024; and if he will publish the price list for goods available in that shop.

Georgia Gould:

There has been no change to either the goods on sale or prices that were available under the last Government. These items are paid for personally by members of staff at full cost price and with no subsidy from the taxpayer. A list will be placed in the library of the House.

■ 70 Whitehall**John Glen:** [\[4663\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many work desks are available for civil servants in 70 Whitehall; and how many staff are assigned to work in 70 Whitehall.

Georgia Gould:

It has been the practice of successive governments not to comment, on grounds of both national security and staff safety, on the physical capacity or staffing numbers for individual buildings of the government estate.

John Glen: [\[4678\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the staff guidance on obtaining a pass to exit 70 Whitehall via the Horse Guards cyclist entrance; and whether staff not travelling by bicycle are permitted to use that entrance.

Georgia Gould:

The Government Property Agency is responsible for ensuring that staff working within 70 Whitehall have the necessary guidance on accessing and using the cyclist entrance at 70 Whitehall. This is not shared outside of the department for security reasons.

■ Business Interests: Civil Servants and Special Advisers**John Glen:** [\[2292\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average length of time is for the Cabinet Office to process a business appointments rules application from (a) crown servants and (b) special advisers.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office processes Business Appointment Rules applications for civil servants and special advisers from within the department, as well as Permanent Secretaries from across all Government departments.

For Cabinet Office civil servants and special advisers below the ACOBA threshold (those below SCS pay band 3 or below special adviser pay band 4), the Cabinet

Office oversees the full process and makes final decisions. For Cabinet Office civil servants and special advisers above the ACOBA threshold (SCS pay band 3 or above and special adviser pay band 4) the Cabinet Office provides a recommendation and supporting information to ACOBA, who then conduct their own analysis and provide advice.

Business Appointment Rules applications at SCS2 and below are managed at a departmental level. It can take between 11 and 32 working days depending on the grade and former and prospective roles to process these applications.

■ Cabinet Office Audit and Risk Committee

John Glen: [\[4652\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many members sit on his Department's Audit and Risk Committee.

Georgia Gould:

A list of members can be found on the department's [governance page on gov.uk](#).

■ Cabinet Office: Annual Reports

John Glen: [\[5033\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Cabinet Office's annual report and accounts for 2023-24 will be published.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Rt Hon member to PQ 2307 answered on 6th September 2024.

■ Cabinet Office: Correspondence

John Glen: [\[4694\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Cabinet Secretary has responded to the letter from the former Prime Minister, Liz Truss, of 18 July 2024.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

A response has been issued.

■ Cabinet Office: Equality

Rupert Lowe: [\[5191\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many positions in his Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Georgia Gould:

Cabinet Office does not routinely collate information on specific words within job titles and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

■ Cabinet Office: Remote Working

John Glen: [\[5046\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the occupancy rate for 70 Whitehall in the most recent week for which data is available since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The publication of this data was suspended in line with pre-election guidance for the duration of the Pre-Election Period. We will provide an update on future publication plans in due course.

■ Chequers and Dorneywood

John Glen: [\[4989\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether changes have been made to the Government-appointed trustees of (a) Dorneywood and (b) Chequers since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

No changes have been made by the government with regard to government-appointed trustees on the boards of Dorneywood or Chequers.

■ Civil Servants

Andrew Rosindell: [\[4618\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to reduce the number of civil servants.

John Glen: [\[4643\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 939 on Civil Service, whether he has a target size for the Civil Service in headcount or full-time equivalent terms relative to the planned reductions of the previous government.

Georgia Gould:

Decisions on the future size of the Civil Service will form a key part of the comprehensive Spending Review.

■ Civil Servants: Incentives

John Glen: [\[4697\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on giving (a) bonuses and (b) reward-based pay to civil servants in the form of shopping vouchers.

Georgia Gould:

As has been the case under successive administrations, non-cash vouchers of small amounts may be used to mark the significant contributions of staff who have worked on specific projects outside of formal performance management processes.

All individual awards follow an established approval process to ensure value for money.

It is also important to confirm that shopping vouchers are not used by government departments to pay traditional end of year performance bonuses - for those departments who still adopt that approach these end of year bonuses are paid as cash payments through payroll.

■ Civil Servants: Muslims

John Glen: [\[5035\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the status of the Civil Service Muslim Network is; and whether network time is allocated to that diversity network as of 10 September 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Muslim Network voluntarily suspended their activity earlier this year, but has now resumed activity, with senior sponsors appointed to ensure all network activity is in line with relevant guidance.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Staff Network time allocation is agreed between networks and departments as the employer. The majority of staff time spent on diversity staff networks is voluntary and unpaid.

■ Civil Servants: Political Impartiality

John Glen: [\[4699\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what disciplinary investigations have taken place in the last 12 months in relation to civil servants breaching political impartiality restrictions by campaigning in (a) Parliamentary by-elections and (b) the general election.

Georgia Gould:

The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment

John Glen: [\[4658\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average length of a recruitment competition is from advertisement to recruitment of the winning candidate for a Civil Service job advertised on the (a) public and (b) civil service-only version of Civil Service jobs.

Georgia Gould:

In April 2024, Civil Service departments were commissioned to report on a common definition of Time To Hire. Civil Service Time To Hire measures the duration from the closing date of an advert, to the date a provisional offer is made.

The first Civil Service Time To Hire data, collected between January and March 2024, indicates department's median averages range between:

17 and 61 calendar days for grades AA to Grade 6, and 28.5 and 70 calendar days for SCS Pay Bands 1 and 2.

These measurements are obtained from recruitment campaigns where an offer was made between January and March 2024.

John Glen: [\[4662\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Civil Service Commission Recruitment Principles, published in April 2018, whether his Department has published supplementary guidance on appointing civil servants under exception 1 on temporary appointments.

Georgia Gould:

There is no additional guidance specific to exception one of the Civil Service Commission Recruitment Principles.

John Glen: [\[4706\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is his policy that all civil service appointments should be advertised on gov.uk.

Georgia Gould:

There is no obligation on departments to advertise their vacancies on any specific platform. However, departments are encouraged to advertise jobs on the Civil Service Jobs platform.

John Glen: [\[5028\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how long a civil service vacancy must be advertised for to qualify as open and fair competition.

Georgia Gould:

There is no prescribed duration for the advertising of publicly advertised vacancies for them to be considered compliant with the Civil Service Recruitment Principles.

■ **Civil Servants: Remote Working**

John Glen: [\[4646\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 919 on Civil Service, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of working from home on Civil Service productivity.

Georgia Gould:

We have reviewed the wide range of studies available on the benefits of hybrid working, which has been used to inform the expectation for 60% office attendance for Civil Servants.

■ **Civil Servants: Temporary Employment**

John Glen: [\[4698\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on the use of contingent labour in the Civil Service.

Georgia Gould:

Contingent labour contracts should only be used in government where better value alternatives are not available.

The Government will stop all non-essential expenditure on consultants, and reduce the reliance on contingent labour.

■ Civil Servants: Trade Union Officials**John Glen:**[\[5051\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 943 on Civil Service: Trade Union Officials, what guidance his Department has issued on the (a) proportion of the total Civil Service paybill that should be allocated to facility time and (b) maximum percentage of time that individual Civil Service staff may spend on facility time.

Georgia Gould:

Under the previous administration, the Cabinet Office provided departments with a facility time framework agreement, and supporting guidance, which departments must use when agreeing their facility time and facilities usage agreements with their recognised trade unions.

■ Civil Servants: Training**Tom Hayes:**[\[4823\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to provide disability awareness training to all civil servants in public-facing roles.

Georgia Gould:

Due to the delegated nature of the Civil Service, departments as individual employers are able to set the learning requirements for their employees.

However, Civil Service Expectations training is available to all Civil Servants. This provides an introduction to the Civil Service code and values; the legislation around diversity and inclusion; the Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy; why diversity and inclusion matters and what it means to Civil Servants and the support that is available to them such as workplace adjustments, mental health and wellbeing support.

■ Civil Servants: Workplace Pensions**John Glen:**[\[5044\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 2 August 2024, to Question 905, on Civil Servants: Workplace Pensions, what recent estimate he has made of the percentage employer contribution to the Alpha pension scheme by pay band; and what the estimated yearly monetary cost to the public purse of such employer contributions is.

Georgia Gould:

This information is publicly available in the “Central Government Supply Estimates 2024-25” documents and the Civil Service Pension Scheme Valuation Results” document.

■ Civil Service**John Glen:**[\[4680\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance the civil service issues on employing (a) staff without posts, (b) people action teams, (c) priority movers lists, (d) redeployment registers and (e) talent pools.

Georgia Gould:

Departments are responsible for setting their redundancy procedures in line with the Cabinet Office issued 2016 Civil Service Redundancy Protocol. This document is publicly available guidance, published on gov.uk. The Civil Service does not formally use the terms, ‘redeployment registers’, ‘people action teams’, or ‘priority movers lists’, but the Redundancy Protocol does set out the expectations placed on departments when it comes to managing their employees who are without posts due to restructuring or job reduction plans.

There is no central policy relating to 'Talent pools' in the Civil Service. Departmental approaches to managing talent vary and are not governed by any central guidance or policy.

■ Civil Service Governance and Accountability Review**John Glen:**[\[4660\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to respond formally to Lord Maude of Horsham's independent review of governance and accountability in the civil service.

Georgia Gould:

The Department will consider Lord Maude's recommendations as this government develops its strategic plan for a more efficient and effective civil service.

■ Civil Service: Collective Bargaining**John Glen:**[\[917\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to introduce collective bargaining in the civil service.

Georgia Gould:

Pay arrangements for civil servants below the Senior Civil Service are delegated to departments as separate employers. Departments each have their own local pay bargaining units to engage with trade unions as departments deal with many different workforce issues.

■ Civil Service: Directories

John Glen: [\[4674\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to publish an updated version of the Directory of Civil Service Guidance, last published on 21 September 2010.

Georgia Gould:

The government has no immediate plans to publish an updated version of the Directory of Civil Service Guidance.

■ Civil Service: Equality

John Glen: [\[4679\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 936 on Civil Service: Equality, whether he plans to implement the previous Government's planned reductions on equality, diversity and inclusion spending in the civil service.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Equality Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Guidance published on 14 May, remains in place.

John Glen: [\[4683\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average salary is of civil servants working in roles relating to diversity, equality and inclusion.

Georgia Gould:

Average salary data for civil servants working in roles relating to diversity, equality and inclusion is not held by the Cabinet Office.

John Glen: [\[5026\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 12 August 2024 to Question HL427 on Civil Servants: Equality, whether his Department has a list of each diversity network by department.

Georgia Gould:

Responsibility for, and management of, departmental diversity networks is delegated to individual departments. Lists are not held centrally by the Cabinet Office.

John Glen: [\[5029\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much was spent on civil service diversity networks in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Georgia Gould:

As part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Review commissioned in 2023 by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Cabinet Office collected information on spend on EDI staff networks. We are currently considering this information.

John Glen: [\[5047\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to House of Lords Question HL517 on Civil Service: Expenditure, what plans his Department has to review the (a) Ministerial controls and exceptions on and (b) departments that can authorise equality, diversity and inclusion expenditure; and if he will publish granted exceptions to spending controls.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Equality Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Guidance which was published on 14 May, remains in place.

John Glen: [\[5048\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the answer of 30 July 2024 to House of Lords Question HL517 on Civil Service: Expenditure, if he will make it his policy to ensure that Civil Service staff should not spend time on diversity network activities during core working hours.

Georgia Gould:

The management of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion networks is delegated to departments and any network time allocation is agreed between the network and the department as the employer. The majority of Civil Service staff time spent on diversity staff networks is voluntary.

John Glen: [\[5049\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to House of Lords Question HL517 on Civil Service: Expenditure, what plans he has to update guidance on diversity networks in the Civil Service.

Georgia Gould:

Existing guidance remains in place for EDI networks to regulate network governance and delivery and provide necessary guardrails to ensure due regard to the Civil Service Code.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Rupert Lowe: [\[4564\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has made an assessment of the (a) costs and (b) merits of each of the restrictions during the covid-19 pandemic.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The previous Government spent up to £400 billion on pandemic related interventions and programmes including 11.7 million employees that were furloughed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, at a cost of £70 billion. 2.9m people on the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme received grants at a cost of £28bn.

The Chancellor has announced that she will appoint a Covid Corruption Commissioner, fulfilling a manifesto commitment. The main focus of the

Commissioner will be pandemic PPE contracts. They will make sure everything that can be done, has been done, to get the public purse what it is owed.

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry has now been established. As set out in its Terms of Reference, the Inquiry will examine, consider and report on preparations and the response to the pandemic. In doing so, the inquiry will help identify lessons learned. The Inquiry published its Module 1 report, focussing on resilience and preparedness in July 2024. The government will carefully consider the Inquiry's findings and recommendations, and will respond within six months.

■ Departmental Coordination

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4970\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Mission Delivery Boards have met since 5 July 2024.

Ellie Reeves:

All Mission Boards have met since 5 July 2024.

■ Departmental Coordination: Disclosure of Information

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4587\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether minutes from mission delivery boards will be made publicly available.

Ellie Reeves:

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its committees - including mission boards - is not normally shared publicly.

■ Ethics and Integrity Commission

John Glen:

[\[4701\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1251 on the Ethics and Integrity Commission, whether the Ethics and Integrity Commission will replace the (a) the Committee on Standards in Public Life and (b) the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the right honourable member to the answer given to PQ 1251 on 23 July 2024.

■ European Court of Justice

John Glen:

[\[4675\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on the potential impact of European Court of Justice rulings on the UK, in the context of the Government's plans to change its relationship with the EU.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

There has been no change in the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice rulings in relation to the UK.

■ **Foreign Investment in UK****Greg Smith:**[\[5117\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the level of inward foreign direct investment was in each of the last 10 financial years.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

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

A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 11th September is attached.

Attachments:

1. Letter from the National Statistician [PQ5117.pdf]

■ **Government Communication Service****John Glen:**[\[4668\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1208 on Government Communication Service, if he will place a copy of the audit in the House of Commons Library that (a) redacts the names of junior civil servants, (b) uses pseudonymisation or (c) uses anonymisation as necessary to ensure that individuals cannot be identified.

Georgia Gould:

No, there are currently no plans to do this.

John Glen:[\[4687\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 921 on Government Communication Service, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of changing the configuration of (a) staffing and (b) other resources for digital communications within the Government Communications Service relative to other means of communication.

John Glen:[\[4689\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 921 on Government Communication Service, what job vacancies have been advertised by the Government Communication Service (a) internally within Government, (b) internally only to existing staff of the Government Communication Service and (c) externally, by (i) job title, (ii) department and (iii) pay range since 4 July 2024.

John Glen:[\[4690\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what data his Department holds on the number of staff in each department that work in (a) communications and (b) marketing, by (i)

headcount and (ii) full-time equivalent; and whether the Government has plans to amend the number of such roles.

John Glen: [4693]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many staff in terms of (a) headcount and (b) full-time equivalent are employed in roles relating to communications by (i) department and (ii) public body, according to figures held by the Government Communications Service's most recent data audit.

John Glen: [4695]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 921 on Government Communication Service, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the decision not to change the size of the Government Communication Service with the identification of savings from stopping all non-essential spending on communications in Table 2 of HM Treasury's publication entitled Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25, CP 1133, published in July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

On the 29th July, The Chancellor of the Exchequer, as part of her statement, announced that the government will review spending on cross government on communications and marketing campaigns, with a view to making reductions. This review is on-going.

We regularly assess all functions and ensure they are delivering value for money. This includes reviewing team structures to ensure the correct skill mix, such as digital, marketing and strategic communications.

There has been one deputy head of digital role advertised during the period stated that we are aware of. We only have access to data up to 31st August 2024 for the Cabinet Office as GCS is not a single employer.

For headcount and FTE numbers across departments and public bodies, please see the documentation published at the following location which provides details on the profession by government department:

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

■ Government Departments: Communication

John Glen: [4700]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will issue guidance on impartiality in Government communications.

Georgia Gould:

Maintaining a high standard of propriety and ethics within government communications is fundamental to preserving trust in public institutions. It is the job of the Government Communication Service (GCS) to explain the policies of the government and support the delivery of its priorities.

■ Government Departments: Disclosure of Information

John Glen: [5009]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the former Prime Minister's letter entitled Government transparency and open data, published on 14 December 2017, whether the content of the letter remains Government policy; and when Government departments plan to publish updated structure charts and organograms.

Georgia Gould:

Transparency reporting requirements remain in place, with data regularly being published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

John Glen: [5052]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 904 on Government Departments: Disclosure of Information, what recent estimate he has made of when the platform will go live; and whether each Department will be required to publish transparency data each month.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

I refer the Rt Hon. Gentleman to my response to PQ09540: that this Government is fully committed to transparency and openness and publishes quarterly transparency data on Gov.uk.

The Government is committed to looking at how the range of information published can be improved and made as useful as possible.

■ Government Departments: Equality

John Glen: [4688]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what information his Department holds on the (a) number of and (b) full-time equivalent staff there are in each Department that have roles relating to equality, diversity and inclusion; and whether each Department plans to change the number of such roles.

Georgia Gould:

We are currently considering the Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Review commissioned by the previous Government.

Each Department has delegated responsibility to manage their workforce.

■ Government Departments: Ethics

John Glen: [4685]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the report entitled Strengthening Ethics and Integrity in Central Government, published in July 2023, CP 900, who is responsible for upholding ethics and integrity in each Department.

Georgia Gould:

The permanent secretary is responsible for the day-to-day management of their department and is accountable to Parliament for their department's actions. Every

Minister, Special Adviser and Civil Servant is responsible for upholding ethics and integrity via their own code of conduct.

■ Government Departments: Labour Turnover

John Glen: [\[4704\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Government Departments collect information on staff turnover.

Georgia Gould:

The Government Financial Reporting Manual requires departments to collect and report data on staff turnover annually.

■ Government Departments: Public Consultation

John Glen: [\[4647\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 907 on Government Departments: Public Consultation, whether his Department has issued guidance on whether (a) communications should be sent to participants in consultations initiated under the previous Government on the conclusions of that consultation and (b) consultation webpages should be updated to advise the public of the (i) status and (ii) conclusions of those consultations.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Cabinet Office advises departments who contact us that a new administration may respond to a consultation that was initiated under a previous administration if they choose to do so. Departments are legally responsible for the consultations that they run and they can determine how best to communicate on consultations that were initiated by ministers of a previous administration.

John Glen: [\[4985\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 908 on Government Departments: Public Consultation, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure compliance by Departments with principle J.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Consultation Principles are high level guidance to help departments manage their consultations. The Cabinet Office provides advice to departments on these principles on request. Individual departments are legally responsible for the consultations they run, and will determine how to practically apply the principles to each of their consultations.

■ Government Departments: Remote Working

John Glen: [\[5023\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 13 August 2024 to Question HL548 on Government Departments: Remote Working, if he will publish comparative data for August 2024.

John Glen: [\[5287\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 13 August 2024 to Question HL548 on Government Departments: Remote Working, whether his Department holds comparative headquarters occupancy data for (a) June and (b) July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The publication of this data was suspended in line with pre-election guidance for the duration of the Pre-Election Period. We will provide an update on future publication plans in due course.

■ Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests

John Glen: [\[4987\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests is able to initiate an investigation into the conduct of a Minister without the consent of the Prime Minister.

Georgia Gould:

This Government is committed to ensuring that the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests has the powers to start investigations into misconduct and that he or she will have access to the evidence needed. Further detail will be set out in due course.

■ Israel: Gaza

John Glen: [\[4684\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the press notice by the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) entitled PCS demands Cabinet Office meeting over Gaza, published on 26 July 2024, whether he has had recent discussions with the PCS on the potential implications of the situation in Gaza for civil servants who are members of that union.

Georgia Gould:

Ministers and officials meet routinely with Civil Service Trade Unions to discuss a variety of topics related to the Civil Service workforce.

■ Jess Sargeant

John Glen: [\[4638\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) pay band, (b) full job description and (c) salary is for the new Deputy Director in his Department's Propriety and Constitution Group; whether the position was appointed through open and fair competition; and for what reason she was not appointed as a special adviser.

John Glen: [\[4639\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps have been taken to ensure firewalls are in place relating to the new Deputy Director in the Cabinet Office's Propriety and Constitution Group's work on propriety casework, inquiries and investigations in relation to (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) Labour Party donors.

John Glen: [\[4640\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Ms Jessica Sargeant will have access to Ministerial papers of the last Conservative Government.

John Glen: [\[4644\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what role Ms Jessica Sargeant will play in developing public policy on (a) the proposed Ethics and Integrity Commission, (b) reform of the Business Appointment Rules, (c) lobbying regulation, (d) political donation laws, (e) honours and dignities, (f) the regulation of public appointments, (g) the Civil Service Commission and (h) the Crown Prerogative.

Georgia Gould:

It is a longstanding policy not to comment on individuals.

■ JK Rowling

John Glen: [\[5019\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1222 on JK Rowling, whether 10 Downing Street plans to take steps to arrange a meeting.

Georgia Gould:

I have nothing further to add to the answer given to the Rt Hon Member on 31 July 2024.

■ Labour Growth Group: Correspondence

John Glen: [\[4999\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Prime Minister will publish all correspondence he has (a) received from and (b) sent to the Labour Growth Group.

Georgia Gould:

As was the case under the previous Administration, the government does not handle political correspondence. Ministers regularly discuss issues, including the government's plans for growth, with parliamentary colleagues.

■ Liam Conlon

John Glen: [\[5004\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many times the hon. Member for Beckenham and Penge has visited 10 Downing Street since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The member for Beckenham and Penge has not visited 10 Downing Street since 4 July 2024.

■ Mark Adams**John Glen:** [\[4995\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister has had discussions with Mark Adams in his capacity on the International Olympics Committee since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

As was the practice under the previous Administration, details of the Prime Minister's official engagements with external individuals and organisations will be published in the quarterly transparency returns on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Members: Correspondence**John Glen:** [\[4649\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Cabinet Secretary will reply to the letter from the Rt Hon Member for Salisbury of 25 July 2024 on special adviser appointments.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

A response has been issued.

John Glen: [\[4650\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will hold discussions with the Cabinet Secretary on when he plans to reply to the correspondence of 25 July 2024 from the Rt Hon Member for Salisbury on the Casement Stadium.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

A response has been issued.

■ Ministers**John Glen:** [\[4994\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 8 of the Directory of Civil Service Guidance, Volume 2, published in 2000, whether it remains convention that Ministers of a current Administration may not generally have access to policy papers of a previous Administration of a different political party.

Georgia Gould:

The convention on Access to Papers of a Previous Administration is also set out in the Cabinet Manual (paragraph 11.23 to 11.24), and remains in place. The Cabinet Manual was published in 2010 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-manual>

■ Ministers' Private Offices

John Glen: [\[4707\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will provide hon. Members with an updated list of email addresses and telephone numbers of Government Ministerial private offices for correspondence inquiries.

Georgia Gould:

The List of Ministerial Responsibilities, which includes correspondence addresses for Government departments, will be published in due course.

■ Ministers: Aviation

John Glen: [\[5040\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answers of 31 July 2024 to Questions 1213 and 1217 on Ministers: Aviation and Question 1219 on Prime Minister: Charter Flights, whether he plans to take steps to reduce the number of (a) chartered and (b) unchartered (i) domestic and (ii) international flights by Ministers.

Ellie Reeves:

I have nothing further to add to the answers given to the Rt Hon Member on 31 July 2024 to Questions 1213 and 1217.

■ Ministers: Codes of Practice

John Glen: [\[4993\]](#)

To the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on whether a Minister who is found by the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner to have broken the House of Commons Code of Conduct can remain a Minister.

Georgia Gould:

As the Ministerial Code sets out, “ministers only remain in office for so long as they retain the confidence of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the ultimate judge of the standards of behaviour expected of a minister and the appropriate consequences of a breach of those standards”.

■ Ministers: ICT

John Glen: [\[2066\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Cabinet Office guidance entitled Non-corporate communication channels for government business, published in March 2023, what the Government's policy is on Ministers using personal devices for conducting official business.

Georgia Gould:

There are arrangements and guidance in place for the management of all electronic communications in relation to the Government's business as detailed in the guidance on Non Corporate Communication Channels.

■ Ministers: Members' Interests**John Glen:** [\[5034\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the policy of the (a) Cabinet Office Propriety and Ethics Team and (b) Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests is on the provision of gifts, donations or donations in-kind to Ministers from donors who (i) are and (ii) are not permissible under the Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

Georgia Gould:

There is an established process in place for the declaration and management of ministers' private interests. This ensures that steps are taken to avoid or mitigate any potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

■ Ministers: Official Residences**John Glen:** [\[4664\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1214 on Ministers: Official Residences, what the timetable is for allocating each of the remaining official residences.

Georgia Gould:

As has been the case under successive administrations, the Prime Minister allocates official residences to ministers, either on the grounds of security or to allow them to better perform their official duties. There is no set timeline for the Prime Minister's allocations.

John Glen: [\[5032\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the provision of accommodation at a below market rate to a Minister is a declarable interest to the (a) Cabinet Office Propriety and Ethics Team and (b) Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests under the Ministerial Code.

Georgia Gould:

There is an established process in place for the declaration and management of ministers' private interests. This ensures that steps are taken to avoid or mitigate any potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

■ Ministers: Training**John Glen:** [\[4677\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1244 on Ministers: Training, whether those induction briefings included guidance on (a) anti-bullying, (b) allyship and (c) unconscious bias.

Georgia Gould:

All Ministers have received induction briefings to support them in their ministerial duties. Typically, this would include information on their areas of responsibility, ethics and standards, security, managing public money and legislation.

■ Morgan McSweeney

John Glen: [\[5042\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1240 on Morgan McSweeney, what the responsibilities are of Mr McSweeney in his role as a special adviser.

Georgia Gould:

It's a longstanding policy to not comment on individuals.

■ Nick Joicey

John Glen: [\[4667\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Civil Service Commission publication entitled 2023/24 Exceptions at and above Payband 2, for what reason the Exception Used for Nick Joicey was Paragraph 100 of Recruitment Principles.

Georgia Gould:

Under Section 12 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has the power to except a selection of appointments from the requirement that recruitment into the Civil Service takes place 'on merit on the basis of fair and open competition'. The vast majority of appointments are made under one of the ten exception categories outlined in the Recruitment Principles (2018).

This appointment required the approval of the Civil Service Commission in accordance with the Senior Appointments Protocol for appointments at SCS Pay Band 3. Paragraph 100 was used because the appointment was an internal move.

■ Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman: Public Appointments

John Glen: [\[5021\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1257 on Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman: Public Appointments, who the decision maker is on which appointee to recommend for appointment.

Georgia Gould:

The process to recruit the Ombudsman is led by the House, which convenes an independent panel to identify appointable candidates and make a recommendation to the Prime Minister. It is then for the Prime Minister to decide whether to advise His Majesty The King to formally appoint the recommended candidate.

■ Prime Minister: Communication

John Glen: [\[4988\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) headcount and (b) full-time equivalent staff work in No. 10 digital communications; and at what pay bands.

John Glen: [\[4998\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to (a) increase and (b) reduce the (i) spending on and (ii) staff working on digital communications in Downing Street.

Georgia Gould:

Information about departmental resourcing is set out in relevant annual reports (or published elsewhere in the relevant document). Decisions about future financial years will be made by the civil service in the usual way.

■ Prime Minister: Correspondence

John Glen: [\[5001\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 930 on Prime Minister: Correspondence, if he will discontinue the fax machine facility in 10 Downing Street.

Georgia Gould:

The Prime Minister's Office does not use a fax machine. This Government has no plans to stop members of the public contacting us in the ways that they find most helpful. As the previous response explained, where members of the public wish to do so via fax, those messages are converted into emails on receipt.

■ Prime Minister: Press Conferences

John Glen: [\[5007\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much 10 Downing Street has spent on (a) cosmetics and (b) make-up artists for media appearances since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

There has been no such expenditure.

■ Prime Minister: Special Advisers

John Glen: [\[4682\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 72 of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities annual report and accounts 2022-23, what is the Cash Equivalent Transfer Value of the civil service pension of the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office, like other government departments, publishes the Cash Equivalent Transfer Value of civil service pensions of civil servants on its Board in its Annual Report and Accounts. This does not include other civil servants, including special advisers.

John Glen: [\[5030\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the declaration of interests of the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff.

John Glen: [\[5039\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish a register of the interests of special advisers.

Georgia Gould:

As was the case under the previous Administration, interests deemed relevant for publication for special advisers in No10 and the Cabinet Office are published on an annual basis by the Cabinet Office.

For special advisers in other departments, interests deemed relevant for publication are published by the relevant department on an annual basis in, or alongside, the department's Annual Report and Accounts.

■ Prime Minister: Staff

John Glen: [\[5043\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many staff (a) excluding and (b) including special advisers are employed by 10 Downing Street broken down by (i) headcount and (ii) full-time equivalent, as of 10 September 2024.

Georgia Gould:

For management and staffing purposes the Prime Minister's Office is part of the Cabinet Office. As of 31 August 2024 there are 240 (237.4 FTE) permanent civil servants employed by the Cabinet Office and allocated to the Prime Minister's Office.

As was the case under the previous Administration, information about Special Adviser numbers will be published in the Annual report on Special Advisers.

■ Prime Minister: Sustainable Development

John Glen: [\[5008\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Treasury's Sustainability Reporting Guidance 2024-25, published on 25 July 2024, whether 10 Downing Street plans to report using those metrics.

Georgia Gould:

The Prime Minister's Office is a business unit of the Cabinet Office. Sustainability reporting for 10 Downing Street is completed by the Cabinet Office. Cabinet Office aligns to the Treasury's Sustainability Reporting Guidance 2024-25, published on 25 July 2024.

■ Prime Minister: WhatsApp**John Glen:** [\[5018\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2024 to Question 1216 on Prime Minister: WhatsApp, whether the Prime Minister has used Whatsapp for government business.

Georgia Gould:

I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave to the Rt Hon Member on 23 July 2024.

■ Professions: Qualifications**Munira Wilson:** [\[4545\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to commence negotiations on a future reciprocal agreement with the European Commission for professional qualifications.

Munira Wilson: [\[4547\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Government last held discussions with the European Commission on the potential merits of negotiating a mutual recognition of professional qualifications agreement for the aviation sector.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

We have already begun working to reset the UK-EU relationship. The Prime Minister has had positive early calls and meetings, including with Ursula von der Leyen, and key leaders in Member States. The Minister for the Cabinet Office has visited Brussels twice in the first two weeks of the new Government and met with his counterpart, Executive Vice President Maroš Šefčovič.

We want to improve the trading relationship with the EU, including on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, and we look forward to exploring this further with our European partners.

■ Propriety and Constitution Group**John Glen:** [\[4672\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will place in the House of Commons Library a copy of the (a) terms of reference and (b) responsibilities of the Cabinet Office's Propriety and Ethics Team.

Georgia Gould:

The Propriety and Ethics Directorate is part of the Propriety and Constitution Group in the Cabinet Office.

Its responsibilities include providing advice to the Prime Minister and Cabinet Secretary on maintaining the highest standards of propriety and ethics across all government departments, advising departments on propriety and ethics issues, supporting the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests, providing advice on the

policy landscape for standards and ethics, and oversight of the public appointments process, inquiries and reviews. The directorate also includes a central Human Resources function for special advisers.

■ Public Bodies

John Glen: [\[4702\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's guidance entitled Classification Of Public Bodies: Guidance For Department, published on 27 April 2016, whether it is his policy that setting up new public bodies should be a last resort.

Georgia Gould:

It is for the relevant Ministers to decide if policy within their portfolio should be delivered through the creation of a new public body. The Cabinet Office and the Treasury have a detailed process in place for the approval of new public bodies to ensure there is sufficient due diligence to establish a clear rationale and fiscal viability of a proposed body.

■ Public Sector: Directors

John Glen: [\[4655\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many Non-Executive Directors have left all (a) Government departments and (b) arms' length public bodies since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

Since 4 July 2024, 20 Non-Executive Board Members have left government departments.

Data on Non-Executive Directors leaving arms length public bodies is not held centrally.

■ Public Sector: Pay

John Glen: [\[4659\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of repealing the Trade Union Act 2016 on public sector pay discussions with trade unions.

Georgia Gould:

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

John Glen: [\[4666\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to meet the Public and Commercial Services Union pay demands for 2024-25 of a (a) 35 days annual leave minimum and (b) significant shortening of the working week with no loss of pay.

Georgia Gould:

Departments are responsible for setting the terms and conditions of employment for their civil servants, in accordance with the rules of the Civil Service Management Code. The Civil Service already provides a competitive leave offer that supports building an engaged and productive workforce.

John Glen: [4703]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's guidance entitled Practitioner Guidance on the 2024-25 Senior Civil Service Pay Framework, published on 30 July 2024, if he will list the statutory office holders whose pay is directly linked to Senior Civil Service pay bands.

Georgia Gould:

A list of statutory office holders whose pay is directly linked to the Senior Civil Service pay bands is not held by the Cabinet Office.

Public Sector: Property**John Glen:** [5036]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish details of surplus public sector property according to the data held on the Electronic Property Information Mapping Service database.

Georgia Gould:

The [Register of Surplus Land](#) provides data on the availability of surplus land for government departments.

Public Sector: Trade Union Officials**John Glen:** [4986]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 903 on Public Sector: Trade Union Officials, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the repeal of the Trade Union Act 2016 on the statutory requirement for public sector organisations to collate and publish transparency data on trade union facility time.

Georgia Gould:

The Government is committed to repealing the Trade Union Act 2016. Further information will be published in due course.

Senior Civil Servants: Performance Appraisal**John Glen:** [4657]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 927 on Civil Service: Performance Related Pay, by which metrics Senior Civil Service end of year performance assessments consider delivery against the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-25.

Georgia Gould:

All objectives set by Senior Civil Servants should be specific, measurable and timed so they can be assessed at the end of the performance year by considering what the individual delivered.

■ Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment**John Glen:**[\[4641\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the appointment of civil servants by Ministers without open and fair competition is classified as a direct ministerial appointment.

Georgia Gould:

Direct ministerial appointments are temporary public office holders who generally hold short-term roles providing expert, independent advice to the Government of the day.

John Glen:[\[4642\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance the Civil Service Commission has provided on whether a decision to appoint a civil servant under one of the Recruitment Principles exceptions can be taken by a Minister.

Georgia Gould:

Ministers cannot appoint civil servants.

John Glen:[\[4645\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will instruct the (a) Cabinet Secretary and Head of Civil Service and (b) Civil Service Commission to make an assessment of the probity of appointments as civil servants without open and fair competition of people who have previously worked for (a) the Labour Party, (b) Labour Party parliamentarians and (c) Labour-affiliated organisations as civil servants.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Leader of the Opposition on 30th August 2024 addressing this issue and the use of Exceptions to the Recruitment Principles.

John Glen:[\[4653\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 26 July 2024, to Question 1260, on Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment, for how many days a job must be advertised publicly to be considered as open to external candidates.

Georgia Gould:

There is no mandated period for a vacancy to be advertised, either externally or internally.

The Civil Service Recruitment Principles state that 'The media chosen to publicise appointment opportunities and the time allowed for advertising must be suitable for attracting a sufficiently strong and diverse field of applicants, taking account of the

nature of the role and the relevant job market.' The time allowed for advertising will therefore vary from role to role.

John Glen: [4670]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will provide a list of each appointment by (a) department, (b) payband, (c) job title, (d) exception used, (e) appointment length and (f) civil servant name that has been approved by the Civil Service Commission since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

Information on appointments made by exception and requiring approval by the Civil Service Commission at Pay Band 2 and above will be published on the Commission's website by the end of October 2024.

John Glen: [4673]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many applications for Recruitment Principles exceptions has the Civil Service Commission rejected since 4 July 2024; and how many breaches of the Recruitment Principles have been identified in the same period.

Georgia Gould:

Where the Civil Service Commission does not believe that a proposed appointment by exception is justified either by the needs of the Civil Service or to enable the Civil Service to participate in a government employment initiative, it may reject the proposal or impose additional conditions. As has been long-standing practice under successive administrations, this information is not published.

The Commission also issues breaches where non-compliance with the Recruitment Principles has been identified. This information is published in the Commission's annual report, which can be found at <https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/publications/annual-reports/>

John Glen: [4692]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Civil Service's policy is on employing people who were previously employed in roles in a party political capacity, other than as special advisers.

Georgia Gould:

Those wishing to be employed at any level of the Civil Service must declare any perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest prior to taking up employment in their respective department. This would include political interests.

All civil servants are expected to support the government of the day in accordance with the values of the Civil Service Code, including impartiality.

John Glen: [5027]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 1260 on Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment, how many of the appointments for the Director Generals in charge of the five Mission Delivery Boards have been externally

advertised; and for what length of time have vacancies been open to apply for those posts.

John Glen:

[\[5031\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 1260 on Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment, how many of the appointments for the Director Generals of the five Mission Delivery Boards have been internally advertised; and how long have those vacancies been advertised.

Georgia Gould:

Five Directors General (DG) have been selected as Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) for each of the five Missions. All five were selected by the Cabinet Secretary and relevant Permanent Secretary, in consultation with their Secretary of State, on the basis of their expertise and experience.

■ Special Advisers

John Glen:

[\[4991\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many proposals by departmental Ministers to appoint a special adviser have been refused by 10 Downing Street since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

It is the longstanding policy of successive governments to not discuss individual staffing matters.

John Glen:

[\[5038\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many special advisers in each department are on (a) four month probationary contracts, (b) six month fixed term contracts and (c) full contracts with no probationary period.

Georgia Gould:

All special advisers are subject to the Model Contract for Special Advisers, which is published online at gov.uk. It stipulates that the first four months of their appointment will be a probationary period.

There are no special advisers on six month fixed term appointments, or contracts without a probationary period.

■ Special Advisers: Pay

John Glen:

[\[4691\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the 2024-25 Senior Civil Service Pay Framework, what changes are being made to (a) the Pay Band 4 ceiling and (b) other special adviser pay bands relative to the rates previously set out in the 2023 special adviser list.

Georgia Gould:

The Senior Civil Service Pay Framework does not apply to special advisers, who are instead subject to a separate Special Advisers Pay Policy.

The pay ceilings for the 2024/25 year will be published in the relevant Annual Report on Special Advisers.

John Glen: [\[5037\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 23 July 2024 to Question 1247 on Special Advisers: Pay, whether the salaries of all special advisers have been agreed; and who is responsible for determining those salaries.

Georgia Gould:

Special adviser salaries are set according to the special adviser pay framework. Information on Special Adviser numbers and costs will be published in the Annual Report on Special Advisers as per the requirements of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, as was the case under the previous Administration.

■ **Special Advisers: Social Media**

John Glen: [\[5010\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on its special advisers (a) posting political opinions and (b) commenting on Government business on social media.

Georgia Gould:

The Code of Conduct for Special Advisers sets out Special Advisers' obligations with regards to the media, including social media.

■ **Treasury: Senior Civil Servants**

John Glen: [\[4648\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1261 on Senior Civil Servants, for what reason the appointment of HM Treasury's Director of Special Advisers and Chancellor Engagement was not included in that list.

Georgia Gould:

As the previous PQ answer made clear, the response was based on the latest information held centrally by the Cabinet Office at the time of drafting.

■ **Young People: EU Nationals**

John Glen: [\[4671\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on youth movement of EU nationals, in the context of the Government's plans to change its relationship with the EU.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

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

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Equality****Rupert Lowe:****[5181]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many positions in her Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the department's annual report & accounts.

■ Government Departments and 10 Downing Street: Cultural Heritage**John Glen:****[4997]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what the Prime Minister's policy is on matters relating to contested heritage in (a) the Downing Street estate and (b) Whitehall departments what his policy is on matters relating to contested heritage in (a) the Downing Street estate and (b) Whitehall departments.

Chris Bryant:

The last government introduced a policy relating to contested heritage, set out in the 2023 Guidance for custodians on how to deal with commemorative heritage assets that have become contested. That policy has not changed.

■ Horse Racing**Edward Argar:****[4724]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the value to the UK economy of the horse racing industry.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government recognises the important role that horseracing makes to British culture and its important contribution to the economy, particularly in rural areas.

According to the British Horseracing Authority, the industry is worth over £4 billion to the economy in direct, indirect, and associated expenditure every year. With over 20,000 people directly employed across the 59 licensed racecourses, training yards and thousands of breeding operations.

■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Graham Stuart: [\[4975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will extend the Listed Places of Worship Grant beyond March 2025.

Chris Bryant:

Future Government spending is a matter for the upcoming Spending Review.

■ Parthenon Sculptures

John Glen: [\[5002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with her counterpart in the Greek government on (a) loaning and (b) donating the Elgin Marbles to Greece.

Chris Bryant:

None.

■ Public Libraries: Finance

Stuart Anderson: [\[4845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to continue the Libraries Improvement Fund.

Chris Bryant:

Any decision as to the future of the Fund is a matter for the current Spending Review process.

■ Sports: LGBT+ People

Kate Osborne: [\[5118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department is taking steps to support LGBTQ+ rugby union teams.

Kate Osborne: [\[5119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what support her Department provides to grass roots LGBTQ+ sports teams.

Kate Osborne: [\[5120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of LGBTQ+ sport teams on tackling inequality in sports.

Stephanie Peacock:

The government is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in sport at all levels. We will continue to work with the sport sector to help it be inclusive and welcoming to its spectators, participants and workforce, including LGBTQ+ people.

Sport England's ten year strategy, Uniting the Movement, reinforces their commitment to tackling inequalities faced in sport by underrepresented groups, including LGBTQ+. Sport England is investing £120 million to increase participation in sport and boost diversity at the grassroots level to give more and better opportunities to all.

Additionally, the updated Code for Sports Governance requires sports that receive substantial public funding from either UK Sport or Sport England, including Rugby Union, to have detailed and ambitious diversity and inclusion action plans in place, which are published and updated annually.

■ Sports: South Holland and the Deepings

Sir John Hayes:

[4171]

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

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, has access to and benefits from quality sport and physical activity opportunities. We are acting to support more people in getting onto the pitch wherever they live via the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme, which will invest £123 million UK-wide throughout 2024/25.

Funding from the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme continues to be invested in England through Sport England and our delivery partner, the Football Foundation. South Holland and the Deepings constituency has benefitted from £600,149 of investment under the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities programme to date.

The Football Foundation plans their investment pipeline based on Local Football Facility Plans (LFFPs). These plans have been developed in partnership with local authorities and are in the process of being refreshed to reflect the current landscape. The existing LFFP for South Holland can be found by visiting the Football Foundation's [website](#).

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

■ Tennis: Facilities

Helen Grant:

[4627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to take steps to recognise the retirement of Sir Andy Murray.

Helen Grant: [\[4628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department is taking step to use the career of Sir Andy Murray to encourage more people to play tennis.

Helen Grant: [\[4629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to invest in tennis facilities to support more people to play tennis year-round.

Helen Grant: [\[4630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to continue funding the Park Tennis Court Programme.

Helen Grant: [\[4631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to fund (a) grassroots and (b) community tennis.

Stephanie Peacock:

I am delighted to take this opportunity to wish Sir Andy Murray well in his retirement. He has contributed a huge amount to British sport throughout his long career, both on and off the court.

The Government is committed to improving access to sports and physical activity for all people, in all places so they can lead richer, more dignified lives. Sport and physical activity is central to achieving our health and opportunity manifesto missions, with the biggest gains coming from supporting those who are inactive to move more.

Sport and physical activity in England is funded through our Arm's Length Bodies, UK Sport (for elite sport) and Sport England (for grassroots) who provide onward funding to relevant organisations such as Active Partnerships and National Governing Bodies (NGBs).

The Government provides the majority of support for grassroots sport through Sport England - which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding. Sport England's work focuses on bringing the health and sport sectors together at community level and to champion physical activity with local leaders to develop interventions tailored to communities.

Sport England provides long term investment to The Lawn Tennis Association, which receives up to £10.2 million for five years to invest in community tennis initiatives.

Decisions with regards to future departmental budgets will be made as part of the spending review process.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[5100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of funding covered tennis facilities.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[5101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has plans to fund covered tennis facilities for the provision of disability tennis.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[5102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the role of indoor and covered tennis facilities in the provision of visually impaired tennis in Britain.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[5103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of (a) tennis and (b) padel on physical activity levels amongst (i) older people, (ii) disabled people and (iii) women and girls.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to improving access to sports and physical activity for everyone, including disabled people, older people and women and girls. Sport and physical activity is central to achieving our health and opportunity manifesto missions, with the biggest gains coming from supporting those who are inactive to move more.

The Government provides the majority of support for grassroots sport through Sport England - which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding. Sport England's work focuses on increasing participation in sport and to boost diversity at a grassroots level to give more and better opportunities to all.

Sport England provides long term investment to The Lawn Tennis Association, which receives up to £10.2 million for 5 years from 2022 to invest in community tennis initiatives that will benefit everyone, including disabled people.

Decisions with regards to future departmental budgets will be made as part of the spending review process.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Housing

James Cartlidge: [\[3743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the percentage increase for Single Living Accommodation charges was for grades (a) 1, (b) 2, (c) 3 and (d) 4 in each year since 2010.

Maria Eagle:

The requested information is provided in the following table:

Year	PERCENTAGE INCREASE (SINGLE LIVING ACCOMMODATION)			
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
2010	1.2	0.8	0.4	0
2011	1.4	0.9	0.5	0
2012	2.9	1.9	1.0	0
2013	3.7	2.5	1.2	0
2014	2.2	1.5	0.7	0
2015	2.8	1.9	0.9	0
2016	3.2	2.1	1.1	0
2017	1	0.67	0.33	0
2018	0.6	0.4	0.2	0
2019	0.6	0.4	0.2	0
2020	0.8	0.53	0.27	0
2021	1.7	1.13	0.57	0
2022	1% cap and tiered/graduated uplift to these charges with smallest increase applied to lowest standard			
2023	4.5	3	1.5	0
2024	6	4	2	0

Note : all percentage increases were recommended by the independent Armed Forces Pay Review Body. The latest (2024) recommendation was accepted by the previous administration.

James Cartlidge:[\[3744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual increase for furniture charges was in Single Living Accommodation in each year since 2010.

Maria Eagle:

There is no separate charge for furniture in Single Living Accommodation.

■ Armed Forces: Protective Clothing

Andrew Bowie: [\[4537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department purchased combat arms earplugs from 3M.

Andrew Bowie: [\[4538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many combat arms earplugs his Department purchased from 3M; and what the cost was.

Maria Eagle:

Combat Arms Ear Plugs, specifically the 3M Combat Ear Plugs Generation 4.1, were purchased by the Ministry of Defence from 3M as part of the Tactical Hearing Protection – Basic User capability via a NATO Support and Procurement Agency contract.

A total of 152,850 units were purchased from 3M at an overall cost of £0.699 million between May 2015 and September 2023.

■ Armed Forces: Training

James Cartlidge: [\[3746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to reduce the training budget for (a) the Army, (b) the Royal Air Force and (c) the Royal Navy in the current financial year.

Al Carns:

The Chancellor has confirmed a challenging in year deficit across all Departments. A spending review process is underway. Departmental spending plans will be set out in the usual way.

■ Defence: Contracts

James Cartlidge: [\[3749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has written to defence contractors to seek efficiency savings.

Maria Eagle:

Senior officials continue to engage with our strategic suppliers on how we can drive efficiency into our contracts and ensure we deliver the Defence programme affordably.

■ Defence: Demonstrations

James Cartlidge: [\[4231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will estimate the cost to the defence industry of lost output resulting from disruption linked to political protest in the last 12 months.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence regularly monitors risks and issues facing our suppliers as part of our supply chain resilience work. We have not made a specific estimate of financial costs over the past 12 months.

Defence: Expenditure

Stuart Anderson: [\[5113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his proposed timetable is for UK defence spending reaching 2.5% of GDP.

Stuart Anderson: [\[5114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, by what date he expects UK defence spending to reach 2.5 per cent of GDP.

Maria Eagle:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for South Suffolk on 22 July to Question 117.

Attachments:

1. Defence Expenditure [117 - Defence Expenditure.docx]

Defence: Manufacturing Industries

Paula Barker: [\[4446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to support UK defence manufacturing through government procurement.

Maria Eagle:

The UK's defence manufacturing industry is vital not only to our national security but to our prosperity and economic growth.. This Government is committed to developing a UK defence industrial base that is able to better support our own and allies security. We will bring forward a new Defence Industrial Strategy to ensure a strong defence sector and resilient supply chains, across the whole of the UK.

Defence: Research

James Cartlidge: [\[3738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much he plans to spend on defence research and development in (a) this financial year and (b) the next four financial years.

Maria Eagle:

The Chancellor has confirmed a challenging in year deficit across all Departments. A spending review process is underway. Departmental spending plans will be set out in the usual way.

James Cartlidge: [\[4391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which (a) agencies and (b) departments are authorised to manage defence research and development projects.

Maria Eagle:

Defence invests in research and development (R&D) from across the Defence enterprise. Defence's core R&D budgets are held in Head Office. The rest of Defence's R&D investment comes mainly from the Capability Portfolios of each Top Level Budget and is delivered through Defence Equipment and Support, Defence Digital, the Atomic Weapons Establishment and the Submarine Delivery Agency, as well as the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and the Defence and Security Accelerator.

■ Dstl: Artificial Intelligence

James Cartlidge: [\[3752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people are employed by DSTL's AI programme.

James Cartlidge: [\[3754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people are employed by DSTL's Air Systems programme.

Maria Eagle:

Dstl delivers science and technology for its customers in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and across Government, working with industry, academia and Government to ensure the UK has the right capabilities for defence and security. An overview of Dstl's Science and Technology (S&T) Programmes can be found on its website, highlighting the wide range of expertise within the organisation. This breadth of knowledge allows expertise to be diverted, as required, to support dedicated programme technical teams to deliver its S&T Programmes.

Information relating to Dstl's workforce is routinely published in its Annual Report and Accounts. Detailed staffing data in respect of the AI programme cannot be provided in the interests of National Security.

James Cartlidge: [\[3753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of how many UK-based supply chain jobs are supported by DSTL's AI programme.

Maria Eagle:

Dstl does not have a mechanism to record the number of jobs supported (either exclusively or in part) by its suppliers or through the lower tiers of the supply chain.

■ Future Combat Air System

James Cartlidge: [\[2106\]](#)

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

James Cartlidge: [\[2108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much spending on the (a) Future Combat Air System and (b) Global Combat Air Programme he plans to defer from the current financial year.

Maria Eagle:

The UK expects to invest over £1.3 billion in the Future Combat Air System/Global Combat Air Programme and the associated Team Tempest R&D programme, in the current financial year.

■ Global Combat Air Programme

James Cartlidge: [\[3742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK-based jobs are (a) directly and (b) indirectly linked to the Global Combat Air Programme.

Maria Eagle:

There are over 3,500 personnel working directly on Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) in the UK across Ministry of Defence and our industry partners; BAE Systems, Rolls-Royce, Leonardo UK and MBDA UK.

These partners are supported by hundreds of organisations, including SMEs and academic institutions, spread across the UK. Major combat air industrial hubs in the north-west and south-west of England, and Edinburgh are supporting the development of the advanced skills base and industrial technologies right across the country.

■ Gurkhas: Pensions

Andrew Bowie: [\[659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to bring pensions for Gurkha soldiers who retired before 1997 in line with the standard British Army pension.

Al Carns:

The Government greatly values the service of all members of the Armed Forces, including the Gurkhas, who have a long and distinguished history of Service to the UK, both here and overseas. The Government takes its responsibilities to our Gurkha veterans very seriously and is committed to providing Gurkha veterans with a fair pension.

The 1948 Gurkha Pension Scheme is different to other Armed Forces Pension Schemes, but these differences are objectively and reasonably justified. The legal basis for Gurkha pensions has been upheld by three Judicial Reviews since 2003, including a case that went to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

The Government maintains that the 1948 Gurkha Pension Scheme continues to provide a good income for our Gurkha veterans living in Nepal, in accordance with the original scheme design.

As a Minister new to the Gurkha Pension issue, I look forward to meeting with the Ambassador of Nepal and the Gurkha veteran representatives in due course.

■ Israel: Arms Trade

James Cartlidge: [\[4232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with his US counterpart on the decision to suspend certain licenses for arms exports to Israel.

Maria Eagle:

The Defence Secretary regularly speaks with his US counterpart on a wide range of matters of mutual interest.

■ Israel: Military Aid

Paula Barker: [\[4447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the legality under international humanitarian law of operational support to the Israeli military.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence only provides support to foreign militaries where it is satisfied that it is lawful under international law and domestic law to do so.

Mike Martin: [\[4501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether in light of recent government announcements about the risk of Israel forces being non-compliant with international law, UK intelligence is passed to Israel for the purposes of military targeting.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence only provides support to foreign militaries where it is satisfied that it is lawful under international law and domestic law.

On 2 December 2023, the UK commenced surveillance flights over Gaza solely tasked to support hostage rescue. Only information relating to hostage rescue will be passed to the relevant authority responsible for hostage rescue. The surveillance aircraft are unarmed and do not have a combat role.

We are unable comment further on detailed intelligence matters for operational security reasons.

■ Lasers

James Cartlidge: [\[3750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the number of supply chain jobs supported by the work of Team Hersa.

Maria Eagle:

Since the creation of Team Hersa and the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Directed Energy Weapons Demonstrator Programme in 2020, the MOD estimate is that 249 supply chain jobs have been supported.

James Cartlidge: [3751]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the number of jobs created by Team Hersa.

Maria Eagle:

Since the creation of Team Hersa and Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Directed Energy Weapons Demonstrator Programme in 2020, the MOD estimate is that 49 jobs have been created.

■ **Military Bases: Gosport**

Dame Caroline Dinenge: [2859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation on the future of Fort Blockhouse.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence continues to explore all options with stakeholders for the future use of this site. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation regularly updates Ministers on plans for the defence estate.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Equality**

Neil O'Brien: [1555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff in his Department have job titles which include the words (a) equality, (b) diversity, (c) inclusion, (d) gender, (e) LGBT and (f) race.

Al Carns:

The Ministry of Defence does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the Department's annual report and accounts: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-defence-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024>

Rupert Lowe: [5190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many positions in his Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Al Carns:

The Ministry of Defence does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the Department's annual report and accounts: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-defence-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024>

■ Ministry of Defence: Hunting**Caroline Voaden:** [\[3545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many licences have been issued for trail hunting on his Department's land in 2024-2025; and whether he plans to revoke any of these licences.

Maria Eagle:

No licences have yet been issued for trail hunting on the Ministry of Defence Estate for the 2024–2025 season.

■ Ministry of Defence: Land**James MacCleary:** [\[3587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will take steps to end the granting of licenses for hunting on its land.

Maria Eagle:

No licences have yet been issued for trail hunting on the Ministry of Defence Estate for the 2024–2025 season.

Dr Simon Opher: [\[4778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will prohibit trail hunting across the Defence estate.

Maria Eagle:

No licences have yet been issued for trail hunting on the Ministry of Defence Estate for the 2024–2025 season.

■ Ministry of Defence: MBDA**James Cartlidge:** [\[2102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the non-commercially sensitive details of his Department's Portfolio Management Agreement with MBDA.

Maria Eagle:

Non-commercially sensitive details of the Ministry of Defence's Portfolio Management Agreement with MBDA have been announced. There are no plans to publish further details.

■ Ministry of Defence: Surrey Satellite Technology**James Cartlidge:** [\[3740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the number of supply chain jobs supported by his Department's contract with Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd.

Maria Eagle:

It is estimated the current live Ministry of Defence contracts with Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd to deliver TYCHE to orbit have supported approximately 100 jobs in the direct supply chain.

■ **Satellites****James Cartlidge:**[\[3739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to continue its support for the Minerva satellite project.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence's development of space-based Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance continues with Minerva providing game-changing innovation and technology for this programme. The Strategic Defence Review will guide future capability development priorities, to ensure the United Kingdom is both secure at home and strong abroad - now and for the years to come.

■ **Strategic Defence and Security Review****Stuart Anderson:**[\[5115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Strategic Defence Review will conclude in its entirety before the next Spending Review commences.

Luke Pollard:

The reviewers will report regularly on progress to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Defence and will make their final report to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the Defence Secretary - with recommendations - in the first half of 2025.

■ **Type 31 Frigates: Sales****Graeme Downie:**[\[3597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with international partners on the sale of Type 31 frigates.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence is actively supporting live and prospective export campaigns based on the Type 31 (with the export variant known as the Arrowhead 140) capability with support from the Department of Business and Trade. For example, the Secretary of State for Defence recently met his Polish counterpart where they discussed the Miecznik programme and its progress.

■ **Type 45 Destroyers: Guided Weapons****James Cartlidge:**[\[2101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to provide funding for Sea Viper's enhancement.

Maria Eagle:

The enhancement of Sea Viper is named Sea Viper Evolution, which includes upgrades to the Type 45 Destroyer's Multi-Function Radar, Combat Management System (CMS), Weapon Command and Control (C2), and the Aster 30 missile. The first stage, called Capability 1, is in Demonstration and Manufacture Phase as of March 2023. The next stage, called Capability 2, is in Assessment Phase as of June 2023, completing in 2025.

Departmental spending plans will be set out in the usual way.

■ Typhoon Aircraft: Radar**James Cartlidge:**[\[4751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress the Royal Air Force has made on the ECRS Mk2 E-Scan radar procurement.

Maria Eagle:

The European Common Radar System (ECRS) Mk2 programme has achieved several positive milestones in the past four months, notably passing the production radar system Critical Design Review (CDR) in June 2024 and the completion of prototype ground testing on a Typhoon trials aircraft in July 2024. Teams across the Ministry of Defence and industry are working to meet the major milestone of a first flight of ECRS Mk2 over the coming weeks.

■ Ukraine: Armed Forces**Dr Andrew Murrison:**[\[4192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of providing (a) eyewear and (b) eye tests for Ukrainian troops being trained in the UK on the health and wellbeing of those troops; and what estimate he has made of the financial value of optician vouchers offered to those troops in the last 12 months.

Luke Pollard:

The UK takes the health and wellbeing of Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) personnel extremely seriously while they are training on Operation INTERFLEX, however, it is the responsibility of the AFU to screen all AFU personnel prior to their participation in UK based training.

Under Operation INTERFLEX, the UK provides AFU personnel with eyewear (spectacles and eye protection) where it is required, to reduce the risk of injury, and to protect the health and safety of those operating on the Defence Estate.

Eye tests are available for spectacles, as well as a provision for corrective lenses to be fitted to eye protection. All eye healthcare for AFU personnel is provided through a contracted service. In financial year 2023-24 the cost of eye tests and eyewear through the MOD Specsavers scheme was £38,277.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid**Daisy Cooper:** [\[5116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the equipment his Department has provided to Ukraine to help counter chemical threats included (a) gas detection and (b) chemical protective equipment for use by (i) civilians and (ii) armed forces.

Luke Pollard:

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

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

■ Veterans: Government Assistance**Manuela Perteghella:** [\[4484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to require relevant public bodies to ask people whether they (a) are veterans and (b) have veterans in their immediate family for the purpose of ensuring that those people receive any public services to which they are entitled.

Al Carns:

This new Government is committed to putting the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law as part of our drive to renew the nation's contract with those who serve and who have served, and their families. We will work across Government to strengthen delivery of the Armed Forces covenant and improve the experience of our veterans when accessing public services.

■ Veterans: Homelessness**Lee Anderson:** [\[4412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to support homeless veterans in Ashfield constituency.

Al Carns:

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country. I am working across government to ensure veterans across the UK have access to the support they need on housing, as well as health, employment and other areas.

The Government will develop a new cross-Government strategy, working with Mayors and Councils across the country, to put Britain back on track to ending

homelessness. The MOD will support that work to take a long-term approach and to tackle the root causes of homelessness.

Veterans in need of housing support can contact Op FORTITUDE, a single referral pathway to connect veterans with help and support. This system provides housing guidance and assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness across the UK. As of September 2024, over 2,400 referrals have been made and over 700 veterans have been supported into housing.

■ **Veterans: Radiation Exposure**

Andrew Bowie: [\[5081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the timeframe is for the eligibility review for the Nuclear Test Medal.

AI Carns:

As directed by the Defence Secretary, the review of the eligibility criteria for the Nuclear Test Medal is already underway. The Ministry of Defence is prioritising this work and will provide an update in due course.

■ **Veterans: Visas**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[4482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he is taking steps to waive dependent visa fees for (a) foreign and (b) Commonwealth veterans.

AI Carns:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 July 2024 to Question 121 to the hon. Member for South Suffolk (Mr Cartlidge).

Attachments:

1. Armed Forces: Visas [121 - Armed Forces Visas.docx]

■ **Warships: Construction**

Graeme Downie: [\[3598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) welders and (b) electricians required to complete surface warship construction.

Maria Eagle:

The Ministry of Defence has regular engagement across all aspects of surface warship construction, including the skills required to support it.

This Government recognises the vital role Defence, and its skilled workforce, play not only in our national security but also to the economic prosperity and growth of the United Kingdom.

The Strategic Defence Review will look at the approach to recruiting, educating, training and retaining the people needed across the whole of Defence, including industry.

EDUCATION■ **Apprentices**

Paul Davies: [\[4139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to provide further support to young people seeking to start apprenticeships.

Janet Daby:

This government is transforming the Apprenticeship Levy into a new Growth and Skills Levy to create opportunities for learners of all ages, including young people at the start of their careers, and to give employers greater flexibility to train and upskill their workforce.

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 identifying the training for which the Growth and Skills Levy will be accessible and ensuring that those training programmes, including apprenticeships, are well designed and delivered to meet the needs of both learners and businesses.

■ **Breakfast Clubs**

Dr Simon Opher: [\[4838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her planned timetable is for making free breakfast clubs available in every primary school.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity and giving every child the best start in life. Breakfast clubs will remove barriers to opportunity by ensuring every child, no matter their circumstances, is set-up for the day and ready to learn by providing a supportive start to the day. The government is committed to making quick progress to deliver on its commitment to offer breakfast clubs in every primary school.

The department has taken decisive action by announcing in the King's Speech that, under the Children's Wellbeing Bill, every primary school in England will offer a breakfast club. Legislating for breakfast club provision will give schools the certainty they need to plan for the future. Before the legislation comes into force, the department will work closely with the sector to make sure the right support, including funding, guidance and resources are in place.

■ **Carers**

Anna Gelderd: [\[4581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on implementing the National Kinship Care Strategy.

Janet Daby:

The government recognises the vital role that kinship carers play in caring for some of the most vulnerable children. The government's manifesto committed to working with local government to support children in care, including through kinship arrangements. The department 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.

This government is extending the delivery of over 140 peer support groups across England, which are available for all kinship carers to access, where they can come together to share stories, exchange advice and support each other. The department is also delivering a package of training and support that all kinship carers across England can access.

The government recognises the challenge that many kinship carers face in continuing to work, alongside the pressures of taking in and raising a child. We are also prioritising implementing kinship leave within the department in the next financial year, subject to pay negotiations.

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 £45 million Families First for Children pathfinder and Family Network Pilot aim to make greater use of family networks by involving them in decision-making at an earlier stage and providing practical and financial support via family network support packages to help keep children safe at home.

■ Childcare: Fees and Charges**Claire Hazelgrove:**[\[4946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the difficulties faced by parents in accessing free childcare places for children under 9 months old.

Stephen Morgan:

Ensuring every child has the best start for life is a central priority for this government, including putting in place early family support services to help families to thrive in children's first crucial months of life.

Children under 9 months are not eligible for government-funded childcare hours. Since September 2024, eligible working parents of children aged from nine months can access 15 hours of government-funded early education and childcare a week, over 38 weeks a year. This is available the term after the child turns nine months and the child's parent has a positive determination of eligibility from HMRC. So far over 200,000 parents have secured a place, and the department expects this to continue to rise in the coming weeks.

■ Children in Care: Education**Amanda Martin:** [\[4573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help improve educational outcomes for (a) children in social care and (b) other care-experienced young people.

Janet Daby:

This government will champion the ambitions of all children and ensure that background is not a barrier to success. In the department's Children's Wellbeing Bill, we will set out our plans to raise standards for all children in social care and will ensure that they are supported to thrive.

■ Children in Care: Standards**Anna Dixon:** [\[4312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to reform children's care services to improve outcomes for (a) children in care and (b) care leavers.

Janet Daby:

Reforming children's social care is critical to deliver the government's Opportunity Mission, to ensure that no child or young person's background limits their ambition or life chances.

The department recognises that children in care and care leavers have poorer outcomes than their peers across all aspects of their lives, and wants all those who are in care or leaving care to have stable homes, access to health services, support to build lifelong loving relationships, and help to engage in education, employment and training.

In the King's Speech, the government committed to introduce a Children's Wellbeing Bill, which will allow the government to take forward the legislative changes needed to improve the children's social care system for children in care and care leavers, including through a clearer focus on improving the support provided by government departments and relevant public bodies.

■ Children: Protection**Victoria Collins:** [\[5177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she made of the implications for her policies of the document entitled General Election 2024: NSPCC priorities for manifestos and programmes for government, published in May 2024.

Janet Daby:

Nothing is more important than keeping children safe and the government is committed to protecting children experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, significant harm as well as tackling the underlying factors driving this. The department is interested in all reports, evidence and recommendations which can help it drive

forward better outcomes for children and young people, and to that end, regularly engages the NSPCC and stakeholders across the children and families sector.

■ **Citizenship: Education**

John Glen:

[4990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps this Government is taking to promote British values.

Catherine McKinnell:

Education plays a vital role in promoting integration and ensuring children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain, including learning about the values that underpin and unite our society. All schools have specific duties to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of their pupils and to prepare them for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life. Schools are also required to actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The department has issued guidance for maintained schools here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a758c9540f0b6397f35f469/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf.

The duty is also reflected in guidance for independent schools (including academies) on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards. The guidance provides that schools should encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes. It can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5cd3fc2fe5274a3fd6ee74b0/Independent_School_Standards- Guidance_070519.pdf.

Promotion of these values plays an important role in preparing our children and young people for life in a modern and diverse Britain. The department continues to provide free resources for teachers and school leaders to support them with this via our Educate Against Hate website, which can be found here:

<https://www.educateagainsthate.com/>.

■ **Department for Education: Equality**

Rupert Lowe:

[5182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many positions in her Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Janet Daby:

The department does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the department's annual report and accounts.

■ Department for Education: Redundancy Pay**Wera Hobhouse:****[3032]**

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

Janet Daby:

The provision of severance payments for Ministers is set out in legislation.

Details of the severance payments made to ministers when leaving office are published in the Departments' Annual Reports and Accounts.

■ Further Education: Pay**Cat Smith:****[5065]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to increase pay in the further education sector.

Janet Daby:

The government does not set or recommend pay in further education (FE), and the FE sector does not have a Pay Review Body (PRB). Colleges are not bound by the national pay and conditions framework for school teachers and are free to implement their own pay arrangements.

The department will continue with its plans to invest in FE teachers, as part of approximately £600 million funding across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years, including targeted retention incentive payments of up to £6,000 for eligible early career FE teachers.

This government will consider the important contribution of non-PRB workforces, including FE, and will consider workforce sufficiency and what this might mean for FE funding in future years, as part of the Spending Review.

■ GCE A-level: Standards**Richard Fuller:****[3691]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the levels of A Level results by county; and what steps she is planning to take to improve standards in areas with lower attainment.

Catherine McKinnell:

Data on local authority attainment at A level is published in the 'A level and other 16 to 18 results' statistical release. The latest data relates to the 2022/23 academic year and data for the 2023/24 academic year will be published in November 2024. For example, A level headline measures can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/13ce6b93-cebf-43e0-b4e4-08dcc80a395>.

Ofqual also publish data from A level results day by county, which may be found here: <https://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk/apps/Alevel/County/>.

High and rising standards are at the heart of this government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and improve the life chances for every child and young person, no matter their background. The department want an education system in which all children and young people can achieve and thrive and develop the skills to seize the opportunities they need to succeed in work and life.

The quality of teaching and leaders are the biggest determinants of outcomes for learners within schools and colleges. This government has moved quickly to start driving up standards by beginning work to recruit an additional 6,500 expert teachers and have already launched an independent, expert-led curriculum and assessment review. Spanning from age 5 through to age 18, the review will look closely at the key challenges to attainment for young people, and the barriers which hold children back from the opportunities and life chances they deserve. The government is also determined to continue to strengthen school and college leadership and development opportunities for staff across the profession.

Regional improvement teams, to be launched early 2025, will help drive high and rising standards. These teams will encourage and foster improvement across the system enabling schools and trusts to support each other, learn from their peers and share best practice. To drive up standards across the country, all state-funded schools will be able to draw on these new regional improvement teams for help accessing and understanding the array of available improvement programmes proven to make a real impact.

Regional improvement teams will also work with schools to utilise new school report cards for schools to identify where they are performing well and where there are areas of improvement.

■ Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023

Joy Morrissey:

[4423]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the decision to stop implementation of the Higher Education (Free Speech) Act 2023, whether she received representations that informed that decision (a) on the potential impact of that Act on universities' (i) operations and (ii) revenues in non-democratic states and (b) from academics or academic groups on matters relating to academic freedoms; and if she will publish the (A) minutes of meetings and (B) written representations received relating to that matter.

Janet Daby:

The decision to pause the implementation of the Higher Education (Free Speech) Act 2023 took account of views from across the higher education (HE) sector, including universities and academics, who felt that the Act is disproportionate, burdensome and damaging to the welfare of students and that it would expose HE providers to costly

legal action, and that the fear of sanction could push providers to overlook the safety and wellbeing of minority groups.

The government does not routinely publish details of meetings and correspondence that inform policy making, as this risks undermining the ability of Ministers to hear free-spoken views.

■ **Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

Stuart Anderson: [4255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to continue the Half-Term Activities Fund in (a) Shropshire and (b) the UK.

Stephen Morgan:

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

■ **Holiday Activities and Food Programme: Finance**

Martin Wrigley: [4902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to make funding available for the Holiday Activity and Food programme beyond 31 December 2024.

Stephen Morgan:

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

■ **Martial Arts: Physical Education**

Zarah Sultana: [4260]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including (a) taekwondo and (b) other martial arts in the activity lists for (i) GCSE, (ii) AS and (iii) A-Level physical education.

Catherine McKinnell:

The current GCSE, AS and A level PE activity lists were last reviewed in 2018. These lists are based upon the reliability and practicality of activities as a basis for assessing whether students had demonstrated the skills required by the relevant qualification specification.

The government has launched an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review covering ages 5–18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The Review will consider the current qualification pathways available at Key Stages 4 and 5. A call for evidence will be published in the coming weeks which will set out the areas where the review group would particularly welcome input. More information about the Review is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-curriculum->

[and-assessment-review](#). Decisions on any possible changes to specifications and assessment arrangements for exams will be taken in the light of the Review.

■ Oak National Academy

Layla Moran: [\[4246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is her policy to retain Oak National Academy as an arms length body to her Department.

Catherine McKinnell:

Teachers using the service have found Oak National Academy to be a helpful tool in their lesson and curriculum planning.

Decisions on the future funding of Oak, along with all other government spending, will be made as part of the Spending Review process.

■ Overseas Students

Mr Luke Charters: [\[3892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking with (a) universities and (b) other higher education institutions to help ensure that the UK remains an attractive place for international students to study.

Janet Daby:

The government recognises that international students enrich our university campuses, forge lifelong friendships with our domestic students and become global ambassadors for the UK, as well as making a significant economic contribution to the higher education (HE) sector and our country as a whole.

The government expects the UK to remain a highly attractive study destination. The UK has four universities in the top ten, and 15 in the top 100 and we offer international students the opportunity to remain in the UK on a graduate visa for two to three years after their studies come to an end.

The department regularly engages with the HE sector to understand the emerging picture of international students' admission for the 2024/25 academic year.

■ Overseas Students: British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell: [\[4617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help increase the accessibility of UK university education to British Overseas Territories citizens.

Janet Daby:

Since 2007, persons who have settled status in the United Kingdom (UK), and who come to the UK from specified British Overseas Territories, have been eligible for home fee status if they meet the requirement of three years' ordinary residence in the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and/or specified British Overseas Territories.

Since 2022/23, those starting designated full-time and part-time undergraduate courses are also now eligible for tuition fee loans in England if they meet the residency requirements. These are that they have been ordinarily resident in the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and/or specified British Overseas Territories throughout the three-year period preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course, with at least part of that period having been spent in the British Overseas Territories.

■ PE and Sport Premium

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[4481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to provide funding for the Primary PE and Sport Premium in the 2024-25 financial year.

Catherine McKinnell:

The primary PE and sport premium will continue in the 2024/25 academic year and, as in previous years, individual school allocations will be confirmed when the department issues updated guidance later in the term.

■ Private Education: VAT

Damian Hinds: [\[4624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of charging VAT on independent schools on levels of usage of unregistered schools.

Stephen Morgan:

Unregistered schools, by their nature, are unregistered and at risk of being unknown, therefore this is not possible to precisely ascertain.

It is an offence under Section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 for any person to conduct an unregistered independent school. Where the department finds evidence that a school is operating unlawfully, we will not hesitate to take action, working with the police, Ofsted and Crown Prosecution Service as necessary.

Anyone with intelligence or concerns relating to a potential unregistered independent school should read the department's guidance on reporting an unregistered school. This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-an-unregistered-school>. Any information they have can be sent to unregistered-school-referrals@ofsted.gov.uk.

The department has provided additional resources to Ofsted to inspect suspected unregistered independent schools. As a result, a team of dedicated inspectors has been working to identify settings and visit them to determine whether they are operating unlawfully as unregistered independent schools. Where schools are found to be operating unlawfully, Ofsted and DfE are taking action to ensure such settings cease operating unlawfully, working with other authorities as necessary.

■ Pupil Numbers: North West

Damian Hinds:

[4200]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children of secondary school age are (a) resident and (b) on the roll in (i) the North West, (ii) Salford Local Authority, (iii) secondary planning area 3550101, (iv) secondary planning area 3550102 and (v) secondary planning area 3550103; and how many school places are unfilled in state secondary schools in those areas.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold information on all children and young people by residence.

Information on unfilled state secondary school places, as at May 2023, is published in the School Capacity statistics publication, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. This is available at region and local authority level here for the North West and Salford: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/fb3975cc-0ccd-4aee-b241-08dccd7b0275>. School level information is also available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-catalogue/data-set/5f26c269-bf72-41ab-8292-e17b58ed7c98> and can be aggregated to planning area level.

This publication also contains information on the number of pupils on roll as at May 2023, to allow comparisons with data on unfilled places. However, this is not the latest data for numbers on roll. The latest published data on secondary age pupils on roll in state funded secondary schools is for January 2024 and is published in the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' publication, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. This is available at a region and local authority level here for the North West and Salford: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/11b17d43-58a5-4ff9-e0d5-08dccd7b577b>. School level information is also available here: <https://content.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/api/releases/6a45c262-aaca-4bda-a548-cc9d1dc63137/files/6a137329-83ce-4e2e-8043-1f15ab5c7101> and can be aggregated to planning area level.

For secondary planning area 3550101, there were 5,647 secondary pupils on roll in May 2023, with 343 secondary school places unfilled (5.8%). In January 2024, there were 5,609 pupils on roll.

For secondary planning area 3550102, there were 3,316 secondary pupils on roll in May 2023, with 212 secondary school places unfilled (6.2%). In January 2024, there were 3,364 pupils on roll.

For secondary planning area 3550103, there were 4,162 secondary pupils on roll in May 2023, with 189 secondary school places unfilled (4.4%). In January 2024, there were 4,235 pupils on roll.

■ Pupil Numbers: South West**Damian Hinds:****[4199]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) children of secondary school age are resident, (b) children are on roll at state secondary schools and (c) places are unfilled in state secondary schools in (i) the South West, (ii) the local authority area of Bristol City Council, (iii) secondary planning area 8010015, (iv) secondary planning area 8010016 and (v) secondary planning area 8010017.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold information on all children and young people by residence.

Information on unfilled state secondary school places, as at May 2023, is published in the School Capacity statistics publication, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. This is available at region and local authority level here for the South West and City of Bristol: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/f8c9439a-21b9-4c4b-e0d7-08dccd7b577b>. School level information is also available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-catalogue/data-set/5f26c269-bf72-41ab-8292-e17b58ed7c98> and can be aggregated to planning area level.

This publication also contains information on the number of pupils on roll as at May 2023 to allow comparisons with data on unfilled places. However, this is not the latest data for numbers on roll. The latest published data on secondary age pupils on roll in state-funded secondary schools is for January 2024 and is published in the Schools, pupils and their characteristics publication, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. This is available at a region and local authority level here for the South West and City of Bristol: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/b2d9d5ee-2876-47a6-b242-08dccd7b0275>. School level information is also available here: <https://content.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/api/releases/6a45c262-aaca-4bda-a548-cc9d1dc63137/files/6a137329-83ce-4e2e-8043-1f15ab5c7101> and can be aggregated to planning area level.

For secondary planning area 8010015, there were 4,391 secondary pupils on roll in May 2023, with zero secondary school places unfilled. In January 2024, there were 4,342 pupils on roll.

For secondary planning area 8010016, there were 12,960 secondary pupils on roll in May 2023, with 460 secondary school places unfilled (3.6%). In January 2024, there were 13,236 pupils on roll.

For secondary planning area 8010017, there were 7,563 secondary pupils on roll in May 2023, with 760 secondary school places unfilled (10.2%). In January 2024, there were 7,754 pupils on roll.

■ Pupil Numbers: Yorkshire and the Humber

Damian Hinds:

[4201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children of secondary school age are (a) resident and (b) on roll at state secondary schools in (i) Yorkshire & the Humber; (ii) York Local Authority and (iii) secondary planning area 8169997; and how many places are unfilled in state secondary schools in those areas.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold information on all children and young people by residence.

Information on unfilled state secondary school places, as at May 2023, is published in the School Capacity statistics publication, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. This is available at region and local authority level here for Yorkshire and the Humber and York: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/2e5181ea-f132-48f7-b23f-08dccd7b0275>. School level information is also available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-catalogue/data-set/5f26c269-bf72-41ab-8292-e17b58ed7c98> and can be aggregated to planning area level.

This publication also contains information on the number of pupils on roll as at May 2023, to allow comparisons with data on unfilled places, however this is not the latest data for numbers on roll. The latest published data on secondary age pupils on roll in state funded secondary schools is for January 2024 and is published in the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' publication, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. This is available at a region and local authority level here Yorkshire and the Humber and York: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/ebafa0ad-e0a7-44ee-e0d3-08dccd7b577b>. School level information is also available here: <https://content.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/api/releases/6a45c262-aaca-4bda-a548-cc9d1dc63137/files/6a137329-83ce-4e2e-8043-1f15ab5c7101> and can be aggregated to planning area level.

For secondary planning area 8169997, there were 4,921 secondary pupils on roll in May 2023, with 259 secondary school places unfilled (5.9%). In January 2024, there were 4,370 pupils on roll.

■ Pupils: Attendance

Victoria Collins:

[5178]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the rate of fines for parents and carers taking their children out of school during term times on encouraging school attendance.

Stephen Morgan:

Tackling absence is at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity. The government understands that reasons for absence are varied, which is why updated statutory attendance guidance sets out that schools, trusts and local authorities should always work together with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and establish strategies for removing them.

The government's support-first approach is the right one. Penalty notices should only be used in cases where support is not appropriate, such as in cases of holidays taken in term-time, or where support has already been provided and has not been engaged with or has not worked.

Information about the rates of fixed penalty notices is published here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/parental-responsibility-measures>.

■ Pupils: Mental Health Services**Anna Dixon:****[4311]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve children's mental health and well-being in schools in Shipley constituency.

Stephen Morgan:

This government is committed to improving mental health and wellbeing support for all children and young people. This is critical to breaking down barriers to opportunity and learning.

The right support should be available to every young person that needs it, which is why this government will provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school. We will also be putting in place new Young Futures hubs, including access to mental health support workers, and will recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults.

Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) currently cover 44% of children and young people in schools and colleges across England. These MHSTs have three core functions: i) to deliver evidence-based early interventions for emerging and actual mental health issues, 1-1 and in groups, ii) to support a school or college's mental health lead to embed an effective approach to promote and support mental health and wellbeing, and iii) to advise school and college staff, and liaise with external specialist services, to help pupils and learners to get the right timely support and stay in education.

Data specifically on how many schools and colleges in Shipley constituency work with an MHSTs is not currently available. As of April 2024, 28% of pupils and learners in Bradford local authority are in schools and colleges that work with an MHST, compared to 44% nationally:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-provision>.

A resource hub for mental health leads and a targeted mental wellbeing support toolkit are available on the Mentally Healthy Schools platform. Data is available at a local authority level on the schools and colleges that have taken up the offer of the department's funded mental health lead training grant. By the end of March 2024, 73% of schools and colleges in Bradford local authority had claimed a senior mental health leads training grant, compared to 74% nationally.

■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs

Neil O'Brien:

[\[4411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average spend per pupil was in state schools in each year since 1994, broken down by region.

Catherine McKinnell:

The table below provides per pupil funding units from 2018/19 to 2024/25, which represents the funding provided for schools in all regions, nationally.

The department cannot provide comparable funding data back to 1994, due to the changes in the funding system since that time. In particular, funding for schools was only identified separately from funding for high needs or early years in 2013, and funding for central school services provided by local authorities was split out from the schools block funding in 2018/19.

The figures below represent the core funding schools receive through the schools block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). All the figures in the table, apart from those for 2018/19 exclude growth funding but include premises funding. They do not include additional funding that schools have received for pay and pensions, or other funding streams, such as the pupil premium.

REGION	DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK PER PUPIL FUNDING						
	2018/19 *	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
East Midlands	£4,426	£4,477	£4,702	£5,086	£5,393	£5,698	£5,818
East of England	£4,445	£4,447	£4,643	£5,021	£5,322	£5,616	£5,736
London	£5,383	£5,360	£5,529	£5,914	£6,240	£6,553	£6,656
North East	£4,618	£4,649	£4,828	£5,220	£5,538	£5,869	£5,993
North West	£4,629	£4,653	£4,838	£5,221	£5,524	£5,835	£5,962
South East	£4,335	£4,372	£4,589	£4,975	£5,268	£5,555	£5,681

REGION	DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK PER PUPIL FUNDING						
South West	£4,346	£4,393	£4,614	£5,010	£5,317	£5,614	£5,734
West Midlands	£4,638	£4,652	£4,823	£5,198	£5,506	£5,815	£5,931
Yorkshire and the Humber	£4,590	£4,622	£4,819	£5,202	£5,508	£5,824	£5,949

* In the 2018/19 DSG, growth funding and premises funding were calculated together, so the 2018/19 funding figures include growth funding. All other years exclude growth funding.

Jodie Gosling:

[4959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the real-terms funding per pupil in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in Nuneaton constituency has been in each financial year since 2010.

Catherine McKinnell:

Local authorities receive their core funding for schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Local authorities are then responsible for designing a local formula, within certain parameters, to distribute the funding that they receive from the department to schools in their area. This local formula is used to determine funding for both the maintained schools and academies in each area.

As the DSG is allocated at local authority level DSG allocations are not available broken down to the level of individual constituencies. The individual allocations that schools within Nuneaton constituency receive are determined, each year, by the local funding formula set by Warwickshire local authority.

The table below provides the per pupil funding units from the 2018/19 academic year to the 2024/25 academic year for Warwickshire local authority. The department cannot provide comparable funding data back to 2010, due to the changes in the funding system since that time. In particular, funding for schools was only identified separately from funding for high needs or early years in 2013, and funding for central school services provided by local authorities was split out from the schools block funding in the 2018/2019 academic year.

The figures below represent the core funding schools receive through the schools block of the DSG. All the figures in the table exclude growth and premises funding. They also do not include additional funding that schools have received for pay and pensions, or other funding streams such as the pupil premium.

DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK PER PUPIL FUNDING: WARWICKSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Year	Primary per pupil funding	Secondary per pupil funding
2018/19	£3,764	£4,924
2019/20	£3,828	£4,958
2020/21	£4,050	£5,139
2021/22	£4,395	£5,574
2022/23	£4,516	£5,737
2023/24	£4,729	£6,046
2024/25	£4,992	£6,365

Sir John Hayes:

[4968]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the real-term funding per pupil in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in South Holland and the Deepings constituency was in each financial year since 2010.

Catherine McKinnell:

Local authorities receive their core funding for schools through the dedicated schools grant (DSG). Local authorities are then responsible for designing a local formula, within certain parameters, to distribute the funding that they receive from the department to schools in their area. This local formula is used to determine funding for both the maintained schools and academies in each area.

As the DSG is allocated at local authority level, DSG allocations are not available broken down to the level of individual constituencies. The individual allocations that schools within South Holland and The Deepings constituency receive are determined, each year, by the local funding formula set by Lincolnshire local authority.

The table below provides the cash per pupil funding levels from 2018/19 to 2024/25 for Lincolnshire local authority. The department cannot provide comparable funding data back to 2010, due to the changes in the funding system since that time. In particular, funding for schools was only identified separately from funding for high needs or early years in 2013, and funding for central school services provided by local authorities was split out from the schools block funding in 2018/2019.

The figures below represent the core funding schools receive through the schools block of the DSG. All the figures in the table exclude growth and premises funding. They also do not include additional funding that schools have received for pay and pensions or other funding streams such as the pupil premium.

DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK PER PUPIL FUNDING: LINCOLNSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Year	Primary per pupil funding	Secondary per pupil funding
2018/19	£3,811	£4,933
2019/20	£3,914	£5,069
2020/21	£4,184	£5,279
2021/22	£4,570	£5,724
2022/23	£4,735	£5,899
2023/24	£4,993	£6,216
2024/25	£5,278	£6,552

■ Qualifications

Paula Barker:

[4269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will pause the defunding of applied general qualifications scheduled for 2025 and 2026.

Janet Daby:

In July 2024, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education announced a short pause to the defunding of qualifications to enable a review of 16-19 qualification reforms at Level 3 and below. This ensured that 95 qualifications set to lose funding this summer continue to be available to students, in accordance with the decisions of awarding organisations. This was followed by a Written Ministerial Statement by Baroness Smith, on 25 July, which is available here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-07-25/hlws20>.

The department is now working to review defunding decisions and qualifications available at level three and it will set out the position before Christmas.

The department has not announced any defunding for 2026.

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[5165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will pause the defunding of applied general qualifications scheduled for 2025 and 2026.

Janet Daby:

In July 2024, my Right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education announced a short pause to the defunding of qualifications to enable a review of post-16 qualification reforms at level 3 and below. This was followed by a Written Ministerial Statement by my noble Friend, the Minister for Skills, on 25 July. This statement is available here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-07-25/hlws20>.

The department is now working to review the defunding due to take place in 2025 and it will set out the position before Christmas.

The department has not announced any defunding for 2026.

■ Schools: Admissions

Damian Hinds:

[4198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data on unfilled school capacity by 2024 parliamentary constituency she plans to publish before the Finance Bill is introduced.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department publishes annual statistics on the capacity and pupils on roll in schools, including unfilled places, each spring. This is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. Statistics publications are pre-announced on the GOV.UK website, which can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-education&order=updated-newest. This is done in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics (the Code), which can be found here: <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>. The department currently has no plan to change this publication schedule. The scheduling ensures that statistics are released as soon as they are ready while abiding by standards set by the Code in terms of trustworthiness, quality and value. Where statistics were published prior to the changes in parliamentary constituency boundaries, they will be updated to reflect the new boundaries in the next publication of statistics. This is expected to be in March 2025 for school capacity statistics.

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

Josh Newbury:

[4283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the adequacy of school place provision in areas with high levels of housebuilding.

Catherine McKinnell:

Local authorities are responsible for providing enough school places for children in their area. The department provides capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support local authorities to provide school places, based on their own pupil forecasts and school capacity data. Nearly £1.5 billion of allocations have been confirmed to support local authorities to create school places needed over the current and next two academic years, up to and including the academic year starting in September

2026. Local authorities' allocations are published here:

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

Contributions from housing developers are also an important way of helping to meet demand for new school places when housing developments are driving pupil numbers. It is for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to secure developer contributions through section 106 agreements or the Community Infrastructure Levy, and to decide on the local infrastructure needs that this contribution should support. The department would encourage LPAs to secure significant contributions for new school places and work closely with colleagues planning school places in their area, including county councils when the local authority responsible for education is not the LPA.

Dr Ben Spencer:

[R] [4863]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the total number of (a) children whose parents or guardians have applied for them from independent to state sector schools and (b) independent schools that (i) closed and (ii) have announced their closure since 29 July 2024, broken down by constituency.

Stephen Morgan:

The department does not hold data on the total number of children whose parents or guardians have applied for them to move from independent to state sector schools.

The Get Information about Schools website shows that five private schools across four constituencies have closed since 29 July 2024. These are shown in the table below and are also available at the following link: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>.

CONSTITUENCY	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS CLOSED
Cities of London and Westminster	2
Ealing Central and Acton	1
North Dorset	1
South West Norfolk	1

The department does not routinely gather information on potential private school closures.

Since 29 July 2024, 15 private schools have opened.

■ Schools: Leicestershire

Edward Argar:

[4723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which state secondary schools in Leicestershire county council area have no school places available.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold data on places currently available.

Information on unfilled state secondary school places, as at May 2023, is published in the School Capacity statistics publication at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. School level information is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-catalogue/data-set/5f26c269-bf72-41ab-8292-e17b58ed7c98>.

Edward Argar:**[4727]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many vacant state secondary school places there were in (a) Leicestershire County Council LA area, (b) Melton Borough and (c) Melton and Syston constituency on 6 September 2024.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold data on places vacant on 6 September 2024.

Information on unfilled state secondary school places, as at May 2023, is published in the School Capacity statistics publication at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. For ease, local authority level information within the publication for Leicestershire can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/a00d6b70-f8fc-4392-b2a8-08dccd7b0275> and can be aggregated to Borough and Parliamentary Constituency level by linking to information at the following link: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>.

For Melton Borough, there were zero secondary school places unfilled in May 2023. For Melton and Syston parliamentary constituency, there were 531 secondary school places (11%) unfilled in May 2023.

■ Schools: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:****[4967]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many vacant state secondary school places there were in (a) Lincolnshire County Council and (b) South Holland and The Deepings constituency on 6 September 2024.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold data on places vacant on 6 September 2024.

Information on unfilled state secondary school places, as at May 2023, is published in the School Capacity statistics publication here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>.

For ease, local authority level information within the publication for Lincolnshire local authority can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/62411dcf-5a26-4262-e175-08dccd7b577b>.

School level information is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-catalogue/data-set/5f26c269-bf72-41ab-8292-e17b58ed7c98>. This information can be aggregated to borough and parliamentary constituency level by linking to here: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>.

In summary, for South Holland and The Deepings parliamentary constituency, there were 605 unfilled secondary school places (8%) in May 2023.

■ Schools: Transport

Luke Taylor: **[4932]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure there is adequate funding for transport to specialised educational facilities for SEND students.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

The department is aware that challenges within the wider SEND system are creating pressure on home to school travel. The government is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools so fewer children need to travel long distances to a school that can meet their needs.

The vast majority of central government funding for home to school travel is provided through the local government finance settlement, administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Departmental officials are working closely across government in preparation for the next Spending Review to ensure the settlement for the 2025/26 financial year reflects local authorities' need to spend on home to school travel.

■ Sir Frederick Gibberd College

Chris Vince: **[4829]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the unsuccessful module building project on students at Sir Frederick Gibberd school in Harlow.

Stephen Morgan:

The department has not completed a formal assessment of the impact of the Caledonian building works on pupils. However, the department is aware of the significant disruption for the school and pupils. The department continues to work closely with the trust and local authority to ensure all pupils at Sir Frederick Gibberd College receive an excellent education in a safe and secure environment.

■ Social Workers: Training

Paula Barker:

[\[5135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to provide mandatory training for social workers on identifying signs of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Janet Daby:

The regulator for the social work profession, Social Work England, sets the professional standards which all social workers must meet. The professional standards include that social workers must be able recognise the risk indicators of different forms of abuse and neglect and their impact on people, their families and their support networks. Social workers complete initial education and training courses which are approved by the regulator against the education and training standards. The provision of continuous professional development for employed social workers is a matter for their employer.

■ Special Educational Needs

Mr Calvin Bailey:

[\[4460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to (a) take steps to (i) improve accountability processes for and (ii) simplify complaint routes for the parents of children that access SEND provision in schools and (b) continue the SEND Change Programme.

Catherine McKinnell:

Ofsted and Care Quality Commission commenced a strengthened local inspection framework in January 2023, which places a greater emphasis on the outcomes being achieved for children and young people. It is the primary tool to maintain a focus on high standards in the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system, across all partners.

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

The department welcomes the publication of the Big Listen response. We will continue to work with Ofsted to consider how outcomes for children with SEND or in alternative provision (AP) are better reflected in the Education Inspection and the Area SEND inspection frameworks going forwards.

There are several routes of redress for parents or young people who disagree with decisions or actions of their educational setting or local authority. However, the department does understand these processes can be lengthy and difficult for families to navigate. It is in everyone's interests that routes of redress are set out clearly and that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

The work of the Change Programme partnerships has provided valuable insights and learning across the SEND and AP system. This includes informing the department's thinking about effective inclusive mainstream practice, which is an area where more needs to be done to ensure children with SEND receive the support they need and deserve. We will share more news on the future direction of the Change Programme in due course.

Mr Calvin Bailey:

[4461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to hold discussions with (a) parents of children with SEND and (b) specialist charities that support parents on reforms to the SEND system.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is committed to ensuring that co-production with parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and with the specialist charities that support them is a priority.

The department has two contracts which enable it to talk directly to both parents and carers of children with SEND and the specialist charities who support them in order to get their input into its policy development. The department uses these contracts to regularly discuss policy development and delivery with parents, carers and with the SEND sector. The department also presents, and hold workshops, at regular events coordinated by SEND specialist charities, such as the Council for Disabled Children, throughout the year.

The department recognises the importance of, and will continue to work together, with parents and carers, specialist organisations, children and young people with SEND, so that they get the right support to succeed in education, lead happy and healthy lives.

Steve Race:

[4462]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the provision of SEND services.

Catherine McKinnell:

The Conservatives have left a trail of devastation across education and that is made clear by current SEND provision. That is what this Labour government inherited.

We recognise that the current special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system is not working and that, for far too long, too many children and families have been failed by it.

This government is determined to address the problems and restore parents' trust that their children will get the support they need. The department has been restructured so that SEND is now treated as part of mainstream schooling, but the government knows that this is only a small step on the road to fixing the system.

The department will listen to and work with families to fix the foundations and deliver long-term renewal.

The department will work with families and sector partners to improve the system, improving inclusivity in mainstream schools, and ensuring special schools work for children and young people with the most complex needs.

Damian Hinds:

[4623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is making additional resources available to accommodate changes in the number of Education Health and Care Plan applications (a) this and (b) next financial year.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is aware not only of the financial pressures that local authorities are facing due to the increasing cost of supporting children and young people with education, health and care (EHC) plans, but also the pressures that the government as a whole is facing because of the financial situation we have inherited. The department is acting as quickly as possible to respond to these cost pressures.

The department is providing schools with almost £1.1 billion in the 2024/25 financial year through the new Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG), to support with overall costs, including support for young people with EHC plans. Of this total, special schools and alternative provision settings will be receiving over £140 million through the CSBG. The additional funding through the CSBG comes alongside high needs funding for children and young people with complex needs, which totals over £10.75 billion in 2024/25.

Decisions on future funding levels will be for the Spending Review.

■ Special Educational Needs: Holiday Play Schemes

James Naish:

[4287]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps with local authorities to broaden holiday club access to SEND children and families during holiday periods.

Stephen Morgan:

This government is determined to ensure that there is high quality, accessible childcare for all children and families, including children with additional needs. The holiday activities and food (HAF) programme funding is primarily for school-aged children from reception to year 11 (inclusive) who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM).

The majority of funding that local authorities receive should be used for holiday club places for children in receipt of FSMs. However, local authorities have discretion to use up to 15% of their funding to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related free school meals, but who the local authority believe could benefit from HAF provision, which could include children with special educational needs. Local authorities are responsible for understanding the needs of the children and families in their area and ensuring that the programme reaches those who need it the most.

■ Special Educational Needs: Mid Cheshire**Andrew Cooper:** [4903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of primary school age children with (a) SEN Support and (b) an Education, Health and Care Plan have not attended school in Mid Cheshire constituency in each of the last five years.

Andrew Cooper: [4904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of children of secondary school age who were not attending school in Mid Cheshire constituency in the past five years had (a) previously been identified in the SEN Support category and (b) an education, health and care plan.

Stephen Morgan:

The requested information is not held centrally.

The department collects data on children missing education (compulsory school aged children not registered at school or otherwise receiving suitable education) from local authorities on a voluntary basis. The latest figures can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-missing-education>.

The data are collected at aggregate level, so it is not possible to identify children missing education (CME) by both year group and special educational need (SEN) status. In autumn 2023/24 8% of all CME had an additional requirement of SEN support, while 6% of CME had an education, health and care plan. This compares with 13% and 4% respectively for the overall school population (in January 2023). CME data are not available at constituency level.

The Children's Wellbeing Bill will legislate for local authority registers of children not in school. This will include a duty on parents to provide the necessary information for these registers if their child is eligible, which would improve the accuracy of data and ensure that fewer children slip under the radar when they are not in school.

Andrew Cooper: [4905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of 16 to 24-year-olds who were not in education, employment or training in Mid Cheshire constituency in the last five years had (a) previously been identified in the SEN Support category and (b) an education, health and care plan.

Janet Daby:

Data for 16 to 24 year olds not in education employment or training (NEET) is not available by constituency nor by special educational needs. National figures for overall proportions of 16 to 24 year olds NEET in England are sourced from the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/neet-statistics-annual-brief>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Nuneaton

Jodie Gosling:

[\[5167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of SEND provision services in Nuneaton constituency; and what steps she is taking to work with local authorities in Nuneaton to improve SEND provision.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

The areas were:

- (i) Autism spectrum disorder waiting times, assessments and support following diagnosis.
- (ii) Co-production.
- (iii) Placement of children and young people with an education, health and care plan.
- (iv) Uptake of training for school staff working with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- (v) And the quality of the online local offer.

The department has appointed a SEND advisor to support and work alongside Warwickshire County Council and the local area partnership.

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

■ Special Educational Needs: Shipley

Anna Dixon:

[\[4316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department made of the adequacy of SEND services in Shipley constituency; and what steps she has taken to support the local authority to improve SEND provisions.

Catherine McKinnell:

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission are jointly responsible for inspecting local area arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Bradford last received an area SEND inspection in March 2022, during which inspectors identified five areas of significant weakness:

- Poor communication between stakeholders across education, health and care (EHC).

- The variable quality of EHC plans, including plans which do not fully describe the provision that children and young people with SEND need.
- The inconsistent delivery of the 0 to 19 health visiting, school nursing and specialist nursing services.
- Children and young people wait too long for assessments, treatment and diagnosis. There is insufficient support for children and young people with SEND who are waiting for provision, services, diagnosis or equipment.
- EHC services do not work together well. The arrangements for joint commissioning are underdeveloped.

The local area was required to produce a written statement of action to explain, to Ofsted and the department, how they would address these areas of weakness.

Following the inspection outcome, the department has worked closely with its partners in NHS England to monitor, support and challenge the local area partnership in making the necessary improvements. The City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council is also receiving additional support from a specialist SEND advisor, and the department will continue to work with the Council and relevant stakeholders to support them in improving SEND services and provision in Bradford.

High needs funding is increasing to over £10.5 billion for the 2024/25 financial year. Of this, through their dedicated schools grant for the 2024/25 financial year, Bradford is receiving a high needs funding allocation of £122.3 million. This funding will continue to help with the costs of supporting children and young people with SEND.

■ Special Educational Needs: West Sussex

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[4907]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure the adequacy of SEND support in West Sussex.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is continuing to support and challenge West Sussex to improve the delivery of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services.

The last local area SEND inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for West Sussex was in November 2023, which found that there are inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The areas for improvement identified by inspectors are:

(I) To identify and address 'waiting well' arrangements and gaps in service provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

(I) To ensure children identified as at high risk for aspiration are fully assessed and have access to video-fluoroscopy.

(II) To develop a strategy to improve the processes, quality and the timeliness of education, health and care plans.

(III) To implement oversight and commissioning arrangements of suitable specialist school places and alternative provision.

(IV) And to strengthen their strategic approach to preparation for adulthood.

The department's regional team has put in place systems to track outcomes against the areas for improvement and the progress made by children and young people with SEND, with a formal review of progress against the areas for improvement to take place in October 2024. West Sussex County Council are committed to working closely with the department to improve services.

West Sussex is taking part in the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND Programme. The DBV in SEND Programme was established under the previous government with the aim of helping local authorities provide more effective SEND services by meeting the needs of children and young people at an early stage and with the right level of support.

■ Students: Loans

Angus MacDonald:

[\[5161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the prevalence of outstanding student loan balances increasing despite repayments being made as a result of high interest charges; and whether her Department is taking steps to review student loan interest rates to ensure excessive financial burdens are not imposed on borrowers.

Janet Daby:

As education is a devolved issue, the following response outlines the student finance system in England only.

Interest rates on student loans do not affect monthly repayments made by borrowers. Repayments are based on earnings above the applicable repayment threshold, not on amount borrowed or the rate of interest. As such, some borrowers will see their balance increasing at certain times despite making regular repayments to their student loan.

Student loans have very different terms and conditions to commercial loans. Unlike commercial unsecured personal loans, student loans are available to all eligible students regardless of their background or financial history. Student loans also carry significant protections for borrowers. For instance, monthly repayments are based only on earnings, and if a borrower's income drops, so does the amount they repay. If income is below the relevant repayment threshold or a borrower is not earning, they do not have to make repayments at all. Any outstanding debt, including interest accrued, is written off after the loan term ends (or in case of death or disability) at no detriment to the borrower. The government is not aware of any commercial loans that offer such protections.

■ Teachers: Industrial Injuries**Jess Brown-Fuller:****[4906]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support is available for teachers who are unable to work as a result of workplace injury.

Catherine McKinnell:

Workplace absences that are the result of a workplace injury would usually be subject to normal sick pay arrangements.

The department has no jurisdiction over arrangements for dealing with workplace injuries or matters relating to sick pay, as these are covered by the Conditions of Service for School Teachers in England and Wales, 2000, which is known as the Burgundy Book. This is a national, non-statutory agreement between trade unions and teacher employers. This government was not party to its development and cannot influence its content. Sick leave or sick pay entitlements are therefore currently the responsibility of employers, which, in a school setting, is normally the local authority or Academy Trust. Schools, like all employers, are also subject to any relevant employment legislation.

■ Teachers: South Holland and the Deepings**Sir John Hayes:****[4597]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the number of teachers in South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on the school workforce, including the number of teachers in each school, is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>. As of November 2010, when the School Workforce Census began, there were 779 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in the 50 out of 51 state-funded schools that returned data in the South Holland and The Deepings constituency. In November 2023, there were 848 FTE teachers in South Holland and The Deepings constituency, when all 50 schools returned data.

The ratio of pupils to teachers (qualified and unqualified) has remained broadly stable in the South Holland and The Deepings constituency, at 18.7 in 2010 and in 2023 and ranging between 17.5 and 19.9 in the years in between.

The number of staff reported by state-funded schools in November 2023, including their constituency, is available in the school level summary file in the 'Additional supporting files' section of the statistical publication, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

The ratio of pupils to teachers and to adults by parliamentary constituency is published here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-catalogue/data-set/997087c9-5b1c-4635-b412-83b4bb0130a6>.

■ Teachers: Training

Damian Hinds:

[\[4625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to continue to report on the (a) outputs of the Teacher Workforce Model and (b) extent to which targets are met.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department uses the Teacher Workforce Model to calculate postgraduate initial teacher trainee targets each year.

These targets are published online each year as part of an official statistics publication, the department intends to publish the 2025/26 academic year targets as usual.

Performance against the published initial teacher training (ITT) recruitment targets is reported within the ITT census official statistics publication. The next publication will be reporting against the 2024/25 academic year targets and has been pre-announced for December this year. The precise date of publication will be announced nearer the time.

Being an established official statistics publication, the department intends to continue publication of performance against ITT recruitment targets.

■ Tom Crick

John Glen:

[\[5012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the (a) pay band, (b) salary and (c) responsibilities are of Mr Tom Crick in his role as Senior Advisor to her Department's Curriculum and Assessment Review; whether that role was open to external candidates; and on what basis he was appointed as a civil servant rather than a special adviser.

Janet Daby:

The role of the Senior Adviser to the Curriculum and Assessment Review is to support the Review Group and its Chair, Professor Becky Francis, in their engagement with the education sector to develop proposals on how best to refresh the curriculum to ensure it is cutting edge, fit for purpose and meeting the needs of children and young people to support their future life and work.

The role was a direct appointment to the civil service to a grade below the Senior Civil Service for a fixed term and with no line management responsibilities.

Making a direct appointment ensured appointment at pace with someone with a unique combination of skills including a strong connection to the sector and alignment with the anticipated time period of the review. As a civil servant, the role is embedded within departmental line management and wider policies, for example the Civil Service Code.

■ Universities: Applications**Jim Shannon:** [\[3978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of levels of uptake of university applications in the last 12 months.

Janet Daby:

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

The majority of students who applied for places at universities in 2024 will have done so before the change of government in July 2024.

Final applications, acceptances and confirmations of these places will continue to be finalised until the end of October 2024.

The department will continue to work closely with the higher education sector to support the 2025 intake of students and to ensure they can progress to their next step in life.

■ Vocational Education: Finance**Layla Moran:** [\[4770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to announce funding arrangements for post-16 vocational education for after 2025.

Layla Moran: [\[4771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate she has made of when the review of post-16 education funding will be completed; and what her planned timescale is for responding to that review.

Layla Moran: [\[4772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Written Statement of 25 July 2024 on Technical Qualifications Reform update, HCWS22, what steps her Department is taking to help support education providers to plan for the provision of post-16 vocational education beyond the 2024-25 academic year.

Janet Daby:

This government is determined to ensure all young people have high quality education and training pathways post-16. To help secure this, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced that the department would pause and review the defunding of qualifications in July 2024. The department will conclude and communicate the outcomes of this internal review of post-16 qualifications, before Christmas 2024.

The focused review announced in July is already underway and the department is working as quickly as possible to provide certainty to the sector. The review will look at the defunding lists that have been published and communicate any changes.

Colleges will be able to reflect the outcomes of the review in their planning and marketing materials in the new year so that students can make the best decisions about their futures.

There are many qualifications not subject to defunding and which provide certainty and continuity to the sector. These include A levels, T Levels, and alternative qualifications in subjects and routes not affected by defunding.

■ Young People: Employment

Lewis Cocking:

[\[4082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that young people have the necessary skills to gain employment.

Janet Daby:

This government aims to create a clear, flexible, high quality skills system that supports all young people, thereby breaking down the barriers to opportunity and driving economic growth.

The department has already taken steps to reform the skills system.

Firstly, the department has established Skills England, which is a new organisation that will ensure we have the highly trained workforce needed to deliver national, regional and local skills needs, aligned with the Industrial Strategy. It is a critical part of the government's mission to raise growth sustainably across the whole country to support people to get better jobs and to improve their standard of living.

Secondly, the department has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18 and chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The review will seek to refresh the curriculum to ensure it is cutting edge, fit for purpose and meets the needs of children and young people to support their future life and work. The review will be undertaken in close partnership with stakeholders, including employers. A call for evidence will be launched in the coming weeks which will set out the areas where the review group would particularly welcome input.

Thirdly, the department is undertaking a short, internal review of post-16 qualifications reform. The review will examine the current planned reforms to look at how the department can ensure high quality qualifications like T Levels are open to as many people as possible, whilst also ensuring there are high-quality alternatives available where they are needed. To allow space for the review, the department has paused the planned defunding of qualifications in construction and the Built Environment, Digital, Education and Early Years, and Health and Science, which was due to go ahead in July 2024. The department will conclude and communicate the outcomes of this review before the turn of the year. Defunding decisions for 2025 onwards will be confirmed after the short review.

T Levels will continue to be rolled out as high quality qualifications which include direct experience of the workplace, providing young people with a firm foundation for their future. 21 T Levels are now available, including Media, Broadcast and

Production, Craft and Design, and Animal Care and Management, which are being taught for the first time from this September.

The government will continue to take steps to reform the skills system, as part of a comprehensive post-16 education and skills strategy.

The department will introduce a Youth Guarantee of access to training, an apprenticeship, or support to find work for all 18 to 21 year olds. This will bring together existing funding and entitlements to help to lower the number of young people who are not learning or earning. This is vital to prevent young people becoming excluded from the world of work at a young age.

The department is transforming the Apprenticeship Levy into a new Growth and Skills Levy, to create opportunities for learners of all ages and to give employers greater flexibility to train and upskill their workforce by allowing investment in a broader range of skills training.

The department will establish Technical Excellence Colleges, which will work with businesses, trade unions, and local government to provide opportunities to young people and adults, developing a highly skilled workforce that meets national and local needs.

These reforms will support all young people to have access to the skills and training opportunities to enable them to succeed in the workplace.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Biofuels: Costs

Alex Sobel: [\[4774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the cost per household of government support for biomass in (a) 2024, (b) 2025 and (c) 2026.

Michael Shanks:

Government provides support for biomass, for the purpose of heat and power generation, through active and legacy policy schemes, such as the Renewables Obligation (RO) and the Contracts for Difference (CfD). The annual cost of support is dependent on variables, such as the volume of electricity generation in a given year and the wholesale cost of electricity. The Department does not hold a combined estimate of the projected cost of these schemes for "biomass" in the years listed.

■ Biofuels: Sustainable Development

Alex Sobel: [\[4773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress his Department has made on its review of biomass sustainability standards.

Michael Shanks:

The 2023 Biomass Strategy contained a commitment to consult on developing and implementing a cross-sector sustainability framework to enable greater consistency across sectors. Next steps on this will be announced in due course.

■ **British Gas: Billing****Josh Simons:**[\[4800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with Ofgem on British Gas's billing system migration; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of that migration on customers.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Regulation of energy suppliers is a matter for Ofgem. All retail energy suppliers are required to meet the standard license conditions set out by Ofgem which detail the minimum standards customers must be provided. Suppliers are expected to provide customers with clear and easily understandable ways to contact them about a problem, question or other request for assistance.

■ **Climate Change: Finance****Chris Law:**[\[4747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps the Government is taking to support negotiations to agree an ambitious New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance at COP29.

Kerry McCarthy:

Delivering an ambitious outcome on the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) is critical to ensure we can deliver towards the ambition of the Paris Agreement. The UK is committed to working together with all Parties to agree a new climate finance goal that supports the most vulnerable, encourages finance to increase from all sources and accelerates the necessary reforms of the global financial architecture. In line with this, the UK is actively engaging internationally at both Ministerial and Official levels with developed and developing countries to achieve an outcome which meets these critical objectives.

■ **Databases: Havering****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[4609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will have discussions with Havering Council on the proposed East Havering Data Centre.

Michael Shanks:

The proposals for the East Havering Data Centre development have the potential to contribute towards our country's net zero ambitions; it is welcome that the plans include building a district heating network, generation of hydrogen powered energy and battery storage capacity.

I would welcome the opportunity for my officials to engage with Havering Council to ensure that the potential of this development to support our journey towards homegrown clean energy is maximised. I understand that you have posed the same questions to the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology as Data Centre technology is within his remit.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Equality

Rupert Lowe:

[\[5183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many positions in his Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Michael Shanks:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost. Information on spending and staffing can be found in the Department's annual report and accounts.

The Department is committed to promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion through its diversity networks.

■ Electricity: Standing Charges

Angus MacDonald:

[\[5221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with Ofgem on disparities in electricity standing charges between regions.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Standing charges cover the costs energy suppliers take on to provide consumers with electricity, which vary by location. Ofgem's recently published discussion paper sets out the options for how standing charges could be reduced, including by moving supplier operational costs off standing charges onto the unit rate, increasing the variety of tariffs available for consumer in the market, and in the longer term, reviewing how system costs are allocated.

My team and I are in regular contact with Ofgem to discuss a wide range of issues.

■ Energy: Prices

Claire Hanna:

[\[5124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with (a) Ofgem and (b) energy companies on introducing a social tariff for low-income households.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is committed to supporting low-income households this winter, and we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides an annual £150 rebate off energy bills to eligible low-income households. Last month, I met with energy suppliers to discuss the support we will provide to customers struggling with bills this winter, and my team and I will continue to work closely with suppliers in the weeks ahead. The Government expects energy suppliers to do everything they can to support consumers who are struggling with their bills.

Fuel Poverty: Older People**Rachael Maskell:**[\[4381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he (a) is having and (b) plans to have discussions with local authorities on steps that can be taken to ensure older people are able to (i) heat their homes and (ii) access other warm spaces.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is committed to supporting those who are struggling to pay their energy bills, including the most vulnerable households. We are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills for eligible low-income households.

Last month I met with energy suppliers to urge them to do everything they can to support consumers struggling to pay their bills, and to sign up to an ambitious set of commitments to take proactive steps to stop further households from getting into debt.

Great British Nuclear: Recruitment**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[5089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to his Answer of 2 September 2024 to Question 2122 on Great British Nuclear: Recruitment, if he will list (a) the organisations from which personnel have been seconded to Great British Nuclear and (b) the number of personnel recruited from each.

Michael Shanks:

GBN has grown rapidly as an organisation to deliver on its mission and now has over 100 personnel working for it, including those seconded from a range of organisations. Permanent recruitment for the Executive Team is actively underway and this will be followed by recruitment for the rest of the organisation.

Meters and Renewable Energy: Islands and Rural Areas**Angus MacDonald:**[\[5162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether officials in his Department have had discussions with relevant organisations on steps to ensure that rural and island communities have (a) equitable access to SMART meters and (b) support for their transition to renewable energy.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Energy suppliers are obligated under their licence conditions to install smart meters throughout Great Britain, including rural and island communities. The Department is working with energy suppliers to identify and share best practice in deploying meters in harder to reach areas, including the use of "roaming" teams of installers who are normally based elsewhere visiting communities at regular intervals.

On the energy transition more widely, Great British Energy will support local and combined authorities – as well as community energy groups – to roll out small and medium-scale renewable energy projects through the Local Power Plan.

■ Mineworkers Pension Scheme**Josh Simons:**[\[5215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to return money the Government (a) has received and (b) will receive from 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.

■ National Grid: Carbon Emissions**Andrew Bowie:**[\[5083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the tonnes of copper that will be required to decarbonise the National Grid by 2030.

Andrew Bowie:[\[5084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of decarbonising the grid by 2030 on demand for copper.

Andrew Bowie:[\[5086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the quantity and proportion of the copper that will be required to decarbonise the grid by 2030 that will be sourced from overseas markets.

Andrew Bowie:[\[5087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the quantity of copper that will be required to provide 60 gigawatts of offshore wind power by 2030.

Michael Shanks:

Significant infrastructure investment is required to meet the Government's mission for clean power by 2030 and accelerate to net zero. The equipment, such as cables and transformers, to enable transformation of the grid will be reliant on copper and its associated supply chain. We also recognise the vital role of copper in making wind power possible.

The Critical Minerals Intelligence Centre, sponsored by the Department for Business and Trade and delivered by the British Geological Survey, is undertaking studies to forecast the UK's demand for critical minerals including copper in our clean energy technologies and energy infrastructure. They will be published later this year.

Andrew Bowie:**[5085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of kilometres of new energy transmission lines that will be required to decarbonise the grid by 2030.

Michael Shanks:

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

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

More detail will be provided in the autumn.

■ Nuclear Fusion**Andrew Bowie:****[5082]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support the development of fusion technology.

Michael Shanks:

Fusion supports the Government's missions to kickstart economic growth and make Britain a clean energy superpower. The commercial process for the STEP powerplant programme is in train, we are investing in cutting-edge research programmes and facilities, and are implementing the UK's proportionate regulatory framework, strengthening the UK's role as the global hub for fusion innovation. Together, this will support investment and job creation and help deliver a thriving UK fusion industry.

■ Nuclear Power: Skilled Workers**Jerome Mayhew:****[4253]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has met with the Secretary of State for Education to discuss the development of skills needed for the growth of the nuclear sector.

Michael Shanks:

My Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with Ministerial Colleagues on a number of issues.

■ **Renewable Energy****Anna Dixon:****[4314]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all new green-energy infrastructure is (a) built in suitable locations and (b) benefits nearby communities.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is committed to the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP). The SSEP will support a more actively planned approach to energy infrastructure across England, Scotland and Wales, across land and sea. The Secretary of State and Head of Mission Control also wrote to the ESO on 23rd August to formally commission advice regarding the key requirements for the Government to meet its clean power commitment by 2030.

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

It is the Government's priority to build support for developments by ensuring communities directly benefit. We are reviewing how to most effectively deliver community benefits for communities living near new energy infrastructure.

■ **Sizewell C Power Station****Wera Hobhouse:****[5090]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for public expenditure of the provision of a further £5.5 billion for additional development support for the proposed new nuclear power plant Sizewell C in (a) the current fiscal year and (b) each of the next four fiscal years.

Michael Shanks:

While working towards a final investment decision on Sizewell C, we have established a new subsidy scheme of up to £5.5 billion to ensure the government can provide the project with the necessary financial support to remain on track. Decisions about providing investment and support under the scheme will be made in due course and will be subject to the relevant government approval processes, including where appropriate the upcoming Spending Review.

■ **Solar Power: Business****Jim Shannon:****[4718]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many businesses in the UK have Government funded solar panels.

Michael Shanks:

Solar power is at the heart of our mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower. The funding of solar panels is typically levied on billpayers rather than through direct taxation. Mechanisms have included the Feed-in tariff, Renewables Obligation and annual Contracts for Difference Allocation Rounds. Given the complex financial environment we are unable to provide an estimate as to how many businesses benefit from Government funding.

■ Solar Power: Industry**Jodie Gosling:**[\[5248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of using (a) car parks and (b) other elements of the built environment for industrial solar energy projects; and if he will take steps to do so.

Michael Shanks:

The Government supports the deployment of solar on rooftops, including those of car parks and other buildings. Many smaller-scale commercial rooftop projects are covered by permitted development rights, which allow them to be installed without applying for planning consent. These include solar canopies in non-domestic, off-street car parks, and rooftop projects of any size on non-domestic buildings. From next year, Future Homes and Buildings Standards will ensure that all newly-built homes and commercial buildings are fit for a net zero future.

■ Zinc: Prices and Supply Chains**Andrew Bowie:**[\[5088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the (a) reliability of supply chains for and (b) resilience to price shocks in the zinc market in the context of his energy policies.

Michael Shanks:

Taking action to ensure that our clean energy supply chains are resilient is a key priority across our missions - both to make the UK a clean energy superpower and kickstart growth.

The Critical Minerals Intelligence Centre (CMIC), sponsored by the Department for Business and Trade and delivered with the British Geological Survey, is currently undertaking an updated criticality assessment, which will assess the economic vulnerability and supply risk of over 80 candidate materials, including zinc.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Finance**

Ayoub Khan: [\[4325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to make cuts to the agricultural budget.

Daniel Zeichner:

As is typical, the farming budget beyond this year will be part of the Government's spending review.

This Government recognises that food security is national security. We said we would provide stability for farmers and we are delivering on this commitment and have confirmed that the first Sustainable Farming Incentive agreements of the 2024 offer are now live. We will confirm plans for rollout of schemes and our wider approach when possible.

Ayoub Khan: [\[4326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of trends in the level of farming funding on the Government's ability to reach it's (a) nature recovery and (b) net zero targets.

Daniel Zeichner:

The level of farming funding in future financial years will be confirmed as part of the Government's spending review.

We know farmers require stability in order for the Government to reach its nature recovery and net zero targets. We have already started to deliver on our commitment to restore stability by continuing the rollout of the Sustainable Farming Incentive, and will go further by optimising our schemes and grants, ensuring they produce the right outcomes for all farmers including small, grassland, upland and tenanted farms, while delivering food security and nature recovery in a just and equitable way.

■ Air Pollution

Pippa Heylings: [\[4471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the outputs of the Air Quality Common Framework emissions reduction sub-group.

Emma Hardy:

The Air Quality Common Framework emissions reduction sub-group is a working level meeting between officials in the UK Governments. We will consider further whether any additional information regarding emissions policies under consideration should be published in due course.

■ Animal Products: Imports**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[4518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the answer of 26 July 2024 to Question HL226 on Animal Products: Imports, what his Department's planned timescale is for banning the import of hunting trophies.

Mary Creagh:

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to [PQ 591](#).

■ Asthma & Lung UK**Adam Jogee:** [\[4867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to meet with representatives of the charity Asthma and Lung UK.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State and the Ministerial team are in the process of meeting a wide range of stakeholders since their appointment to the department.

■ Badgers: Disease Control**Sarah Champion:** [\[1916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; whether he plans to continue with the cull of badgers in Derbyshire; and for what reason 1,675 badgers were to be culled.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government has committed to ending badger culling by the next General Election. In contrast, in the past decade over 230,000 badgers were culled.

On 30 August, Defra announced that we will be working on a comprehensive new TB eradication strategy to end the badger cull and drive down bovine TB rates to protect farmers' livelihoods.

Badger culling is licensed under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 for the purpose of preventing the spread of disease. The figure quoted in the question refers to the maximum number of badgers to be culled under supplementary badger control licences in Derbyshire. In previous years, the total number of badgers culled has been closer to the minimum, which this year is set at 425, rather than the maximum.

Steve Darling: [\[3857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many badgers have been killed under the current cull regime in Devon.

Daniel Zeichner:

The numbers of badgers removed during culling operations are published annually on GOV.UK. The number of badgers removed cannot be broken down by county as licensed cull areas often overlap multiple counties. However, for licences granted

which are predominantly in Devon, approximately 41,000 badgers have been removed since 2013 under these licences.

■ Beavers: Conservation

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[\[4913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will review the rules on beaver (a) protection and (b) management.

Mary Creagh:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The Government has no plans to review the rules on beaver protection. Beavers are a protected species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Protection makes it an offence to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or injure beavers, or to damage or destroy their breeding sites or resting places. Protection means a licence is required for certain beaver management actions.

Defra will continue to work with Natural England to develop our approach to beaver reintroductions and management in England. Beaver management should follow the 5-step management approach published on GOV.UK. Licensed projects are responsible for managing animals they have released and are also expected to follow the Code for Reintroductions and other Conservation Translocations in England. Landowners and managers who may be affected by beaver activity can find further guidance on beaver management, including when a licence might be needed, on GOV.UK.

■ Biodiversity

Christine Jardine:

[\[900425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle biodiversity loss.

Mary Creagh:

Britain's nature is in crisis. Nearly half of our bird species and a quarter of our mammal species are at risk of national extinction. Biodiversity has been declining at an unprecedented rate since 1970.

That is why this Government has wasted no time in announcing a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan, to be completed by the end of the year, to make sure it is fit for purpose.

We will introduce a new, statutory plan to protect and restore our natural environment, delivering on our legally binding target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.

■ Birds: Conservation

Sir John Hayes: [4170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle the decline of seabirds.

Ayoub Khan: [4327]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle the decline of UK seabirds.

Emma Hardy:

Ensuring nature's recovery is a top priority for this Government. This is why the Government has announced a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) to deliver on our legally binding environment targets, including reversing the decline in species abundance and reducing the risk of national extinction.

Earlier this year, Natural England published the English Seabird Conservation and Recovery Pathway (ESCaRP), which assesses the vulnerability of seabird species in light of the pressures they are facing and sets out actions that could help to bring about seabird recovery. Defra plans to seek stakeholders' views on the recommended actions this winter.

The Oslo-Paris Commission (OSPAR), the regional seas convention for the North East Atlantic, has published a Regional Action Plan (RAP) for Marine Birds on 6 September. UK experts were involved in developing the RAP which aims to reduce and eliminate the main pressures and activities impacting marine birds in the North-East Atlantic.

■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control

Dr Simon Opher: [4281]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to issue new badger cull licences.

Daniel Zeichner:

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

As part of this announcement, existing cull processes will be honoured to ensure clarity for farmers involved in these culls whilst new measures can be rolled out and take effect.

Further details can be found on GOV.UK at

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

Under the previous Government, an application for a badger disease control licence was received in respect of a TB hotspot in Cumbria in the Low Risk Area, which was established over 18 months ago following an increase in cattle TB cases in 2021 and 2022. This application was processed by Natural England, as the delegated licensing authority, in accordance with the published policy guidance for this licence type, as introduced by the previous Government in 2018.

Claire Young:

[4791]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that incidents of bovine TB in livestock are properly (a) monitored and (b) dealt with.

Daniel Zeichner:

We know that experiencing a TB incident (or breakdown) in a cattle herd can be particularly stressful. To help cattle keepers in this situation, comprehensive guidance on how TB breakdowns are monitored and dealt with can be found on the TB Hub website: (<https://tbhub.co.uk/advice-during-a-tb-breakdown/>).

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) follow well-established protocols in all herds affected by a TB breakdown, working closely with the affected herd keeper to contain and eradicate the infection, enabling the herd to regain its Officially TB Free (OTF) status. Several steps are taken, including:

- Immediate application of herd movement restrictions. Only limited and controlled movements of TB-restricted cattle are permitted. Cattle from TB-restricted holdings can only move to slaughter and certain other limited destinations under a licence issued by APHA.
- All animals over 42 days old in the affected herd are tested at 60-day intervals (often using a more severe interpretation of the tuberculin skin test), until two consecutive test results are achieved.
- Supplementary interferon-gamma blood testing is used alongside the skin test in some TB breakdown herds.
- All TB test reactors (and, in some cases, non-reactor animals in direct contact with known infected cattle) are rapidly removed to designated slaughterhouses, triggering statutory compensation payments to the keeper. Alternatively, keepers can opt for private slaughter of their TB reactors if they prefer.

Claire Young:

[4792]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support farmers who experience outbreaks of bovine TB to recover.

Daniel Zeichner:

We recognise the serious impacts that bovine TB (bTB) breakdowns can have on the affected farm businesses and on local rural communities. In addition to statutory payments to compensate farmers for the loss of any animals removed for TB control

reasons, Defra provides support and help to affected livestock keepers (and their families) in different ways:

The Defra-funded TB Advisory Service (TBAS) (<https://www.tbas.org.uk/>) offers free, bespoke, practical and cost-effective advice to all livestock keepers in England. This can be provided by way of farm visits by qualified specialists, over-the phone advice and badger sett surveys to help reduce the risks associated with TB.

Grant funding for the **Farming Community Network (FCN)**, which provides an on-demand support service for those impacted by a TB breakdown, with specially trained volunteers providing business as well as emotional and pastoral support.

ibTB (<https://www.ibtb.co.uk/>) is a free-to-access, online interactive mapping tool set up to help cattle farmers and their vets to understand the level of bTB in their area and to manage the risks when purchasing cattle. IbTB is updated on a regular basis to enhance its functionality and the quality of information it offers to users.

The TB Hub (<https://tbhub.co.uk/>) is a joint industry-government initiative, also provides cattle farmers with practical advice and information on dealing with bTB on their farm, covering everything from biosecurity measures to TB testing.

The Five Point Plan (<https://tbhub.co.uk/preventing-tb-breakdowns/protect-your-herd-from-bovine-tb/>), developed in partnership by industry and Defra, provides clear and practical guidance on good practice for bTB biosecurity.

Claire Young:

[4794]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what changes his Department has made to the testing system for bovine TB since August 2021.

Daniel Zeichner:

Since August 2023, cattle brought into herds in the annual testing part of the Edge Area from higher-risk areas in England (and from Wales) have been subject to post-movement TB testing. This measure has strengthened the mandatory TB post-movement testing regime for cattle in England, originally introduced in April 2016 for animals joining herds in the Low Risk Area (LRA) of England from other parts of England or Wales.

Between September 2020 and July 2021, the default frequency of mandatory TB surveillance testing throughout the High Risk Area (HRA) of England was increased from annual to every six-months, with some exceptions for lower-risk cattle herds (whose owners would have the option to remain on annual TB testing). In March 2024, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) introduced two relatively minor changes to the process used to identify herds in the HRA that are eligible for annual TB testing:

- the regular review of the eligibility lists switched from six-monthly to quarterly.
- keepers of herds newly qualifying for annual testing were given the opportunity to delay their next scheduled TB tests as long as the window for completion of the next routine herd test had not started.

■ Business: Rural Areas**Sarah Dyke:** [\[900176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support businesses in rural areas.

Richard Foord: [\[900191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support businesses in rural areas.

Daniel Zeichner:

Rural areas offer significant potential for growth and are central to our economy. Over half a million business are registered in rural areas, with the rural economy contributing over £315 billion a year to England alone.

The Government is committed to improving the quality of life for people living and working in rural areas, so that we can realise the full potential of rural business and communities. To achieve this, we are ensuring that the needs of people and businesses in rural areas are at the heart of policymaking.

That starts with delivering a new deal for farmers including cutting energy prices by setting up GB energy, ensuring future trade deals are fairer for British farmers, and procuring more British produce in Government.

■ Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[4491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reforming the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to help foster responsible access to the countryside.

Mary Creagh:

The Government remains committed to increasing responsible access to the countryside and is currently considering how best to deliver enhanced access and what changes are needed to develop policy.

■ Countryside Stewardship Scheme and Sustainable Farming Incentive**Rebecca Smith:** [\[5247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that people farming on commons can benefit from (a) the Sustainable Farming Incentive and (b) Countryside Stewardship.

Daniel Zeichner:

We want people farming on commons land to benefit from both the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and Countryside Stewardship and are working to make applications to the SFI service available to commoners and other shared graziers. We have asked farmers on commons interested in applying to SFI to contact the Rural Payments Agency so that we can help farmers to prepare to apply and be

ready when the application service is available. We will set out more details of the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier offer in due course. To help with a group's costs of administering a common land SFI agreement, an annual additional payment of £7 per hectare of eligible common land is available.

■ **Dangerous Dogs: Sales**

Gregory Stafford: [\[3657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help prevent the sale of illegal dog breeds on (a) Freeads, (b) Gumtree and (c) other advertisement websites.

Daniel Zeichner:

It is a criminal offence to sell, gift, exchange, advertise or offer for sale any prohibited dog breeds. The maximum penalty for doing so is up to six months in prison and or an unlimited fine.

The Government has strongly encouraged all online selling sites to run automated checks for words and terms relating to these prohibited breed types, reporting this to enforcement authorities where relevant.

■ **Daniel Shaw**

Layla Moran: [\[4769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter of 24 June 2024 from the UN Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention entitled Statement regarding the criminal prosecution of Mr. Daniel Shaw for his involvement in peaceful environmental protest in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mary Creagh:

The UK welcomed the creation of the Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention.

The Government is considering the issues raised in the Special Rapporteur's recent letters, in the context of the UK's obligations under the Aarhus Convention.

We will respond in due course.

■ **Dartmoor: Horses**

Sir Geoffrey Cox: [\[4977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to coordinate efforts with local groups to protect Dartmoor ponies.

Rebecca Smith:

[5207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to coordinate efforts with local groups to protect Dartmoor ponies.

Mary Creagh:

The new Moorland Offer, as outlined on the Government website, includes 10 new actions to be included in Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and two new and one amended action to be included in Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT). The new offer will provide payment for grazing with both cattle and ponies and will make both cattle and ponies eligible under the native breeds at risk supplement. The competition between the two has been removed as recommended in the Dartmoor review. In the new offer, ponies are exempt from stock removal requirements, in recognition that removal of ponies from moorland is neither feasible nor desirable in most circumstances.

Full details of the expanded and improved SFI offer available to farmers were published by the government on Tuesday 21 May 2024. Expressions of interest have now opened for those wishing to apply through the Sustainable Farming Incentive controlled roll out. The application window for Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) will be confirmed shortly. Farmers and other eligible land managers can apply for an SFI agreement to run alongside their existing agreement, if:

- They or their land are eligible for each scheme
- The activities or outcomes they are being paid for are compatible

They will not be paid twice for a similar activity or outcome on the same area of land at the same time (known as 'double funding'). It should be noted that those managing land designated as SSSI will need to obtain Natural England consent for their grazing management actions; this is part of Natural England statutory duty regarding the protection of SSSIs. Those managing land not designated as a SSSI will not need to discuss their grazing management with Natural England to enter into a Sustainable Farming Incentive agreement.

The new moorland offer will be subject to monitoring and evaluation, particularly in the first year. Any change in the pony population during this time will be investigated and further mitigations will be explored if necessary.

■ Dartmoor: Nature Conservation

Sir Geoffrey Cox:

[4978]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will meet with hon. Members representing constituencies in Devon to have discussions on the (a) conservation of Dartmoor moorland and (b) protection of Dartmoor ponies.

Rebecca Smith: [\[5208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will meet (a) hon. and Rt hon. Members with constituencies in Devon and (b) key stakeholders to discuss steps to (i) conserve Dartmoor moorland and (ii) protect Dartmoor ponies.

Daniel Zeichner:

I will meet with hon. and Rt hon. Members representing constituencies in Devon, and key stakeholders, to discuss these issues.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Equality**

Rupert Lowe: [\[5184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many positions in his Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the department's annual report and accounts.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Public Appointments**

Kit Malthouse: [\[2392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) statutory and (b) non-statutory direct ministerial appointments excluding special advisers he has made; and (i) who the appointee was and (ii) what the (A) remuneration, (B) title and (C) terms of reference was for each appointment.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Secretary of State has not made any Direct Ministerial Appointments.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Redundancy Pay**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[3034\]](#)

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

Daniel Zeichner:

The details of any ministerial severance payments can be found in our Annual Report & Accounts.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Regulation**Steve Race:**[\[4464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure regulators sponsored by his Department have sufficient resources for enforcement work.

Daniel Zeichner:

The department recognises the vital role that regulators play in the context of enforcement. The enforcement powers of bodies such as Ofwat and the Environment Agency are key to ensuring companies meet their obligations across the water and waste sectors in England and Wales. The Water (Special Measures) Bill, which was introduced into Parliament on 4 September, will strengthen the power of the water industry regulators and expand the cost recovery powers available to the regulators, enabling them to recover their costs for enforcement action from water companies.

Officials work closely with Defra's public bodies throughout each spending review period, to agree enforcement plans and the required resources.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Workplace Pensions**John Glen:**[\[5013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the latest estimate is of the Cash Equivalent Transfer Value of the Civil Service pension of his Department's Second Permanent Secretary and Defra group Chief Operating Officer in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Daniel Zeichner:

The position of Second Permanent Secretary and Chief Operating Officer was appointed to in July 2023 by his party. The pension cash equivalent transfer values for this position will be published in the 2023/2024 Defra Annual Report and Accounts.

■ Disease Control: National Security**Dr Neil Hudson:**[\[900423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the UK's biosecurity.

Mary Creagh:

The department remains vigilant to potential global disease threats and has in place robust measures to prevent and detect disease incursion, as well as maintaining capacity to contain and eradicate outbreaks, should they occur. Our robust, risk-based border control regime safeguards against the import of pests, disease threats and invasive species through trade in animals and plants and their associated products.

■ Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal

David Simmonds:

[\[5225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to limit the number of bins into which councils require householders to separate their rubbish.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to delivering the Collection and Packaging Reforms to the announced timelines, including the Simpler Recycling policy in England, subject to spending review outcomes. Ministers are reviewing final policy positions relating to Simpler Recycling; we hope to provide further certainty and clarity to stakeholders as soon as possible.

■ Drinking Water: Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances

James MacCleary:

[\[3588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to take steps to reduce the amount of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water.

Emma Hardy:

The Drinking Water Inspectorate's (DWI) current guideline limit on individual types of PFAS of 100 nanograms per litre for treated drinking water was set in 2021 based on an assessment of existing scientific knowledge. These limits were agreed with the UK Health Security Agency to be robust levels with an appropriate margin to ensure our drinking water is not a danger to human health. Work now continues across Government to assess levels of PFAS to safeguard current high drinking water quality and ensure our regulations remain fit for purpose.

More widely, as we look to improve and maintain our water quality standards, 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.

The Water (Special Measures) Bill will also deliver on the Government's manifesto commitment to put water companies under special measures to clean up our water. Through the Bill, we will drive meaningful improvements in the performance and culture of the water industry.

■ Environmental Land Management Schemes

Rebecca Smith:

[\[5245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to enable agri-environment agreement applications before the current agreements expire.

Daniel Zeichner:

Farmers with existing agri-agreements can apply to enter the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) if the activities under each scheme are compatible and they will not be paid twice for a similar activity on the same area of land at the same time. We are fully committed to making the Environmental Land Management schemes work for all farmers. We will confirm plans for further rollout of the schemes as soon as possible.

Rebecca Smith:[\[5246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will carry out full impact assessments of the (a) social and (b) economic impact of Environmental Land Management Schemes on upland farms.

Daniel Zeichner:

Uplands farmers will have a key role to play in the future for delivering sustainable food production and our environmental targets. We are committed to Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes and will work with the sector to optimise the schemes, ensuring they produce the right outcomes for all farmers including upland farms, while delivering food security and nature recovery in a just and equitable way.

We plan to increase the transparency of schemes by publishing data on the impact they are having, including on upland farms. We will confirm next steps in the rollout of other ELM schemes, including how we will publish this data, in due course.

■ Farmers: Finance**Seamus Logan:**[\[4507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to ensure continuity of Government support for farmers through a multi-annual ring-fenced funding commitment; and how much financial support will be allocated to farmers over the current Parliament.

Daniel Zeichner:

The farming budget beyond this year will be part of the Government's spending review.

This Government recognises that food security is national security. We said we would provide stability for farmers and we are delivering on this commitment and have confirmed that the first Sustainable Farming Incentive agreements are now live. We will confirm plans for rollout of schemes and our wider approach as soon as possible.

■ Farmers: Tenants**Tim Farron:**[\[4619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to establish a Tenant Farming Commissioner for England.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government will introduce a new deal for farmers, including tenant farmers, to boost rural economic growth and strengthen Britain's food security. Defra recognises

the importance of agricultural tenancies as a key route into farming for new entrants bringing new skills to the sector. Farm tenancies also provide a flexible way for progressive farmers to expand and adapt their businesses. The Government is carefully considering the role of a Commissioner for the Tenant Farming Sector and will provide an update in due course.

■ Farming Recovery Fund

Steve Barclay:

[\[4362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many farmers who are eligible for support under the expanded Farming Recovery Fund announced on 24 May 2024 have been (a) (i) identified and (ii) contacted by the Rural Payments Agency and (b) paid.

Steve Barclay:

[\[4363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of the additional funding for the expanded Farming Recovery Fund announced on 24 May 2024 (a) has been paid out as of 5 September 2024 and (b) is projected to be spent by the end of the 2024-25 financial year.

Daniel Zeichner:

All eligible farmers that were identified in the original fund from April 2024 have been offered payment. This represents 679 farmers who were paid a total of £2.19 million.

■ Fisheries

Sarah Champion:

[\[4722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (a) domestically and (b) internationally.

Daniel Zeichner:

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a significant threat to ocean ecosystems, coastal communities and global food supplies which undermines fisheries conservation and management measures. The UK Government holds key responsibilities under domestic and international law to tackle IUU fishing.

Domestically, catch documentation is required when importing seafood into the UK from another country to prevent IUU-derived fish entering UK supply chains. Furthermore, seafood caught by a vessel listed on the UK's IUU vessel list is banned from entering the UK, and controls are also in place to prevent foreign vessels accessing UK ports if suspected of engaging in IUU fishing.

Internationally, the UK co-founded the IUU Action Alliance in 2022 to help drive international support and cooperation to tackle IUU fishing globally and, in line with this, is funding a project in the Philippines to support implementation of robust controls at their ports. The UK Government is also party to a number of regional fisheries management organisations which focus on ensuring our shared fish stocks

in international waters are managed sustainably and illegal fishing is tackled effectively.

■ Fisheries: EU Countries

John Glen: [\[4676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his policy is on EU fishing rights in UK waters, in the context of the Government's plans to change its relationship with the EU.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is committed to managing fishing access to its waters in a way that balances sustainable management with the interests of the UK fishing industry, as per our obligations under the Fisheries Act 2020 and Joint Fisheries Statement. The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides full reciprocal access during the adjustment period until June 2026, after which access becomes a matter for annual negotiation by default.

■ Flood Control

Alex Mayer: [\[2621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of (a) Anglian Water and (b) all water companies in England in (i) identifying and (ii) removing barriers that prevent the connectivity of surface waters.

Emma Hardy:

The Government recognises the need for well-connected surface waters, so that water can be moved to where it is most needed. Water companies, including Anglian Water, have focussed their resilience improvements on water grids and transfers, a number of which have been built in recent years. The resilience of our water supply has been strengthened by the action taken by Government, regulators and the private sector, including water companies investing £469 million to investigate additional resources like new reservoir projects and inter-regional water transfers.

Lewis Cocking: [\[4079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve (a) resilience and (b) preparation for flooding.

Emma Hardy:

Defra has established a ministerially led cross-Governmental Flood Resilience Taskforce to ensure that communities are better protected from flooding, 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, MPs will receive advice on how to access the most up to date flood information from the EA and how to raise awareness of flooding with constituents.

■ Flood Control: River Severn

Shaun Davies:

[\[4456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress his Department had made with the River Severn Partnership on (a) reducing flooding and (b) protecting homes and businesses from flood risk.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency is working with partners in the River Severn Partnership (RSP) including local authorities, water companies, Natural Resources Wales, Natural England and environmental organisations on a long-term, whole-catchment scale view of planning for the future in response to climate change: Severn 2100+.

Under Severn2100+ work, the RSP is developing a Climate Resilience Strategy including an options appraisal of the flood risk adaptation actions needed in the River Severn catchment.

The work includes an 'Adaptation Pathways Plan' to help the Environment Agency understand how to sequence those actions, who can help and when.

The Environment Agency is working with partners on the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme to examine how a suite of flood risk interventions in the upper catchment of the River Severn can reduce flood risk. A demonstrator programme is underway delivering a series of 8 projects to test concepts and ideas that will support the future roll-out of the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme.

■ Flood Control: Rural Areas

Lewis Cocking:

[\[4081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help protect rural communities at risk of flooding.

Emma Hardy:

Protecting communities around the country from flooding and coastal erosion is one of the new Secretary of State's five core priorities. That's why we are launching a Flood Resilience Taskforce to provide oversight of national and local flood resilience and preparedness ahead of and after the winter flood season.

In the current floods investment programme, approximately 40% of the Environment Agency's flood defence schemes, and 45% of their investment, protect properties in rural communities. We will review the floods programme to ensure flood risk management is fit for the challenges we face now and in the future.

Working with farmers and landowners is an important part of the [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy Roadmap](#) up to 2026. As part of this, the Rural

Flood Resilience Partnership focuses on helping farmers and land managers adapt to a changing climate.

■ Flood Control: Shipley

Anna Dixon:

[\[4317\]](#)

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

Emma Hardy:

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

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

Bradford Council and the Environment Agency have identified 47 properties at several locations in the Shipley constituency at high risk of flooding from the River Aire. Assessments undertaken confirm neither upstream flood storage, walls nor embankments provide viable solutions for the River Aire in the Shipley constituency. Bradford Council is working with these properties to determine the suitability and effectiveness of Property Flood Resilience (PFR) for their property. PFR measures in 39 properties will be installed over the autumn and winter. Bradford Council will continue to engage with the remaining properties.

■ Fluorinated Gases

James Wild:

[\[4785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the (a) phasedown and (b) phaseout of fluorinated greenhouse gases takes into account the requirements of the pharmaceutical industry for (i) developing sustainable inhalers using climate-friendly gases and (ii) securing regulatory approval of such medicines.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra is in the process of reviewing the F-gas Regulation, which includes an exemption from the hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) phasedown for metered dose inhalers (MDIs). The review will consider the implementation of the current F-gas Regulation and options for future policy development.

To support this work there is ongoing engagement between Defra, NHS, DHSC and other stakeholders, including the pharmaceutical industry and patient representatives. Through this engagement, Defra will ensure future policy development takes account of the technical considerations and the practical requirements of the key stakeholders in this sector.

■ Foie Gras: Imports

James MacCleary:

[3584]

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

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government shares the British public's high regard for animal welfare. Foie gras production using force feeding has been banned in the UK for 17 years and it is not compatible with our animal welfare legislation.

This Labour Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation.

Ministers are reviewing policies, which will be announced in due course.

■ Food: Labelling

Andrew Rosindell:

[4521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish the responses to his Department's consultation entitled Fairer food labelling, which closed on 7 May 2024; and whether he plans to bring forward legislation introducing mandatory Method of Production labelling.

Daniel Zeichner:

A public consultation on fairer food labelling was undertaken between March and May 2024 by the previous Government. This sought views on proposals to improve and extend current mandatory method of production labelling. We are now carefully considering all responses before deciding on next steps and will publish a response to this consultation in due course.

■ Food: Waste

Wera Hobhouse:

[5091]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the merits of introducing mandatory food waste reporting.

Wera Hobhouse:

[5094]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to take steps to ensure that mandatory food waste reporting will take into account companies who (a) are aligned with existing reporting requirements under the Food Waste Reduction Roadmap and (b) already report their food waste as part of global ESG reporting.

Wera Hobhouse:

[5095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that food waste reporting requirements on businesses are (a) effective and (b) not overly burdensome.

Mary Creagh:

The previous Government held a consultation wherein stakeholders were asked about their views on the scope of any reporting requirements. It can be found at [Improved food waste reporting by large food businesses in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improved-food-waste-reporting-by-large-food-businesses-in-england)

The Waste and Resources programme (WRAP) led voluntary Food Waste Reduction Roadmap supports business to target, measure and specifically act on reducing food waste. The roadmap includes guidance and templates for reporting developed by industry in collaboration with WRAP and the Institute of Grocery distribution (IGD) with funding from DEFRA. WRAP regularly reports on the progress of the roadmap and works closely with businesses to quality assure reported data and ensure that it is fit for purpose.

Ministers will consider any mandatory food waste reporting requirements in due course.

Wera Hobhouse: [5092]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce food waste; and what discussions he has had with industry representatives on the best way to tackle the issue.

Wera Hobhouse: [5093]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to support the application of the food and drink waste hierarchy for surplus food.

Mary Creagh:

The Department will hold discussion with the supply chain on a range of issues including how to prevent waste.

We remain committed to the programme of work led by The Waste and Resources Programme (WRAP) to drive down surplus and waste across the supply chain, with the aim to halve food waste by 2030.

The guidance [Food and drink waste hierarchy: deal with surplus and waste - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/food-and-drink-waste-hierarchy-deal-with-surplus-and-waste) offers tools and advice to food businesses.

■ Forest Products: Northern Ireland**Jim Allister:** [4798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the process is for appointing the competent authority for Northern Ireland for EU Regulation 2023/1115.

Jim Allister: [4799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what budget he plans to allocate to the competent authority for Northern Ireland under EU Regulation 2023/1115.

Mary Creagh:

Ministers are currently considering our approach to Regulation 2023/1115 in Northern Ireland, and the Government will communicate relevant arrangements at the earliest possible opportunity.

■ **Furs****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[4519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he expects the Animal Welfare Committee to (a) complete and (b) publish its review of responsible sourcing of fur.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra is continuing to build the evidence base on the fur sector. The Animal Welfare Committee's opinion on the sustainable sourcing of fur is due to complete in 2025 and will be published on GOV.UK thereafter.

■ **Glass: Recycling****Claire Hanna:**[\[4268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the extender producer responsibility scheme on sustainable glass producers.

Mary Creagh:

No, the 2022 [PePR impact assessment](#) made an assessment of the impact of introducing the scheme on packaging producers as a whole. This does not split the assessment by sector. The Government has now published the first set of pEPR illustrative base fees and is undertaking engagement with relevant industry to ensure that they are based on the best evidence to date. As part of this engagement, the impact on specific packaging sectors is being discussed.

Wendy Morton:[\[5061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposed Extender Producer Responsibility scheme on sustainable glass producers.

Wendy Morton:[\[5062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of new illustrative fees for the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme on glass as an infinitely recyclable material.

Mary Creagh:

The [2022 Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging \(pEPR\) impact assessment](#) made an assessment of the impact of introducing the scheme on packaging producers as a whole. This impact assessment covers glass, but does not split the assessment by sector. The Government has now published a first set of pEPR illustrative base fees and is undertaking engagement with all relevant

industries to ensure that they are based on the best evidence to date. As part of this engagement, impact on specific packaging sectors is being discussed.

Wendy Morton: [\[5063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he is taking steps to manage the potential impact of implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme on glass manufacturers.

Mary Creagh:

As part of the Government's commitment to implement Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging (pEPR) and the benefits it will deliver, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is working alongside the Department for Business and Trade to discuss the impact of Extended Producer Responsibility on specific packaging sectors, including glass. We will continue to engage with industry on this matter.

■ Greenpeace

John Glen: [\[4992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024, to Question 1246 on Greenpeace, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for the Government's policy on engagement with Greenpeace of the protest held by representatives of that organisation at the then Prime Minister's family home in August 2023.

Daniel Zeichner:

It remains the Government's policy to engage with a range of stakeholders, including Greenpeace.

■ Greyhound Racing

Liz Jarvis: [\[5214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning greyhound racing.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is aware of the concerns that surround greyhound racing. However, we also recognise that the sport is already attempting to address many of these issues. The Government is monitoring the sport's progress and should further measures and protections be required we will, of course, consider options which are targeted, effective, and proportionate.

■ Grouse Moors

Ayoub Khan: [\[4330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the environmental impact of grouse moor management.

Mary Creagh:

There are no current plans to undertake an assessment.

■ **Housing: Gardens****David Simmonds:**[\[5226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 30 August 2024 to Question 1516 on Housing: Gardens, what the timetable is for the review of the effectiveness of all available options to manage unplanned increases in impermeable or hard surfaces and their costs and benefits.

Emma Hardy:

Defra is considering how best to take forward the review of the effectiveness of all available options to manage unplanned increases in impermeable or hard surfaces.

■ **Incinerators: Waste Disposal****Steve Barclay:**[\[4364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the use of unbound incinerator bottom ash aggregate in construction on the environment in (a) the Fenlands and (b) other low-lying areas.

Mary Creagh:

In England the Environment Agency's regulatory position statement [RPS 247](#), first published in January 2021, sets out risk-based conditions which restrict the use of unbound incinerator bottom ash aggregate (IBAA) as a replacement for primary aggregate based on tonnage, location, placement, and type of construction project. The Environment Agency is satisfied that in complying with the regulatory position statement, the risks to ground and surface water are understood and proportionately managed.

Steve Barclay:[\[4365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Environment Agency regulatory policy statement entitled Using unbound incinerator bottom ash aggregate (IBAA) in construction activities: RPS 247, published on 25 June 2024, if she will take steps to update Regulatory Policy Statement 247.

Mary Creagh:

Regulatory position statement [RPS 247](#), first published in January 2021, sets out risk-based conditions which restrict the use of unbound incinerator bottom ash aggregate (IBAA) as a replacement for primary aggregate based on tonnage, location, placement, and type of construction project. The regulatory position statement is to be withdrawn by 31 January 2025. The Environment Agency will replace this position statement with a candidate waste exemption and a new standard-rules permit. The Agency are preparing to consult on the new permit later this year.

As is usual, it is likely that the Environment Agency will extend RPS 247 by a few months to allow the new standard rules permit to be published and available for use.

■ Inland Waterways

Paula Barker:

[\[5136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to (a) clean up water ways in a timely manner and (b) encourage companies to invest in waterways to improve infrastructure in the water industry.

Emma Hardy:

Ofwat on 11th July proposed allowing a spending package of £88bn by water companies. This investment will deliver upgrades of 1500 wastewater treatment works, improvement of thousands of storm overflows and investment in improving bathing waters.

The Secretary of State and I also 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 Water (Special Measures) Bill will strengthen regulation, giving the water regulator new powers to ban the payment of bonuses if environmental standards are not met and increase accountability for water executives.

■ Inland Waterways: Pollution

Dr Marie Tidball:

[\[900433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress he has made on banning the payment of bonuses to the executives of water companies that are found to have polluted waterways.

Emma Hardy:

The opposition had 14 years to legislate to ban the bonuses of water bosses – and they didn't. This Labour Government has done it in less than 70 days. Through our Water (Special Measures) Bill, water companies will be put under tough special measures. This Bill will give Ofwat powers to ban the payment of performance-related pay including bonuses to chief executives and senior leadership of water companies, unless they meet high standards when it comes to protecting the environment, their consumers, financial resilience and criminal liability.

■ Land and Seas and Oceans: Environment Protection

Dan Carden:

[\[4540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress his Department has made to meet the commitment to protect 30% of (a) land and (b) seas by 2030.

Mary Creagh:

In July, the Secretary of State confirmed the Government's intention to launch a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). Our review will make sure that the EIP is fit for purpose to deliver on our ambitious targets, including 30by30, and we will communicate updates in the usual way.

■ Land Use

Stuart Anderson:

[\[4844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish a land use framework.

Mary Creagh:

The Government will publish a Land Use Framework for England in due course in the form of a Green Paper, accompanied by a public consultation.

■ Livestock Worrying

Ben Lake:

[\[4241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an estimate of the potential cost to farmers of dog attacks on farm animals in the last 12 months.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra does not collect its own data on the cost of dog attacks on farm animals to farmers. However, the National Farmers' Union approximates that UK farm animals worth an estimated £2.4million were severely injured or killed by dogs in 2023.

The Government recognises the distress livestock worrying can cause animals and their keepers. We are considering the most effective ways to deliver our commitments in this area to ensure that livestock are suitably protected.

Ben Lake:

[\[4243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help tackle livestock worrying.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government recognises the distress livestock worrying can cause animals and their keepers.

We are considering the most effective ways to deliver our commitments in this area to ensure that livestock are suitably protected. We will set out next steps in due course.

Ben Lake: [\[4244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on livestock worrying.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government recognises the distress livestock worrying can cause animals and their keepers.

We are considering the most effective ways to deliver our commitments in this area to ensure that livestock are suitably protected. We will set out next steps in due course.

■ Livestock Worrying: Wales

Ben Lake: [\[4242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in the Welsh Government on taking steps to help tackle livestock worrying.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Secretary of State has spoken to his Welsh counterpart on a range of issues.

The Government recognises the distress livestock worrying can cause animals and their keepers. We are considering the most effective ways to deliver our commitments in this area to ensure that livestock are suitably protected. We will set out next steps in due course.

■ Livestock: Disease Control

Claire Young: [\[4793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure movement restrictions as a result of reported disease outbreaks are reviewed in a timely manner.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra recognises the impact that movement controls can have on animal keepers and other affected businesses and seeks to minimise burdens as far as practically possible, while maintaining the integrity of measures to mitigate risk of spread. To that end, movements from restricted zones to designated slaughterhouses are permitted under a general licence, and keepers can apply to move animals to live outside restricted zones under individual licences if pre/post movement tests indicate these moves are safe.

The situation, including the need for and size of movement controls, remains under continuous review.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries

Sarah Champion: [\[4529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the next phase of the consultation on restricting bottom trawling in offshore marine protected areas (MPAs); and whether he plans to include an option for bottom trawling to be banned across offshore MPAs on a whole site basis.

Emma Hardy:

It is essential to manage bottom trawling in our Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) appropriately due to the significant damage it can have on protected seabed habitats. The department is considering next steps in the context of our domestic and international nature conservation obligations and how we support the fishing sector.

■ Meat: Labelling

Sarah Green: [\[4451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to require meat produced from animals not stunned before slaughter to be clearly labelled.

Daniel Zeichner:

A consultation on proposals to improve and extend current mandatory method of production labelling was undertaken between March and May 2024 by the previous Government.

The consultation sought views on options for the production standards behind the label, including the period of life which should be covered by the standards (for example whether slaughter should be included). We are now carefully considering all responses provided to the consultation before deciding on next steps.

■ Moorland: Fire Prevention

Paul Davies: [\[4318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent moorland fires.

Mary Creagh:

We are committed to protecting our nature-rich habitats, including our moorlands, through promoting sustainable land management and restoration practices. Wetter, healthy-functioning peatlands are more resilient to the impacts of fire.

■ National Landscapes: Planning

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[900431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the potential impact of planning reforms on areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mary Creagh:

I have been engaged in discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister and my other honourable friends to discuss the Government's plan to reform planning.

This Government was elected on a mandate to build the homes that Britain desperately needs while protecting nature including National Landscapes. That is exactly what we will do.

■ Nature Conservation**Helen Grant:**[\[2864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help ensure habitat (a) creation and (b) enhancement through biodiversity net gain.

Mary Creagh:

It is evident that the previous Government failed to protect and restore nature. The previous Environment Improvement Plan did not focus enough on delivery of our Environment Act targets and as a result nature is in crisis.

Biodiversity net gain requires most planning applications to deliver a 10% increase in biodiversity compared to what was there before. The biodiversity to be delivered is calculated using the biodiversity metric, developed by Natural England together with stakeholders over a period of many years, drawing on the best science available.

By applying the biodiversity metric to all eligible development sites, we will make sure that the right habitat creation and enhancement takes place to both compensate for what has been lost and deliver a gain.

The metric also rewards biodiversity actions taken in line with Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs), incentivising the right actions to be taken in the right places as LNRs are brought forward across England.

Helen Grant:[\[2865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the delivery of the local nature recovery strategies.

Mary Creagh:

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs) are currently being prepared across England. They will identify and prioritise actions and areas for nature recovery and nature-based solutions. The first strategies are expected this autumn with the remainder following in the first half of 2025.

In July, the Secretary of State announced a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver our legally binding environmental targets. Defra is working with stakeholders to undertake this review, including looking at the role of, and support for, LNRs in its delivery.

■ Neonicotinoids

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[4417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to change existing policies to prevent the use of neonicotinoid pesticides.

Emma Hardy:

This Government is committed to preventing the use of those neonicotinoid pesticides that threaten our vital pollinators. At this stage, officials are currently determining the most effective way to implement this commitment.

■ Northumbrian Water

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[4901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of Ofwat in regulating Northumbrian Water.

Emma Hardy:

Ofwat will not hesitate to hold water companies to account where they fall short of our expectations. For example, Ofwat recently issued a proposed enforcement order against Northumbrian Water for the management of wastewater treatment works which proposes financial penalties of £17 million (5% of their relevant annual turnover). The consultation period closed on 10th September after which Ofwat will make their final decision. The Water (Special Measures) Bill will also give Ofwat further powers to hold water companies to account where they do not deliver for customers and the environment.

The Government will also soon carry out a review to shape further legislation that will fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good, ensuring that the regulatory framework that underpins our water sector delivers long-term stability, with clear, achievable targets.

■ Peatlands: Conservation

Ayoub Khan:

[\[4328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help restore peatlands.

Mary Creagh:

The Government recognises the importance of England's peatlands. Currently, peatland restoration is funded via the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme. After 2026, peatland restoration will be primarily funded through Environmental Land Management schemes, such as the Landscape Recovery Scheme and Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances**James Wild:**[\[4786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that his approach to (a) per- and (b) poly-fluoroalkyl substances restrictions takes account of the (i) requirements and (i) time required for the pharmaceutical industry to (A) develop sustainable inhalers and (B) secure regulatory approval for these medicines using novel low global warming potential gases.

Emma Hardy:

Defra is currently considering measures to restrict per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in a wide range of industrial and consumer uses under UK REACH. The scope of restriction proposals will be informed by engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, as well as by technical considerations, health and safety factors and the practical feasibility and requirements of adopting non-PFAS alternatives.

■ Pets: Disease Control**Jayne Kirkham:**[\[4505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to prevent the use of neonicotinoid pesticides in off-the-shelf pet treatments.

Emma Hardy:

Whilst these substances have been authorised for pesticide use, their use in animals requires authorisation as veterinary medicinal products under a different legislative framework with differing factors coming into consideration. Parasiticides, such as those containing imidacloprid, play an essential role in protecting both animal and human health against fleas and ticks and their associated vector-borne diseases. The VMD also recognise the concerns regarding the potential contribution of flea and tick treatments to the levels of imidacloprid currently being detected in UK surface waters. The VMD is currently gathering evidence around this issue and has led on the formation of a cross-governmental Pharmaceuticals in the Environment (PiE) Group, with the aim is to develop a co-ordinated strategy to reduce the impacts of pharmaceuticals on the environment.

Jayne Kirkham:[\[4506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that (a) vets and pet owners have access to advice on the responsible use of pet parasiticides and (b) the (i) packaging, (ii) usage guidance and (iii) point of sale advice for flea and tick pet treatments warn pet owners of the danger to aquatic life of those products entering watercourses.

Emma Hardy:

The packing for the product and supporting product literature for veterinary medicines includes information on how to use the product as well as comprehensive safety information, including environmental safety, to ensure all potential risks are clearly

communicated to users, supporting the safe and responsible use of the product. In addition, the VMD and the Pharmaceuticals in the Environment cross-government group are working with stakeholders, including industry and veterinary professionals, to initiate industry-led stewardship to promote the responsible use of pet parasiticides. This initiative will prioritise communication on raising awareness around the appropriate use of these products.

■ **Pigs: Animal Welfare**

Andrew Rosindell:

[4520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timescale is for the delivery of animal health and welfare pathway grants to the pig farming sector.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government will work closely with the pig farming sector to deliver high standards of animal health and welfare. The Government is currently listening to farmers, as well as assessing data and information about what's working and what isn't before setting out detailed plans in relation to further grants.

■ **Poultry: Import Controls**

Alex Burghart:

[4762]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 3050 on Poultry: Import Controls, what certification is required to evidence that products are from unvaccinated ducks.

Daniel Zeichner:

Currently, imports of vaccinated ducks cannot be certified as the animal health requirements in the Import Health Certificates cannot be met. Standard certificates for imports of products of animal origin and live animals, available on GOV.UK, are used.

Traders are regularly updated through industry groups, and the Animal and Plant Health Agency addresses technical operational queries via exports@apha.gov.uk.

■ **Protected Site Management on Dartmoor Independent Review**

Sir Geoffrey Cox:

[4976]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to implement the recommendations of the report of the Independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor led by David Fursdon.

Rebecca Smith:

[5206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to implement the recommendations of the report of the Independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor led by David Fursdon.

Mary Creagh:

In April, the previous Government published the response to the independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor.

Central to that was agreeing to the recommendation of creating a land use management group for Dartmoor, to reinforce Dartmoor's existing governance - providing a place for cooperation and collaboration between key stakeholders and our arm's length bodies.

Following the general election, we are now in the process of appointing the independent chair of the group – with applications for the role closing on 3 September and interviews taking place shortly.

The new group will play a key role in delivering a Land Use Framework and land-use plan for Dartmoor, as well as the other recommendations attributed to the group in the government response.

Further information can be found on GOV.UK [here](#).

Public Footpaths**Rebecca Long Bailey:****[2931]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps is to promote (a) wider and (b) more accessible footpath access in (i) parks and (ii) other public spaces.

Mary Creagh:

Local authorities already consider the needs of those with mobility problems when managing the public rights of way network for the area they are responsible for. They are required to produce rights of way improvement plans which must set out how the public rights of way network will provide a better experience for users including those with mobility problems.

The King Charles III England Coast Path and the new Coast to Coast National Trail will be made as accessible as possible where it is feasible to do so.

Public Houses: Tiverton and Minehead**Rachel Gilmour:****[3567]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with the Exmoor National Park Authority on change of use for rural pubs in Tiverton and Minehead constituency.

Mary Creagh:

Planning permission is always required to change use of a pub, ensuring that local consideration can be given to any such proposals through the planning application process, in consultation with the local community. Defra cannot comment on individual planning cases.

■ Recycling

David Simmonds: [\[5409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to implement the policies set out in Annex A of the Government response to the consultation on Consistency in household and business recycling in England, updated on 21 November 2023.

Mary Creagh:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

By default, the primary legislation requires that the recyclable waste streams are collected in separate containers, unless this is technically or economically impracticable, or provides no significant environmental benefit. Regarding exemptions that were announced in the Simpler Recycling Government response in October 2023 and May 2024: further regulations would be required to implement these exemptions. Ministers are reviewing these policies; we hope to provide further certainty and clarity to stakeholders as soon as possible.

■ Rights of Way

Phil Brickell: [\[900424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to extend the right to roam.

Mary Creagh:

Our countryside and green spaces are a source of great national pride, but too many across the country are left without access to the great outdoors. That is why the last Labour Government expanded public access by introducing the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which provided the public a right of access to large areas of mountain, moor, heath, down, registered common land and coastal margin in England. 2024 marks 75 years since the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, which secured public access and preserved natural beauty.

This Government will continue to increase access to nature for families to enjoy, boosting people's mental and physical health and leaving a legacy for generations to come. We will create nine new National River Walks, plant three new National Forests and empower communities to create new parks and green spaces in their communities with a new Community Right to Buy. We will announce further details on our plans for improving access to nature in due course.

■ River Thames: Bridges

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[900427\]](#)

If he will meet the hon. Member for Henley and Thame and the Environment Agency to discuss the repair of Marsh Lock bridge on the Thames Path between Henley and Shiplake.

Emma Hardy:

I would be happy to meet with the honourable Member alongside the Environment Agency to discuss this matter.

■ **River Thames: Reading****Sarah Olney:****[5076]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of volumetric river flow rates corresponding to the locations of each gauging station on the Thames from Reading to Kingston.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency operates six river flow gauging stations on the River Thames between Reading and Kingston. These are located at Reading, Maidenhead, Windsor, Staines, Walton and Kingston. The recent daily mean flow at these sites on 11 September 2024 ranged from 12.0 to 28.7 cubic metres per second (m³/s).

River level and flow data can be found via the GOV.UK website:

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/hydrology>.

■ **River Thames: Reservoirs****Sarah Olney:****[5077]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the expected reservoir levels for each Lower Thames reservoir for drought events (a) 1:100 years, (b) 1:200 years and (c) 1:500 years.

Emma Hardy:

Public water supply reservoirs are the responsibility of the water companies. The Government has not made such estimates; however we are committed to improving water resilience and we are closely monitoring the delivery of their water resources management plans. Their plans set out how they will continue to provide secure water supplies in the long term.

■ **Rivers: Standards****Mr Joshua Reynolds:****[900430]**

What steps he is taking to improve the water quality of rivers.

Emma Hardy:

After 14 years of Conservative failure, we share the public's fury at the levels of sewage being released into our rivers, lakes and seas.

That is why this Government has introduced legislation to put the water companies under special measures to end their disgraceful behaviour. But this is not all we are doing.

We will outline further legislation to fundamentally transform how the water industry is run and speed up the delivery of upgrades to our sewage infrastructure to clean up our waterways for good.

■ Seafood: Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes**Melanie Onn:**[\[4748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what skills grants (a) are available and (b) he plans to make available for the seafood sector in Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

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

■ Sewage: Harpenden and Berkhamsted**Victoria Collins:**[\[4568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help tackle sewage discharges by Thames Water into chalk streams in Harpenden and Berkhamsted constituency.

Emma Hardy:

There are four wastewater treatment works (WwTW) operated by Thames Water that discharge to chalk streams in the Harpenden and Berkhamsted constituency.

Through the Water Industry National Environment Programme, improvements have been agreed for the three largest of these WwTWs, which account for over 99% of the effluent flow from these sites, including into chalk streams.

This is part of the Government's plans to transform the entire water sector, which has already started.

In July, we announced measures including ringfencing vital funding for infrastructure investment and placing customers and the environment at the heart of water company objectives.

In September, the Government introduced the Water (Special Measures) Bill to Parliament to give regulators new powers to take tougher and faster action to crack down on water companies damaging the environment and failing their customers.

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

■ Sewage: Shipley**Anna Dixon:**[\[4307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle sewage discharges into the River (a) Aire and (b) Wharfe in Shipley constituency.

Emma Hardy:

The Government has taken immediate and substantial action to address water companies who are not performing for the environment or their customers. In July, we announced swift action to begin resetting the water sector, including ringfencing vital funding for infrastructure investment and placing customers and the environment at the heart of water company objectives.

In September, Government introduced the Water (Special Measures) Bill to parliament to give regulators new powers to take tougher and faster action to crack down on water companies damaging the environment and failing their customers. 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](#).

■ Sewage: West Dorset**Edward Morello:****[5203]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data his Department holds on sewage discharges into the sea in West Dorset constituency in each of the last three years.

Emma Hardy:

[Wessex Water](#) and [South West Water](#) provide data on storm overflow discharges in near real time on their websites. 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 Government's Water (Special Measures) Bill will require independent event duration monitoring of all sewage outlets, to support greater scrutiny of water company activity.

Edward Morello:**[5204]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce sewage discharges by Wessex Water and South West water in West Dorset constituency.

Emma Hardy:

In the first week of the new Government, the Secretary of State met with water company bosses, including Wessex Water and South West Water, to make it clear that water firms will be held accountable for their performance for customers and the environment. During the meeting, water bosses signed up to the Government's initial package of reforms to reduce sewage pollution and attract investment to upgrade infrastructure.

This Government has also introduced legislation that will allow us to put water companies under special measures, bring criminal charges against persistent law-breaking water executives, and ban the payment of bonuses to executives of water

companies who pollute our waterways. This bill will deliver the most significant increase in enforcement powers in a decade.

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

■ **Swimming: Regulation**

Julia Buckley: [\[4104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the press notice entitled Record number of new bathing sites get the go ahead, published on 13 May 2024, whether he plans to publish a consultation on bathing water regulations.

Emma Hardy:

Bathing waters are one of the most visible ways in which the public interacts with the water environment. The Government recognises that there have been increasing changes to how and where people use bathing waters. Ministers are currently working through priorities and options for future reform of the bathing water system.

■ **Thames Water**

Charlie Maynard: [\[4321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps with Ofwat to place Thames Water in special administration.

Ayoub Khan: [\[4332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing Thames Water into special administration.

Emma Hardy:

The Government and Ofwat – the financial regulator for the water sector – are carefully monitoring the situation, and Ofwat continues to engage with Thames Water.

The company remains stable, and it would be inappropriate to comment in detail on hypotheticals – however it is important to provide reassurance that the Government is prepared for all scenarios across all our regulated industries – as any government should be.

■ **Trapping**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[4522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what is his planned timescale for introducing legislation to ban the use of snares in England.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[4558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the merits of the use of snares.

Mary Creagh:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation. As outlined in our manifesto, we will bring an end to the use of snare traps. We are considering the most effective way to deliver this commitment and will be setting out next steps in due course.

Sarah Champion: [\[4721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to end the use of snare traps by 1st January 2025.

Mary Creagh:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation. As outlined in our manifesto, we will bring an end to the use of snare traps. We are considering the most effective way to deliver this commitment and will be setting out next steps in due course.

■ Tree Planting: Northern Ireland**Jim Shannon:** [\[4719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that Northern Ireland is included in the free tree scheme this year.

Mary Creagh:

Forestry is a devolved matter. Responsibility for tree planting in Northern Ireland is led by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). Defra regularly coordinates with DAERA. There are a number of tree planting schemes in Northern Ireland provided by non-governmental organisations.

■ Water Abstraction: Teddington**Sarah Olney:** [\[3763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Teddington Direct River Abstraction project on water quality in its vicinity; and if he will take steps to ensure the adequacy of water quality for swimming in that area.

Emma Hardy:

Teddington Direct River Abstraction (DRA) is a water recycling scheme considered in Thames Water's draft Water Resources Management Plan 2024 (dWRMP24) and Water Resources South East's (WRSE) Regional Plan as a supply option for 2030/31.

The Environment Agency has scrutinised WRSE's plan and has responded to Thames Water's DWRMP24. Any scheme developed will have to meet environmental requirements. The scheme will need environmental permits that the Environment Agency regulate, and planning consents where the Environment Agency is a statutory consultee.

For Teddington DRA proposal to be taken forward Thames Water will be required to obtain an abstraction license and permit to discharge from the Environment Agency. These set out the conditions under which abstraction is authorised to take place and the standards to which the discharged effluent must be treated, ensuring it is treated to a high standard to meet environmental quality standards and ensure water quality in the Thames does not deteriorate. Thames Water will need to ensure any tertiary water treatment for Teddington DRA meets those regulatory requirements and the Environment Agency will regularly inspect Thames Water to ensure that permit standards are met.

Sarah Olney:

[4010]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with Thames Water on the definition of best value in the context of the Teddington DRA and Water Resource Management plan.

Emma Hardy:

The Teddington Direct River Abstraction scheme has been selected by Thames Water in its Water Resources Management Plan from one of 2,400 options modelled at a regional level, by Water Resources South East. The options were put through an options appraisal process to develop a preferred best value plan. Both the Environment Agency and Ofwat have assessed the plan.

Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales and Ofwat joint guidance sets out how water companies should consider assessing best value in their Water Resources Management Plans. It can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-resources-planning-guideline/water-resources-planning-guideline#section-9--aspects-to-consider-in-compiling-a-best-value-plan>.

■ Water Charges: Infrastructure

Chris Bloore:

[900432]

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

Emma Hardy:

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. If that money is not spent, it will be refunded to customers – not diverted for bonuses, shareholder payouts or salary increases.

■ Water Companies

Charlie Maynard: [\[4320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether it is his policy that water companies in breach of their operating licence are able to continue to operate with no material sanction.

Ayoub Khan: [\[4333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what criteria his Department uses to assess whether a water company should lose its licence.

Emma Hardy:

Ofwat, as the independent economic regulator, carries out its work in the manner it considers best meets its duties, including its duty to secure that water companies properly carry out their functions.

Where companies have failed to meet statutory or licence obligations, Ofwat is responsible for enforcing. Ofwat have the power to take action through an enforcement order or financial penalty (up to 10% of a company's relevant annual turnover).

The ultimate enforcement tool is an application for special administration. The Secretary of State, or Ofwat with the consent of the Secretary of State can apply to the High Court for a special administration order. The High Court can only make a special administration order in certain circumstances, including where it is satisfied that:

- There has been or is likely to be a contravention of a principal duty (i.e. The general duties under sections 37 and 94 of the Water Industry Act 1991) or
- an enforcement order where, in either case, it is serious enough to make it inappropriate for the company to continue to hold its appointment or licence; or
- the company is or is likely to be unable to pay its debts.

■ Water Companies: Criminal Proceedings

Amanda Martin: [\[4574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to enable criminal charges to be brought against water company executives who persistently break the law.

Emma Hardy:

The Water (Special Measures) Bill delivers on the Government's commitment to bring criminal charges against persistent lawbreakers.

Through the Bill, the maximum penalty for obstruction of investigations by the regulators will be strengthened to include imprisonment for up to two years in all cases, and it will be possible for cases to be heard either in the Crown Court or the Magistrates Court. In addition, the Bill will provide for potential imprisonment where

the obstruction is attributable to the consent, connivance or neglect of a senior officer of the company.

■ Water Companies: Regulation

Manuela Perteghella:

[3398]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of Ofwat in regulating water companies.

Emma Hardy:

The previous Government weakened the regulators and failed to hold water companies to account.

The new Government's water (Special Measures) Bill will give Ofwat tough new powers to hold water companies to account where they do not deliver for customers and the environment.

This Bill is just the start of the fundamental and much broader transformation that the Government will lead for the water industry.

The Government will carry out a review to shape further legislation that will fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good.

■ Water Supply: Housing

Ayoub Khan:

[4331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure a (a) secure and (b) affordable water supply for households.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is committed to a twin track approach to improving water supply resilience. This involves action to reduce water company leaks and improve water efficiency, alongside investing in new supply infrastructure, including new reservoirs and water transfers.

Water companies have statutory duties to provide secure water supplies, efficiently and economically. Most water companies are currently finalising their statutory Water Resources Management Plans, which set out how they will provide secure water supplies sustainably for at least twenty-five years into the future. A summary of the draft plans is available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-review-of-englands-draft-regional-and-water-resources-management-plans>

Officials are currently considering a range of options for improving the affordability of water bills, focusing on improving the fairness and effectiveness of affordability support across England and Wales. Additionally, all water companies have measures in place for people who struggle to pay for their water and wastewater service and should ensure that their customers know what support schemes are available and how to use them if they need help.

■ Water Supply: West Sussex**Andrew Griffith:****[4054]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the likelihood of future water supply shortages in West Sussex.

Emma Hardy:

Water companies have a statutory duty to provide a supply of wholesome water under the Water Industry Act 1991 and associated water quality regulations. Companies must ensure continuation of their water distribution functions during an emergency and are required to plan to provide alternative supplies in the event of a loss of normal supply. As set out in Security and Emergency Measures Direction (SEMD) 2022, in the event of an unavoidable failure of piped supply, water companies must ensure that a minimum supply is provided by alternative means. The Drinking Water Inspectorate lead on assurance and enforcement of SEMD.

Water companies have statutory requirements to consult, publish and maintain Water Resources Management Plans, which set out how they will provide secure water supplies for at least twenty-five years into the future. We expect Southern Water to consult on a revised draft plan later this month. The draft plan will be assessed by water regulators, including the Environment Agency and Ofwat to ensure Southern Water make appropriate improvements.

Subject to an eight-week consultation on changes to the Guaranteed Standards Scheme, Government proposals will increase – and in most cases double – reimbursement which water company customers are entitled to when key standards are not met by water companies, including in incidents of supply interruption.

■ Wines: East of England**James Cartlidge:****[4229]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support East Anglian wine producers.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is committed to supporting rural economies and ensuring the UK has a thriving and diverse economy that promotes local jobs and boosts growth.

The English wine sector is one of the fastest growing agricultural sectors, which continues to attract domestic and foreign investment. Defra works closely with the sector to support its ambitions and drive growth and exports. This in turns helps to provide high-quality jobs in rural communities.

■ Wood-burning Stoves

David Simmonds:

[\[5227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) banning and (b) further regulating wood burning stoves in domestic dwellings.

Emma Hardy:

Domestic wood burning stoves make a significant contribution to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) emissions nationally, with implications for the health of everyone exposed to smoke. Defra is currently considering options for action to reduce the impact of wood burning stoves on people's health and to meet our statutory targets for this pollutant.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Aid Workers: Crimes of Violence

Chris Law:

[\[4741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help (a) support the safety of and (b) increase accountability for attacks on humanitarian workers.

Anneliese Dodds:

The FCDO supports the safety of humanitarian workers by investing in protective measures that our partners need to safely work, championing International Humanitarian Law, and using UK seats at key multilateral fora to raise awareness and promote accountability. The Minister for Development reinforces these efforts through bilateral and diplomatic engagement, including in meetings with multilateral organisations and senior government representatives from other countries where humanitarian workers are at risk. In addition, the UK co-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 2730, which reaffirms parties' obligations under international law to protect all humanitarian personnel as well as humanitarian premises and assets. This resolution also establishes a regular reporting mechanism to: highlight the issue at the Security Council, provide recommendations on measures to protect and enhance the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, and promote accountability for unlawful attacks.

Chris Law:

[\[4742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to implement the recommendations of the 15th Special Report of Session 2017-19 of the International Development Committee on Tackling violence against aid workers, HC 2691, published on 10 October 2019.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK welcomed the IDC's report on Tackling violence against aid workers. Its recommendations are closely aligned with the UK's approach to this issue. This

includes multi-year funding for the International NGO Safety Organization to support risk analysis and safety advice for frontline agencies, as well as research into the impacts of attacks on female health care workers in armed conflict. The FCDO works to leverage UK diplomatic reach and influence to enhance humanitarian access and the protection of humanitarian personnel. The UK also used its seat at the UN Security Council to co-sponsor UNSCR 2730 which reaffirms states' obligations under International Law to protect humanitarian personnel and promotes accountability for unlawful attacks.

■ Azerbaijan: Human Rights

Chris Law: [\[4729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the Azerbaijani government's (a) human rights record and (b) treatment of political dissidents.

Chris Law: [\[4730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to help safeguard human rights defenders in Azerbaijan (a) before, (b) during and (c) after COP29.

Stephen Doughty:

Along with our international partners, we continue to urge Azerbaijan to improve human rights protections for all its citizens. Azerbaijan's hosting of COP29 in November provides the country with an opportunity to demonstrate meaningful action in this regard to the world. The UK remains concerned at the increased number of detentions of independent journalists, human rights defenders and civil society representatives over the last year. The UK government is clear that freedom of expression is the foundation of an open, pluralistic society, and must be respected.

■ Azerbaijan: Prisoners

Chris Law: [\[4733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for his policies of (a) arbitrary detention of prisoners in Azerbaijan and (b) reports of human rights abuses in prisons in that country.

Chris Law: [\[4734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Azerbaijani counterpart on (a) arbitrary detention of prisoners in Azerbaijan and (b) reports of human rights abuses in prisons in that country.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK government remains concerned at reports of serious allegations of severe acts of ill-treatment and torture in prisons in Azerbaijan. We continue to urge the

authorities to ensure that those in detention are treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, in line with international human rights law, and that those in detention are afforded a fair trial and are provided safe conditions, in accordance with Azerbaijan's international obligations and commitments.

■ Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement

Damien Egan:

[\[5218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of 25 April 2024 by the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Official Report, column 387WH, what steps his Department is taking to ratify the Global Ocean Treaty in time for the UN Ocean Conference in June 2025.

Anneliese Dodds:

Ratification of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) is in line with this Government's determination to reinvigorate the UK's wider international leadership on climate and nature, and we are fully committed to doing so. Legislation to implement the BBNJ Agreement to allow ratification will be introduced as soon as the legislative timetable allows.

■ China: Foreign Relations

Sarah Champion:

[\[5058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his planned timetable is for the audit of the UK-China bilateral relationship; and what topics that audit will consider.

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. An audit of the UK's relationship with China will improve the UK's capability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities. A timeline for the audit is to be determined.

■ Climate Change: Finance

Chris Law:

[\[4746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of the £40 million pledged to the Loss and Damage Fund has been disbursed; and what his Department's priorities are for loss and damage funding.

Anneliese Dodds:

At COP28 the UK pledged up to £40 million in funding for the newly established Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (FrLD). UK officials are working with other members of the FrLD board, the World Bank and civil society, to quickly establish an efficient and effective fund that delivers for those who are particularly vulnerable to the worst impacts of climate change. We are working through the Board to finalise arrangements to enable donors to make payments into the Fund. Our wider priorities for L&D funding are in line with our broader commitments on aid spending and climate finance.

Colombia: Health Services**Jim Shannon:**[\[4713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Colombian counterpart on sustainable access to medical services for people in that country.

Catherine West:

The UK and Colombia work closely together on health as part of our commitment to the sustainability development goals. We are working to strengthen the capacity of public health systems in Colombia, including access issues. We recognise the importance of regulatory frameworks providing businesses with the confidence to innovate and invest in medical services, including robust intellectual property regimes. Our work on preventing sexual violence in conflict also focuses on medical services for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, where the UK provides targeted specialised psychosocial support in Colombia.

Development Aid: Climate Change**Chris Law:**[\[4743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish his Department's plan for meeting its international climate finance targets in the 2025-26 financial year.

Anneliese Dodds:

All spending plans will be determined through the ongoing spending review process.

Chris Law:[\[4744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to track the delivery of climate finance to (a) least developed countries, (b) fragile and conflict-affected states and (c) small island developing states.

Anneliese Dodds:

We are working through the UK co-chaired Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance, which includes the new UK-funded Centre for Access to Climate Finance, and through the UK-convened Climate & Development Ministerial process to press for better tracking of finance delivered to climate vulnerable countries. The Taskforce's

Principles and Recommendations are clear that climate finance should be more transparent and yield measurable progress towards delivering recipient countries' climate capabilities and goals.

Chris Law:

[\[4745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of his Department's international climate finance was allocated to fragile and conflict-affected states in (a) 2023-24, (b) 2022-23 and (c) 2021-22.

Anneliese Dodds:

UK International Climate Finance (ICF) is delivered through a range of multilateral, multi-donor and bilateral programmes, many of which operate across more than one country. Including only bilateral programmes that operate in identified fragile and conflict affected states (based on World Bank analysis) the UK spent £98 million ICF in 2021/22 and £56 million ICF in 2022/23. Figures for 2023/24 are not yet finalised.

■ **Foreign Relations: Iran**

John Glen:

[\[5005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Joint statement on the Middle East, published on 12 August 2024, if he will publish a list of the allies of Iran.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Iran continues to proliferate advanced weaponry, alongside providing financial and political support to its proxies and partners including Lebanese Hizballah, Hamas, the Houthis and other groups in Iraq and Syria. Since 7 October, these groups have conducted hundreds of attacks on Israel, Counter-Daesh Coalition forces and commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

Furthermore, Iran's recent transfer of ballistic missiles to Russia, is a significant escalation of Iran's military support to Russia. It will prolong the war, and cause greater suffering to the Ukrainian people.

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

Rupert Lowe:

[\[5189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many positions in his Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Catherine West:

FCDO does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the Department's annual report and accounts.

■ Gaza: Health Services**Paula Barker:**[\[5127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the UK responds adequately to the humanitarian crisis of the collapsed healthcare system in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK Government is concerned about the worsening humanitarian context in Gaza. The FCDO is closely monitoring the impact of the conflict, including on health. We recently announced £5.5 million for UK-Med to support the ongoing work of its field hospitals and the rehabilitation of the emergency department at Nasser Hospital in Gaza. Since the start of the 2024/25 Financial Year we have also provided additional funding to humanitarian agencies including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (£21 million) and UNICEF (£6 million) for their activities, which include healthcare. We welcome the news that the UN's polio vaccine campaign is now underway, and that the UK's funding to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative is supporting delivery. We continue to press Israel to increase humanitarian access, including health and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) relief items.

■ Gubad Ibadoghlu**Chris Law:**[\[4731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Azerbaijani counterpart on the detention of Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu in Baku.

Chris Law:[\[4732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to secure the release of Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu from detention in Azerbaijan.

Stephen Doughty:

Since Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu's arrest in July 2023, the UK has consistently advocated for appropriate medical access and treatment, and the right to a fair legal process. Following his arrest, the UK released a joint statement with the US, France and Germany calling for the Azerbaijani government to protect the freedoms and human rights of its citizens, including Dr Ibadoghlu:

<https://twitter.com/ukinazerbaijan/status/1684428817333383168?s=20> .

The UK also raised these concerns during Azerbaijan's Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council in November 2023. The UK has consistently called on the Azerbaijani Government to protect the freedoms and human rights of all of its citizens, and we will continue to work to ensure Dr Ibadoghlu's rights are upheld.

■ Hong Kong: British National (Overseas)**Katie White:** [\[5168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure the Hong Kong government recognises the British National (Overseas) passport.

Catherine West:

The UK will continue to stand up for the rights of the people of Hong Kong, as we have demonstrated by introducing the bespoke immigration route for British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holders and their eligible family members.

■ International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace**Daisy Cooper:** [\[4825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken with international partners to establish an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

This government has prioritised working to end this conflict and secure the safe release of hostages, in co-ordination with international partners, since day one. We will continue to use every diplomatic lever to bring about a ceasefire deal as the first step towards long-term peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians, and the wider region. The Foreign Secretary has raised the issue of securing long-term peace in all his meetings with counterparts across the region, in addition to the US, Germany, and France. The UK will play our full diplomatic role in ending this conflict and creating a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

■ Israel: Arms Trade**Chris Hinchliff:** [\[4304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to encourage (a) the USA and (b) Europe to review the risk of their arms exports to Israel being used to commit serious violations of international law.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK has some of the most robust export licencing criteria in the world, which states that the Government will not issue export licences if there is a clear risk that the items might be used in violations of International Humanitarian Law. We have deemed that there is such a risk and have taken the necessary decision under our domestic legislation. The Foreign Secretary made an Oral Statement to update the House on this decision on 2 September. Other countries have their own processes. We will continue to work closely with our allies, including the USA and European countries, on Middle East issues, including the crucial priority of a ceasefire.

Esther McVey:

[5053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the legal advice upon which he relied to block arms exports to Israel.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Government has published a summary of the international humanitarian law (IHL) process, used to assess and review Israel's compliance with IHL. This summary was informed by legal advice, and alongside the Foreign Secretary's Oral Statement, it outlines the decision and instances where we have deemed there are risks that UK arms might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of IHL. This shows an unprecedented level of transparency about a decision of this nature.[\[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summary-of-the-international-humanitarian-law-ihl-process-decision-and-the-factors-taken-into-account#:~:text=The%20government%20has%20conducted%20a%20thorough%20review%20of%20Israel%E2%80%99s%20compliance\]](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).

■ Israel: Palestinians

Ben Lake:

[4410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on violence against Palestinian civilians.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

[Holding answer 11 September 2024]: We are clear that International Humanitarian Law and the rules-based order must be upheld, and civilians protected. From the Prime Minister down, we have repeatedly urged Israel to improve aid access, minimise civilian casualties and engage seriously with negotiations for a ceasefire deal.

Given the grave concerns about the conduct and consequences of the war in Gaza for civilians, on day one in office, the Foreign Secretary commissioned a thorough review into Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law. The review concluded that there is a *clear risk* that some items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as part of Israel's military operations in Gaza, and - in line with domestic legislation - suspended these exports. The Foreign Secretary set out this decision to the House on 2 September. The Foreign Secretary spoke with Israeli Foreign Minister Katz on 2 September, and on 3 September spoke with Israeli Ambassador Tzipi Hotovely, to discuss the UK's review of export licenses.

The Government will continue to use every diplomatic lever to bring about a ceasefire. It is clear that a ceasefire would not only protect civilians in Gaza, but also pave the way for wider de-escalation and bring much needed stability for the Middle East.

Paula Barker:

[\[4443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of recent Israeli military activity in the West Bank.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

[Holding answer 11 September 2024]: The UK is concerned by the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) ongoing military operation in the occupied West Bank and attacks by Palestinian militants. We recognise Israel's need to defend itself against security threats, but we are worried by the methods Israel has employed and by reports of civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. The risk of instability is serious and the need for de-escalation urgent. As our statement on 30 August made clear, we continue to call on the Israeli authorities to exercise restraint, adhere to international law, and clamp down on the actions of those who seek to inflame tensions.

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[\[4515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will raise the case of Alice Kisiya with his Israeli counterpart; and what diplomatic steps he is taking to help protect land rights of Palestinians.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

[Holding answer 11 September 2024]: The UK's position is clear. Settlements are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We recognise settlements have reached record levels in the past year and have been accompanied by an increase in settler violence. We urge Israel to take greater action to hold violent settlers to account. During his visit in July, the Foreign Secretary met Palestinians displaced in the West Bank. He was horrified to hear of acts of violence carried out by settlers. The UK has sanctioned eight people and two entities responsible for perpetrating, inciting, and promoting human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank. While we do not comment on specific cases, we keep all these issues under review, and we discuss them with our closest allies. The Foreign Secretary was clear with PM Netanyahu on his visit to Israel and the OPTs (July 2024) that the Israeli government must clamp down on settler violence and end settlement expansion.

■ Israeli Settlements

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[\[4512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on recent Israeli settlements in the Al Makhroun area of Beit Jala in the occupied West Bank.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

[Holding answer 11 September 2024]: The Foreign Secretary has raised the UK's concerns about settlement expansion and settlers with Israeli Ministers. The UK's position is clear. Settlements are illegal under international law, present an obstacle

to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. During his visit in July, the Foreign Secretary met Palestinians displaced in the West Bank. He was horrified to hear of acts of violence carried out by settlers. 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.

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[4513]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the increase in Israeli settlement expansion and the depopulation of Palestinian villages in the occupied West Bank.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

[Holding answer 11 September 2024]: The UK's position is clear. Settlements are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We recognise settlements have reached record levels in the past year and there has been an increase in settler violence. We urge Israel to take greater action to hold violent settlers to account. During his visit in July, the Foreign Secretary met Palestinians displaced in the West Bank. He was horrified to hear of acts of violence carried out by settlers. The Israeli Government has seized more of the West Bank in 2024 than in the past 20 years. This is completely unacceptable. 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 UK has sanctioned eight people and two entities responsible for perpetrating, inciting, and promoting human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank. We keep all these issues under review, and we discuss them with our closest allies.

■ **Jagtar Singh Johal**

Graham Leadbitter:

[4305]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will publicly call for the release of Jagtar Singh Johal.

Catherine West:

The UK Government is absolutely committed to pushing the Government of India for faster progress in resolving Jagtar Singh Johal's case. The Foreign Secretary raised concerns on multiple occasions with the Government of India, including regarding Mr Johal's allegations of torture. Most recently, he raised Mr Johal's case with Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on 24 July during his first official visit to India in this role. Consular staff regularly visit Mr Johal to check on his welfare, most recently on 21 August.

■ Jimmy Lai

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[4961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of (a) threats made against Jimmy Lai's international legal team and (b) other aspects of the UN Secretary General's report on Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, A/HRC/57/60, published on 20 August 2024.

Catherine West:

Any attempts to coerce, intimidate or harm those who cooperate with the United Nations, are unacceptable. The UK unequivocally condemns each and every act of intimidation or reprisal.

We are carefully reviewing the UN's report on 'Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights' and will respond to the report during the current session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

■ Jordan: Refugees

Stephen Gethins: [\[4368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help support (a) refugees and (b) host communities in Jordan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Jordan has shown tremendous generosity in hosting an estimated 1.3 million Syrian refugees in addition to 2.3 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA. UK support to Jordan includes humanitarian aid, and investment in education, social protection and job opportunities, reaching both refugees and vulnerable Jordanians. FCDO Minister of State for Development Anneliese Dodds visited Jordan on 7-8 August and reaffirmed UK's commitment to supporting Jordan and the refugees it hosts. UK funding allows refugees to live in safety and with dignity until they are able to eventually return home. We acknowledge the increased pressure placed on local services for Jordanian communities.

■ Journalism: Protection

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[5064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps with his international counterparts to negotiate a UN convention on the protection of journalists.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK already works through existing UN conventions and mechanisms which require states to uphold rights that address the key risks faced by journalists. The UK also works through the Media Freedom Coalition to champion the protection of journalists. In 2022 the UK renewed our commitment to the UN Plan of Action for the

Safety of Journalists, and we support the Council of Europe's Journalism Matters campaign for the safety of journalists launched in 2023. The UK has contributed £2.8 million to the UNESCO Global Media Defence Fund in the last 4 years.

■ Lebanon: Politics and Government

Jim Shannon:

[\[4717\]](#)

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 political situation in Lebanon.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK wants to see Lebanon stable, secure, and prosperous. We are working with the authorities to support the efforts of a caretaker government to safeguard Lebanon's stability and set the country on the path to recovery, but we are clear that these efforts are undermined by the ongoing Presidential vacuum. The government of Lebanon urgently needs to end the political deadlock and appoint a President who can deliver the reforms necessary to solve the country's economic and security crises and agree a political solution to de-escalate tensions across the Blue Line boundary with Israel. Ministers frequently raise this with Lebanese interlocutors. The Foreign Secretary emphasised the need for a president to Prime Minister Mikati and Foreign Minister Bou Habib during his visit to Lebanon in August and Minister Falconer most recently raised it with Lebanon's Acting Central Bank Governor on 5 September.

■ Montserrat: Development Aid

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[4616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the development of (a) transport and (b) utilities infrastructure in Montserrat.

Stephen Doughty:

The FCDO is funding a £40 million capital investment programme in Montserrat which includes improvements to the road network and airport, as well as funding the new port. The FCDO is working with the Governor and Government of Montserrat on how to improve access to the island. The Government of Montserrat is running an exercise, supported by UK experts, to understand options for flight operators, as well as a procurement process to ascertain interest in operating a longer-term ferry service.

In 2023, the FCDO provided funding to procure additional generators and earlier this year committed an additional £7 million to improve and modernise the power and water systems. The Department for Energy and Net Zero, and the Department for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs have also been providing expertise to the Government of Montserrat to support the design of a long-term renewables-based energy system.

■ Palestinians: Christianity**Mary Kelly Foy:** [\[4934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to take steps to support Palestinian Christians.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK will continue to champion freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, globally. We are clear that incitement of violence or hatred against individuals based on their religion or belief is unacceptable. Respect for FoRB, and the promotion of interreligious dialogue, plays an important role in securing sustainable peace. Our Consulate General in Jerusalem regularly meets and discusses issues with the Christian community in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

■ Republic of Ireland: Foreign Relations**Adam Jogee:** [\[3485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the strength of the British/Irish relationship.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary spoke to the Tánaiste Micheál Martin on 5 July when he set out how the government was looking forward to resetting the bilateral relationship with Ireland. He looks forward to visiting Dublin in the near future, as do I, which I made clear to my Irish counterpart - Minister Jennifer Carroll MacNeill - when we spoke on 2 September. The Prime Minister hosted the Taoiseach at Chequers in July where they agreed to a UK-Ireland Summit in early 2025; they met again in Dublin on 7 September to agree priorities for the Summit. Ireland is the UK's nearest neighbour and sixth largest trading partner, and we are committed to ensuring UK/Ireland relations continue to go from strength to strength.

■ Sanctions: Russia**Mike Martin:** [\[4500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his policy is on the ownership of interests in UK oil and gas companies by sanctioned Russians.

Stephen Doughty:

If the UK sanctions an individual, their UK assets are frozen. Sanctioned individuals cannot access frozen funds or obtain any financial benefit (including from ownership of interests in UK companies) without HMT/OFSI granting a licence.

Additionally, the National Security and Investment Act allows HMG to intervene in transactions that threaten national security.

■ Sudan: Armed Conflict**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[4606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Sudanese counterpart on the ongoing civil war.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK continues to pursue all diplomatic avenues to end the violence in Sudan. FCDO officials regularly engage the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF), as well as a wide range of civil society actors to further the UK's objectives in Sudan: securing a ceasefire and creating the conditions for the resumption of democratic, civilian-led government; ensuring humanitarian aid can be delivered to all those in need; and protecting civilians.

Within his first month in office, Lord Collins spoke with Ramtane Lamamra, the Secretary-General of the United Nations' Personal Envoy to Sudan and former Sudanese PM Abdalla Hamdok to stress the importance of a coordinated international response to resolve the conflict. On 24 July, the Foreign Secretary publicly called upon the warring parties to commit to the ceasefire talks hosted by the US, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Switzerland and condemned the fact that the SAF did not physically attend. I [Minister Dodds] have met with representatives of the Emergency Response Rooms at the forefront of the humanitarian response in Sudan. On my trip to the region, in South Sudan I spoke to refugees to better understand the challenges they face. Additionally in Addis Ababa, I met with representatives of Sudanese civil society and with the African Union to discuss how to further our objectives on Sudan.

■ Tony Blair Institute for Global Change**Sir John Hayes:**[\[4589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Ministers in his Department have met representatives of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change since 5 July 2024.

Catherine West:

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

Ministers confirmed a nil return to meetings with representatives of Tony Blair Institute for Global Change since 5 July 2024.

■ UNRWA: Finance**David Simmonds:**[\[2560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to monitor the likelihood of his Department's funding reaching

Hamas through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary noted in his statement to the House of Commons on 19 July 2024, that the UN had taken the allegations that United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) staff were involved in the 7 October Hamas terrorist attack seriously. He is reassured after Catherine Colonna's independent review, that UNRWA is ensuring the highest standards of neutrality.

£1 million of the £21 million of new UK funding to UNRWA will support it to implement the management reforms recommended by the review. We continue to monitor UNRWA's implementation. Separately, a Memorandum of Understanding governs UK financial support to UNRWA. The FCDO carries out due diligence assessments and conducts an annual assessment of UK funding to UNRWA.

■ **Venezuela: Elections**

Sammy Wilson:

[\[4345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to his Venezuelan counterpart on taking steps to allow a democratic and peaceful transition following the recent 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.

■ West Bank: Violence**Laura Kyrke-Smith:**[\[4514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the reported (a) use of violence and (b) detention of Palestinian land owners in the West Bank by Israeli (i) settlers and (ii) soldiers.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

[Holding answer 11 September 2024]: The UK's position is clear. Settlements are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We recognise settlements have reached record levels in the past year and there has been an increase in settler violence. We urge Israel to take greater action to hold violent settlers to account. 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 UK has sanctioned eight people and two entities responsible for perpetrating, inciting, and promoting human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank. We keep all these issues under review and we discuss them with our closest allies.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Alan Milburn****John Glen:**[\[5014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Mr Alan Milburn is a Ministerial or departmental adviser; and what meetings Mr Milburn has had with Ministers since the general election.

Karin Smyth:

Whilst Alan Milburn is neither a Ministerial nor Departmental adviser, he is a Privy Councillor and a former Secretary of State for Health. As my rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, stated in Parliament on 9 September 2024, details of meetings will be published on GOV.UK in the usual manner.

■ Allergies: Children**Jim Shannon:**[\[5054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) medical researchers and (b) other professionals on trends in the level of severe allergies in children in the last 10 years; and steps his Department is taking to screen more children for severe allergies.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is strongly committed to supporting research into all aspects of human health, including research into allergies. The Department funds research on

health and social care through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health. These are judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality, and the NIHR will work with researchers to facilitate the development of good-quality proposals that will move the evidence base forward.

An Expert Advisory Group for Allergy (EAGA) was established in 2023, and brings together key stakeholders, including clinical organisations, with the aim improving the quality-of-life of people with allergies. Chaired jointly by the Department and the National Allergy Strategy Group, the EAGA identifies priority areas for the Department, NHS England, and other Government departments and agencies relating to allergies that require policy change or development, and advises on how to best achieve improved outcomes.

The Department has also held a number of meetings with the National Allergy Research Foundation (NARF) to discuss both the research and policy aspects of allergies. The NARF is a charity with a mission to make allergy history through pioneering scientific and medical research, to change the lives of those living with allergies, starting with food allergies.

Blood and skin allergy tests can detect a patient's sensitivity to common allergens, including food allergens, and advice on the circumstances under which such tests should be offered are contained in the guidance, Food allergy in under 19s: assessment and diagnosis [CG116], published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). The NICE maintains surveillance of new evidence that may affect its published guidance, and would consult on proposed changes if significant new evidence were to emerge.

■ Blood Cancer

Dan Garden:

[\[4539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the recommendations of Blood Cancer UK's Action Plan.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has not made a formal assessment of the potential implications of its policies based on the recommendations of Blood Cancer UK's Action Plan.

However, we will get the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster. This is supported by NHS England's key ambition on cancer to meet the Faster Diagnosis Standard, which sets a target of 28 days from urgent referral by a general practitioner or screening programme to patients being told that they have cancer, or that cancer is ruled out.

The Department is committed to implementing the recommendations of the Lord O'Shaughnessy review into commercial clinical trials, making sure that the United

Kingdom leads the world in clinical trials, and to ensure that innovative, lifesaving treatments are accessible to NHS patients, including those with blood cancer.

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

■ **Cancer: Young People**

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[4531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the specialised (a) challenges and (b) needs of young cancer patients are met.

Andrew Gwynne:

In Spring 2024, the Department ran several workshops with colleagues in the health system, committed to improving cancer care for children and young people. The workshops identified key issues for exploration, and ministers are considering next steps to progress this important work.

■ **Cervical Cancer: Older People**

Munira Wilson: [\[4935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of recorded cases of cervical cancer in patients over the age of 65 in the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

The National Disease Registration Service publishes cancer registration statistics annually, as Accredited Official Statistics. The information requested is therefore available at the following link:

https://www.cancerdata.nhs.uk/incidence_and_mortality

The interactive dashboard provides the most recent data available to 2020 which represents completed disease registration. The data is broken down by age and types of cervical cancer.

■ **Clinical Waste: East of England**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[4476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what percentage of medical waste incineration capacity is underutilised in the East of England.

Karin Smyth:

We do not hold the information in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Siân Berry:

[\[5236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and (b) other experts on the potential merits of offering the Covid-19 booster vaccine to frontline healthcare workers over 65 years old.

Andrew Gwynne:

As with all United Kingdom vaccination programmes, the decision on which groups are eligible for a particular part of the programme is only made following careful consideration of the groups most at risk of illness, severe illness, or death, as a consequence of infection. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to the following individuals in autumn 2024:

- adults aged 65 years old and over;
- residents in a care home for older adults; and
- persons aged six months to 64 years old in a clinical risk group, as defined in the COVID-19 chapter of the Green Book.

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care accepted the JCVI's advice for COVID-19 vaccination in autumn 2024, and so COVID-19 vaccination will be offered to all adults aged 65 years old and over in the upcoming campaign.

■ Covid-19 Inquiry

Paula Barker:

[\[5128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timeframe is for implementing recommendations of the covid-19 inquiry.

Andrew Gwynne:

The COVID-19 Inquiry's first report, which covered resilience and preparedness, was published on 18 July 2024, and makes 10 recommendations for the Government. As the Prime Minister's written ministerial statement to Parliament said, the Government will carefully consider the findings and recommendations of the report in the context of the Government's overall approach to resilience. The Cabinet Office is leading this work and co-ordinating across all departments, including the Department of Health and Social Care. The full Government response will be published within six months.

■ Dementia: Mental Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[\[3701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to develop intervention strategies which tackle poor psychological wellbeing as a contributory factor to the development of dementia.

Stephen Kinnock:

Depression and social isolation are risk factors for developing dementia. They can be caused by, or contribute to, poor psychological wellbeing. By tackling these factors, we will therefore support wellbeing and reduce the risk of developing dementia.

We deliver dementia research via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR invested £2.9 million to develop an app that will address identified risk factors for dementia, including depression and social isolation.

NHS Talking Therapies provide treatment to adults with common mental health conditions including depression. People can self-refer to NHS Talking Therapies Services or be referred by their general practitioner. We will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, easing pressure on busy mental health services.

Social prescribing is a key component of the National Health Service's Universal Personalised Care. Social prescribing link workers take a holistic approach to people's health and wellbeing. They connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support.

■ Dental Services: Colne Valley**Paul Davies:****[5213]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of dentistry practices that are accepting NHS patients in Colne Valley constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

As of 4 September 2024, there were nine National Health Service dentist practices in the Colne Valley constituency, and none of them were showing as 'accepting new adult patients when availability allows'. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-Dentist>

NHS dentists are required to update their NHS website profiles at least every 90 days, to ensure patients have up-to-date information on where they can access care.

■ Dental Services: Recruitment**Daisy Cooper:****[4022]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Dental recruitment incentive scheme 2024/25 published on 10 May 2024, how many NHS dentists have been recruited on the Golden Hello pathway in each (a) region and (b) ICB area.

Stephen Kinnock:

The dentistry recovery plan, Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry, published on 7 February 2024, included a Golden Hello scheme

offering up to 240 dentists a cash incentive to deliver National Health Service work in under-served areas of the country, for three years. The scheme is under way, and integrated care boards are working with practices in their areas to agree the list of practices to participate in the scheme, and to recruit dentists to these posts. No dentists have been recruited to these roles yet.

■ Dental Services: Registration

Josh Simons:

[\[4931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people being removed from dentist registries due to (a) missing appointments and (b) failing to make timely appointments.

Stephen Kinnock:

Patients in England are not registered with a National Health Service dental practice, although many NHS dental practices do tend to see patients regularly. NHS dental practices are contracted to deliver a course of treatment to an individual irrespective of where they live, allowing patients the choice of where they would like to receive care.

NHS dentists are required to keep their NHS.UK website profiles up to date, so that patients can find a dentist more easily. This includes information on whether they are accepting new patients. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through an NHS dental practice, they should contact NHS 111.

■ Dentistry: Recruitment

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to recruit additional (a) academic and (b) non-academic dental school staff before September 2026.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 5 September 2024]: Individual dental schools are responsible for the recruitment of their academic and non-academic staff.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Civil Servants

Victoria Atkins:

[\[2936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many civil servants who are not special advisers he has appointed without open competition since the general election.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 4 September 2024]: The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 sets out the requirement for the Civil Service Commission to establish recruitment principles which departments must follow. The Recruitment Principles

2018 provide the legal requirement for the selection of appointments to the Civil Service to be made on merit and on the basis of fair and open competition. In addition, under section 12 of this act, it allows for exceptions to these principles.

Appointments by exception are an important part of how we bring talent and expertise into the Civil Service. These routes are long established and have been used properly and extensively by all modern administrations, as they can assist with bringing in individuals with relevant experience and skills for a time-limited basis.

In the latest year for which data is available across the civil service, the year ending March 2023, approximately 80,000 people were hired through open competitions, and approximately 9,000 people were hired through the different exception routes. Full details are available at the following link:

https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/15.101_CSC_ARA-2022-23_FINAL_WEB.pdf

In the period from the general election to 3 September 2024, the Department has made 15 appointments by exception to the recruitment principles.

Victoria Atkins:

[2937]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has appointed civil servants who (a) previously (i) worked for and (ii) were seconded to the Labour Party, (b) previously donated to the Labour Party and (c) have been Labour parliamentarians since the general election.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 4 September 2024]: Previous political activity does not preclude appointment into the Civil Service. All civil servants are expected to support the Government of the day, in accordance with the values of the Civil Service Code, which includes impartiality. Routine recruitment processes are in place to allow candidates to declare any potential conflicts of interest, and to discuss how these should be handled, so that the individuals in question can uphold the Civil Service Code's values.

From the general election to 3 September 2024, the Department has appointed one staff member at delegated grade, who declared on their declaration-of-interest form during the appointment process that they worked for the Labour Party. This appointment has been made by exception to the Civil Service Commission recruitment principles.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Data Protection

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[4755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has shared (a) official sensitive documents and (b) documents of a higher sensitivity classification with Alan Milburn.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 12 September 2024]: As my rt. Hon. friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, set out in the House, papers were shared with my rt. Hon. friend, Alan Milburn, on Privy Council terms. Nothing commercially sensitive was shared during these interactions. We have no plans to share such documentation with other Privy Councillors or hon. Members on Privy Council terms.

It is not unusual to share official documentation when appropriate based on the business need; for example with other Government Departments, NHS England, and other external experts.

Dr Caroline Johnson:[\[4756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make official documents shared with Alan Milburn available to (a) Privy Councillors on all sides of the House on Privy Council terms or (b) hon. Members.

Dr Caroline Johnson:[\[4757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has shared official documents classified as official sensitive or higher with any individuals, not including Alan Milburn, who do not have an official role within his Department.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 12 September 2024]: As my rt. Hon. friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, set out in the House, papers were shared with my rt. Hon. friend, Alan Milburn, on Privy Council terms. Nothing commercially sensitive was shared during these interactions. We have no plans to share such documentation with other Privy Councillors or hon. Members on Privy Council terms.

It is not unusual to share official documentation when appropriate based on the business need; for example with other Government Departments, NHS England, and other external experts.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Equality**Rupert Lowe:**[\[5188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many positions in his Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Karin Smyth:

The Department currently has two positions which include either diversity, inclusion, equity, or equality in their job title. The following table shows the roles the title included, the total roles, and the total salaries, from 2020/21 to August of 2024:

ROLE TITLE INCLUDES	2024	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21
Diversity	0	0	4	14 (11)	10
Inclusion	1	4	8	0	0
Equity	1	1	0	1	0
Equality	0	0	1	2	0
Total roles	2	5	13	17	10
Total salary	£114,264	£363,338	£619,969	£842,077	£515,784

Note: the number of roles with diversity and inclusion in the job title have been included under diversity, only to avoid duplication.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Labour Turnover

Victoria Atkins:

[\[2938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) non-executive directors, (b) other direct ministerial appointees and (c) other public appointees in his Department have left their posts since the general election; what (a) direct ministerial and (b) other public appointments his Department has made since the general election; and if he will publish any political activity declared by each appointee.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 4 September 2024]: As of 3 September 2024, three public appointees left as non-executive board members, those being: Gerry Murphy, who ended his final term of office on the Department's board as planned on 31 July 2024, following 10 years of service; Amit Bhagwat, a member of the Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment, who ended his term as planned on 31 August 2024; and Sir David Behan, a non-executive director on the board of NHS England, who ended his term as planned on 31 August 2024.

Six public appointees had their terms extended as non-executive board members, and these have been announced as: Nigel Trout and Charlotte Moar, as members on the board of NHS Resolution; and Junaid Bajwa, Graham Cooke, Paul Goldsmith and Rajakumari Long, as members on the board of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

Extensions or re-appointments to the terms of a further 12 public appointees have also been agreed, and are due to be announced shortly. As of 3 September 2024, no new public appointees have taken up roles since the election. In line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments, any political activity by candidates that is required to be declared, is made public when the appointment is announced.

As of 3 September 2024, no direct ministerial appointees have left their posts since the general election. With respect to new direct ministerial appointments made in this period, I refer the Rt hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Rt hon. Member for North West Hampshire on 30 July 2024, to PQ2407, which is available at the following link:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-30/2407>

It concerns the number of direct ministerial appointments made by my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care since the election, as the position remains the same. Both appointees referred to in the answer have declared their political activity.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Young People**

Jim Shannon:

[4715]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of levels of vaping by young people.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is concerned about the worrying rise in vaping among children, as rates of youth vaping have tripled in the past four years, and 18% of children have tried a vape. All too often, vaping products are promoted in a way that appeals to children, despite the risks of nicotine addiction and the unknown harms.

To address this, the Tobacco and Vapes Bill will reduce the appeal and availability of vapes to children. The bill will stop vapes from deliberately being branded and advertised to children, including regulations on flavours, packaging, and changing how and where they are displayed in shops. The bill will be introduced to Parliament soon.

We will publish an impact assessment for the bill shortly, and we will publish further impact assessments alongside our future vaping regulations. We will also undertake an implementation review after a set period to determine the effect of these policies on youth vaping rates.

■ **Endometriosis**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[4418]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) support people with and (b) raise awareness of endometriosis.

Karin Smyth:

Endometriosis is a common gynaecological condition, estimated to affect one in 10 women of reproductive age. Endometriosis can significantly impact women and girls' physical and mental health, and anyone with symptoms of endometriosis should contact their general practice. Information on endometriosis symptoms and treatments can be found on the National Health Service website, available at the following link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/endometriosis/> Additionally, further

information on endometriosis symptoms can be found on the NHS' YouTube channel, specifically a video series on menstrual health, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnhASgDToTkvLigKt1XBE-iwZVJxd7Lto>

To support people and raise awareness of endometriosis among healthcare professionals, endometriosis is included in the Royal College of General Practitioners' curriculum. The General Medical Council is also introducing the Medical Licensing Assessment for students, which will include endometriosis. This assessment is mandatory for doctors who want to practice in the United Kingdom, and will be introduced for students graduating from 2024/25.

■ Endometriosis: Diagnosis

Alistair Strathern: **[4889]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to shorten the diagnosis time for endometriosis.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 12 September 2024]: Endometriosis is a common gynaecological condition, estimated to affect one in 10 women of reproductive age. Endometriosis can significantly impact women and girls' physical and mental health, and anyone with symptoms of endometriosis should contact their general practice.

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

■ Food and Cosmetics: Pollutants

Esther McVey: **[4710]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 2887 on Food and Cosmetics: Pollutants, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the International Agency for Research on Cancer's classification of titanium dioxide as possibly carcinogenic to humans.

Andrew Gwynne:

The International Agency for Research on Cancer conducts hazard assessments on substances in all applications. The Joint WHO/FAO Expert Committee on Food Additives as risk assessors looked at the safety of substances when used as a food additive, and found no concerns, maintaining the existing acceptable daily intake.

The United Kingdom's independent scientific committees, the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Foods, Consumer Products and the Environment and the Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Foods, Consumer Products and the Environment, have also assessed the safety of E 171 titanium dioxide, and concluded that

‘exposure of food grade titanium dioxide from the diet is unlikely to present a risk to health of the UK population’.

■ **General Practitioners: Broxbourne**

Lewis Cocking:

[4076]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the GP-to-patient ratio in Broxbourne constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

In July 2024, the median number of full time equivalent (FTE) doctors in general practice per 10,000 registered patients in the Broxbourne constituency was 5.5. This was more than the median in England, of 5.4.

■ **General Practitioners: Finance**

Saqib Bhatti:

[3179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential value for money of including GPs in the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 4 September 2024]: Over a thousand newly qualified GPs will be recruited through changes to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, as a result of additional funding to address GP unemployment over 24/25. The change will allow patients to get access to the care they need through increasing appointments.

The change follows extensive engagement and consideration of options to support employment of additional GPs who have been trained and can provide necessary clinical capacity in general practice. No explicit assessment has been made of the potential value for money of the change.

■ **General Practitioners: High Peak**

Jon Pearce:

[2598]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the recruitment and retention of GPs in High Peak constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have committed to training thousands more GPs across the country as well as taking pressure off those currently working in the system.

Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) reports that it supports recruitment and retention in the High Peak and across Derby and Derbyshire, providing a range of initiatives. These include a new to practice scheme that supports GPs and Practice Nurses for the first two years of their career, and GP mentorship and fellowship schemes.

We have accepted the recommendations of the DDRB, the independent pay review body, in full and subject to consultation with the BMA will uplift the pay element of the

GP contract by 6% on a consolidated basis, to provide practices with funding to uplift GP partner, salaried GP and other salaried staff pay by 6%.

Funding for these awards will be backdated to April 2024, and it is our expectation this funding is passed on to all salaried general practice staff.

The government recently announced changes to the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme which allows primary care networks to recruit newly qualified GPs through the scheme for 24/25. This is an emergency measure whilst the government works with the profession to identify a longer term solution.

Jon Pearce:

[2602]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) support and (b) resources his Department has provided to help support GP surgeries to (i) clear patient backlogs and (ii) reduce workloads in High Peak constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP), and we are committed to fixing this crisis in GPs to secure the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service. High Peak sits within the NHS Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), where the percentage of appointments delivered within two weeks of booking is 12.7% lower than the national average.

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

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

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

■ **General Practitioners: Loughborough**

Dr Jeevun Sandher:

[3581]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to recruit more GPs in Loughborough constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have committed to training thousands more general practitioners (GPs) across the country, as well as taking pressure off those currently working in the system. NHS England has allocated £1.9 million of emergency short term funding, from October 2024 to March 2025, for the recruitment of newly qualified GPs in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care Board (LLR ICB). The LLR Workforce Steering Group is reviewing options for how this additional resource can be used most effectively across the LLR ICB, including within the Loughborough area.

Newly qualified GPs are also being offered support through the LLR Primary Care Training Hub, which provides high quality education, training, and support to those working in primary care. The hub is currently working up a local offer of support for newly qualified GPs following the cessation of the national fellowship scheme in March 2024. This local offer will include continuing professional development, leadership development and wellbeing support, peer networking, and focused mentoring sessions, and will be delivered flexibly to enable GPs to access the support that they need.

■ **General Practitioners: Winter Fuel Payment**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[4374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of allowing GPs to prescribe a Winter Fuel Payment to pensioners in fuel poverty.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department of Health and Social Care works closely with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to ensure that fuel poor and health vulnerable households are supported.

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

■ **Gynaecology: Waiting Lists**

Alistair Strathern:

[\[4890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for non-cancerous gynaecological services.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 12 September 2024]: Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for the Government, as we get the National Health Service back on its feet. Equality of both access to care and outcomes will be at the heart of building an NHS that is fit for the future. This includes ensuring that women's health is not neglected.

We have committed to achieving the NHS Constitutional standard that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment by the end of this Parliament, which includes those waiting for gynaecology treatment. To achieve this, we will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments per week, and will increase the number of computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, and other tests, that are needed to reduce elective and cancer waits. This urgent work will help the nearly 600,000 women on gynaecology waiting lists get the care they need.

■ Health Service: Disadvantaged**Tom Hayes:** [\[4817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will require Integrated Care Boards to have a dedicated focus on tackling health inequalities for inclusion health populations.

Andrew Gwynne:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are expected to have a dedicated focus on tackling health inequalities, including for inclusion health populations. The Health and Care Act 2022 mandates that ICBs reduce inequalities in access to, and outcomes from, the healthcare for the population they serve. This includes groups experiencing the poorest health outcomes, often referred to as inclusion health populations.

■ Health Services: Rural Areas**Angus MacDonald:** [\[5159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to work with the devolved governments to help ensure that NHS services in rural areas can attract and retain adequate numbers of staff.

Karin Smyth:

The Department makes it a priority to work collaboratively with the devolved nations to drive forward our objective of improving health and care outcomes across the whole of the United Kingdom.

The Government will make sure the National Health Service has the staff it needs to be there for all of us when we need it, and will put staff in places where patients and the NHS need them most.

We will work with all those who share our commitment to ensuring that we train the workforce that we need in all parts of the country, not least in rural areas that struggle to attract and retain staff.

■ Health Services: Waiting Lists**Dr Caroline Johnson:** [\[R\] \[4396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for delivering 40,000 more NHS appointments per week.

Karin Smyth:

Reducing elective waiting lists is a key part of getting the National Health Service back on its feet. Delivering 40,000 more NHS appointments per week is part of our commitment to get back to NHS standards, so that people can expect to wait no longer than 18 weeks for treatment. The next steps will be confirmed after the budget in October.

■ Health: Women

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[R] [\[4234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made delivering the Women's Health Strategy.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is 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.

■ HIV Infection

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[4399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) adults and (b) children are living with HIV in each (i) region, (ii) county and (iii) local authority area.

Andrew Gwynne:

While the information is not collected in the format requested, the following table shows the number of children in 2020, and the number of adults in 2022, living with diagnosed HIV infection in England, broken down by region:

	CHILDREN WITH HIV IN 2020	ADULTS WITH HIV IN 2022
London	76	37,267
East of England	21	8,076
East Midlands	16	5,777
West Midlands	31	7,887
North East	3	2,151
North West	29	10,200
South East	22	11,680
South West	7	5,413
Yorkshire and Humber	21	5,946
England	226	94,397

Source: statistics are published by the UK Health Security Agency, and are available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hiv-annual-data-tables>

Note: children are counted as those under 15 years old and adults are counted as those 15 years old or over.

In addition, the following table shows the number of adults living with diagnosed HIV infection in England, broken down by local authority, in 2022:

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ADULTS LIVING WITH DIAGNOSED HIV
Barking and Dagenham	786
Barnet	856
Barnsley	281
Bath and North East Somerset	151
Bedford	302
Bexley	502
Birmingham	2,262
Blackburn with Darwen	114
Blackpool	449
Bolton	422
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	782
Bracknell Forest	144
Bradford	561
Brent	1,174
Brighton and Hove	1,760
Bristol	928
Bromley	570
Buckinghamshire UA	578
Bury	271
Calderdale	208
Cambridgeshire	711
Camden	1,505
Central Bedfordshire	306
Cheshire East	333

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ADULTS LIVING WITH DIAGNOSED HIV
Cheshire West and Chester	334
City of London	87
Cornwall	379
County Durham	329
Coventry	913
Croydon	1,640
Cumberland	129
Darlington	84
Derby	472
Derbyshire	523
Devon	525
Doncaster	321
Dorset	251
Dudley	350
Ealing	970
East Riding of Yorkshire	156
East Sussex	810
Enfield	1,028
Essex	1,457
Gateshead	190
Gloucestershire	535
Greenwich	1,338
Hackney	1,506
Halton	91

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ADULTS LIVING WITH DIAGNOSED HIV
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,160
Hampshire	1,175
Haringey	1,426
Harrow	464
Hartlepool	65
Havering	382
Herefordshire	125
Hertfordshire	1,500
Hillingdon	565
Hounslow	818
Isle of Wight	79
Isles of Scilly	
Islington	1,379
Kensington and Chelsea	1,149
Kent	1,608
Kingston upon Hull	256
Kingston upon Thames	266
Kirklees	466
Knowsley	135
Lambeth	3,367
Lancashire	872
Leeds	1,544
Leicester	1,011
Leicestershire	542

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ADULTS LIVING WITH DIAGNOSED HIV
Lewisham	1,853
Lincolnshire	560
Liverpool	835
Luton	626
Manchester	2,446
Medway	379
Merton	674
Middlesbrough	172
Milton Keynes	667
Newcastle upon Tyne	460
Newham	1,595
Norfolk	835
North East Lincolnshire	96
North Lincolnshire	108
North Northamptonshire	497
North Somerset	159
North Tyneside	163
North Yorkshire UA	362
Northumberland	162
Nottingham	841
Nottinghamshire	624
Oldham	290
Oxfordshire	501
Peterborough	356

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ADULTS LIVING WITH DIAGNOSED HIV
Plymouth	313
Portsmouth	376
Reading	400
Redbridge	612
Redcar and Cleveland	64
Richmond upon Thames	315
Rochdale	316
Rotherham	267
Rutland	29
Salford	914
Sandwell	651
Sefton	261
Sheffield	843
Shropshire	212
Slough	356
Solihull	141
Somerset UA	374
South Gloucestershire	249
South Tyneside	85
Southampton	506
Southend-on-Sea	371
Southwark	2,880
St. Helens	148
Staffordshire	602

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ADULTS LIVING WITH DIAGNOSED HIV
Stockport	297
Stockton-on-Tees	167
Stoke-on-Trent	411
Suffolk	655
Sunderland	210
Surrey	1,382
Sutton	357
Swindon	280
Tameside	340
Telford and Wrekin	182
Thurrock	290
Torbay	190
Tower Hamlets	1,854
Trafford	331
Wakefield	349
Walsall	454
Waltham Forest	926
Wandsworth	1,426
Warrington	174
Warwickshire	550
West Berkshire	109
West Northamptonshire	678
West Sussex	1,183
Westminster	1,837

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ADULTS LIVING WITH DIAGNOSED HIV
Westmorland and Furness	93
Wigan	325
Wiltshire	297
Windsor and Maidenhead	182
Wirral	280
Wokingham	152
Wolverhampton	648
Worcestershire	386
York	128
England	94,397

Source: statistics are published by the UK Health Security Agency, and are available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hiv-annual-data-tables>

While the number of adults living with diagnosed HIV infection by local authority is available, the information on children is not held in the format requested. However, the number of children living with diagnosed HIV infection has reduced from 1,489 in 2013, to 225 in 2020. This is due to the success of antenatal screening, which has prevented vertical transmission of HIV, combined with the success of HIV treatment. HIV treatment has enabled those born with HIV to live into adulthood.

Florence Eshalomi: [5148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish a new HIV Action Plan.

Florence Eshalomi: [5149]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of levels of inequality in HIV (a) care access and (b) outcomes.

Florence Eshalomi: [5150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support local commissioning areas to (a) identify and (b) address HIV inequalities.

Florence Eshalomi: [\[5152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) tackle inequalities in access to preventative HIV care and (b) end new HIV transmissions by 2030.

Andrew Gwynne:

HIV is a key priority for the Government, and we have commissioned officials for advice on how to progress the development of a new HIV Action Plan to end new HIV transmissions within England by 2030, with a strong focus on tackling inequalities, HIV care access and outcomes, and preventive HIV care, which we aim to publish by summer 2025.

We will continue working with local government and other partners, together with the UK Health Security Agency and NSH England, to support local planning, commissioning, and delivery of high quality and effective public services over the long term.

■ HIV Infection: Genito-urinary Medicine

Florence Eshalomi: [\[5151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to expand access to preventative HIV care beyond sexual health services.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to ensuring equality and equity of access to HIV prevention and treatment for all. We recognise that testing is the best way to determine your HIV status, and to ensure people can take appropriate measures to protect themselves and others from transmitting or acquiring HIV.

We are making excellent progress with the blood borne virus opt-out testing programme in the highest HIV prevalence areas, helping us reach those who do not typically engage with sexual health services. In its first 28 months, the programme has identified 1,360 undiagnosed or untreated HIV cases, and over 5,000 cases of untreated or undiagnosed hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

The Department has commissioned officials for advice on how to progress the development of a new HIV Action Plan, including content and scope, which we aim to publish by summer 2025.

■ HIV Infection: Health Education

Florence Eshalomi: [\[5153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure HIV health promotion campaigns are (a) culturally appropriate and (b) effective in reaching (i) under-served and (ii) at-risk communities.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to ensuring equality and equity of access to HIV prevention and treatment for all. We have commissioned officials for advice on how to

progress the development of a new HIV Action Plan, which we aim to publish by summer 2025. This will include seeking advice from our community and voluntary sector partners on how best to engage and consider the specific needs of under-served and at-risk communities.

HIV Prevention England (HPE) is the national HIV prevention programme for England. It delivers a nationally co-ordinated programme of HIV prevention work for communities at higher risk of transmission such as black African heterosexual communities and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. HPE is funded by the Department, who have appointed the Terrence Higgins Trust, a national charity who campaign about, and provide services related to, sexual health and HIV, to deliver the programme from 2021 to 2025.

The programme has recently hosted their 6th biannual conference, which brought together over 200 representatives from the HIV sector to share ideas, best practice, and research, drawing attention to the need to prioritise impactful and equitable interventions, considering the specific needs of those at greater risk. The presentations, workshops and materials will be made available online at HPE's website next week.

■ Hospices: Cornwall

Ben Maguire:

[\[3643\]](#)

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

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 supporting 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 at end of life and their loved ones.

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 of a range of palliative and end of life care provision within their ICB footprint.

We 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.

■ Hospices: Staff

Luke Taylor: [\[5210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to help fill staff vacancies in the hospice sector.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

Whilst much palliative and end of life care is provided by National Health Service staff and services, including NHS hospices and community and hospital specialist palliative care, charitable hospices also provide significant support to people, and their families, at the end of life. Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. As independent organisations, charitable hospices are responsible for their own recruitment and employment terms.

The NHS has been facing chronic workforce shortages for years, and we have to be honest that bringing in the staff we need will take time. We understand that this will also impact the voluntary sector, including hospices. We are committed to training the staff we need to get patients seen on time. The Government will make sure the NHS has the staff it needs to be there for all of us when we need it, including at the end of life. We 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.

■ Hospices: West Midlands

Stuart Anderson: [\[4847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that hospices in (a) South Shropshire constituency and (b) the West Midlands receive (i) adequate and (ii) sustainable funding.

Stephen Kinnock:

Palliative care services are included in the list of services that integrated care boards (ICBs), including those in Shropshire and the wider West Midlands, must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

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

Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. The amount of funding charitable

hospices receive varies by ICB area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth and range of palliative and end of life care provision within their ICB footprint.

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

We 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.

■ Hospitals: Parking

Kate Osamor: [4749]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) NHS staff and (b) patients with car parking charges at NHS facilities.

Kate Osamor: [4750]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to provide funding for (a) free or (b) subsidised parking for NHS (i) staff and (ii) patients at NHS facilities.

Karin Smyth:

Hospital car parks are the responsibility of individual National Health Service trusts, with no central Government involvement. All revenue that hospitals make from car parking must be put back into front line services. The NHS Car Parking guidance states that where car parking charges exist, they should be reasonable for the area, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-patient-visitor-and-staff-car-parking-principles/nhs-patient-visitor-and-staff-car-parking-principles>

■ Housing: Health

Rachael Maskell: [4383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with Directors of Public Health on the risks posed to elderly people of not being able to heat their home to minimum temperature thresholds for health in winter 2024-25.

Andrew Gwynne:

Ministers meet with local authorities on a range of issues. Living in a home that is cold or damp can directly impact occupants' physical and mental health, creating or exacerbating health issues across their life course. The Government is committed to a preventative approach to the public's health. Improving housing standards and addressing hazards such as cold and damp is a key part of this.

We will continue to stand behind vulnerable households this winter. Support includes delivering the £150 Warm Home Discount for low-income households from October,

extending the Household Support Fund with £421 million, to ensure local authorities can support vulnerable people and families, ensuring around 1.3 million households in England and Wales will continue to receive up to £300 in Winter Fuel Payments, and through our commitment to protect the triple lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their State Pension increase by more than £1,000 over the next five years.

The Government will also invest an extra £6.6 billion over this Parliament in clean heat and energy efficiency, upgrading five million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation. This will help keep people warm and well in their homes, and help reduce pressures on the National Health Service.

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

■ Leukaemia: Research

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[4613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support research on (a) the causes of and (b) treatments for acute myeloid leukaemia.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department invests £1.5 billion per year on health research, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). NIHR research expenditure for all cancers was over £121.8 million for 2022/23, and more is spent on cancer than any other disease group.

The Government, through the NIHR, is committed to improving research into cancers with the poorest survival rates, such as acute myeloid leukaemia, by funding high quality, timely research that leads to improved outcomes for patients and the public and makes the health and social care system more efficient, effective, and safe.

Research evidence is vital for improving treatments and outcomes for people, including those with pancreatic cancer and other less survivable cancers. The following table shows NIHR research spend on diagnosis, treatment, and both diagnosis and treatment of blood cancers, including leukaemia, since 2018:

	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	TOTAL AWARDS VALUE
Blood cancer diagnosis	11	£11,900,000
Blood cancer treatment	14	£14,700,000
Blood cancer diagnosis and treatment	4	£7,700,000

In 2023, the Government awarded £2 million to new interdisciplinary research teams tackling hard to treat cancers, via the Medical Research Council's two-day cancer sandpit strategic funding opportunity, focused on technological innovation for understanding cancers with the poorest survival rates.

The NIHR continues to encourage and welcome applications for research into any aspect of human health, including acute myeloid leukaemia. All applications are assessed for funding by peer review committees. The level of research spend in a particular area is driven by factors including the quality of the proposals and their scientific potential. All applications for research into pancreatic cancer and other less survivable cancers made through open competition have been funded.

■ Maternity Services

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[R] [\[4395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department issues on questioning patients on (a) pregnancy and (b) risk of pregnancy before (i) scans and (ii) operations.

Karin Smyth:

National Health Service trusts are directed to follow clinical National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance when ensuring the delivery of safe and effective healthcare and would refer to this prior to an operation.

Questions asked of patients prior to a scan will depend upon the imaging modality, with ultrasound offered routinely as a part of antenatal care. Similarly, low field strength MRI is safe to use in pregnancy.

Imaging using ionising radiation, for instance x-rays or computed tomography scans, should be used with more caution and should prompt questions about whether a woman is pregnant. Clinicians will assess risks of ionising radiation against the benefits for maternal health. The RCE-9 report provides advice on protection of pregnant women during diagnostic medical exposures to ionising radiation. NHS England also provides guidance to support clinical teams in breast screening services, to deliver safe clinical practice in compliance with the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposures) Regulations.

NHS guidance also advises women to inform their healthcare provider that they are pregnant prior to an x-ray.

■ Medical Equipment: Procurement

Jim Shannon:

[\[4211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the formal roles and responsibilities of NHS England's Specialised Services Devices Programme (SSDP) are; whether the responsibilities of the SSDP have been expanded to include the evaluation and procurement of medical devices; and how his Department plans to regulate the evaluation and procurement of medical devices by the SSDP.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England owns the Specialised Services Devices Programme (SSDP), a national purchase and supply system for specific categories of devices. The NHS Supply Chain provides procurement and legal compliance support for trusts with value for money tendering in the open market, in line with Public Procurement Regulations, and for putting in place fit for purpose local contracts. The published information on the roles and responsibilities of the SSDP, including evaluation and procurement, is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/spec-services/key-docs/medical-devices/>

The Department is undertaking several initiatives to address unwarranted price variation in medical device spend, including specialised services, such as: development of a national product information management system; reform of the listing process for community prescribed medical technology; commissioning the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to undertake assessments of existing product categories; and the development of a methodology for value-based procurement. The Department will work with the SSDP to review any areas of unwarranted price variation for medical devices managed through the SSDP.

■ Medical Treatments: Birmingham**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[4600]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS have received any complaints about politically motivated advantageous NHS treatment in the Birmingham area in (a) August and (b) September 2024.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 12 September 2024]: The information requested is not collected centrally. The annual release of National Health Service complaints data includes breakdowns of complaints by subject area, region, and integrated care systems area.

■ Members: Correspondence**James Wild:****[4028]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for North West Norfolk of (a) 9 and (b) 31 July 2024 on the New Hospitals Programme.

Karin Smyth:

We have received the hon. Member's correspondence of 9 and 31 July 2024, and we will respond shortly.

■ Mental Health Services: Colne Valley**Paul Davies:****[5211]**

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

Stephen Kinnock:

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

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

■ **Mental Health Services: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:**[3680]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many mental health support teams there were in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire in each year since 2014.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows the number of mental health support teams in South Holland and the Deepings constituency and Lincolnshire, broken down by district and the year in which they became operational, or are planned to become operational, since 2014:

DISTRICT	YEAR THE TEAM BECAME OPERATIONAL				YEAR THE TEAM IS PLANNED TO BECOME OPERATIONAL		
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Lincoln and West Lindsey		2					
Boston and East Lindsey			2				
South Hollands and the Deepings					1		
South and North Kesteven					2		

DISTRICT	YEAR THE TEAM BECAME OPERATIONAL				YEAR THE TEAM IS PLANNED TO BECOME OPERATIONAL		
Lincoln South and North Kesteven					1		
East Lindsey							1
Total operational mental health support teams	0	2	4	4	7	8	9

Source: NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board.

By 2025, the NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board expects there will be approximately 166 education settings with a mental health support team across Lincolnshire, covering 46% of all maintained or academy settings, and over 66,000 children and young people, or 60% of the total number on roll in Lincolnshire. Since 2021, mental health support teams in Lincolnshire have supported 6,985 pupils.

In addition, the Healthy Minds Lincolnshire service has been providing support to children, young people, and their families experiencing emotional wellbeing concerns that do not require specialist intervention from children and young people's mental health services across the county, and including South Holland and the Deepings, since 2018.

■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

Paula Barker:

[\[5129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to reduce the waiting lists for NHS mental health services.

Stephen Kinnock:

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

We will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, which will also help ease pressure on hospitals.

■ Mental Health: Men

Jim Shannon:

[4716]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve men's mental health.

Stephen Kinnock:

Men with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they deserve, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health.

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future and that is there when people need it, the Government will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, which will also help ease pressure on the busy mental health services.

NHS Talking Therapies, which include cognitive behavioural therapy, provide treatment to men, with common mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety. They can self-refer to NHS Talking Therapies services, or be referred by their general practitioner.

Suicide is one of the biggest killers of men aged 45-64, and we are committed to tackling this, while ensuring they live well for longer.

The Suicide Prevention Strategy for England 2023-2028 was published in September 2023, with over 130 actions identified to reduce the suicide rate within five years (with initial reductions to be seen in 2.5 years). The strategy has identified middle aged men as a priority group and targets common factors such as financial difficulty, gambling and loneliness.

Across England, 79 organisations, ranging from local, community-led organisations through to national voluntary, community or social enterprises, have been allocated funding from the £10 million Suicide Prevention Grant Fund and are delivering a broad and diverse range of activity that will prevent suicides and save lives.

Successful recipients of the grant fund include Lancaster Men's Hub, Mankind UK and the UK Men's Sheds Association through to March 2025.

■ Mental Illness

Dr Ben Spencer:

[R] [4933]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish a mental ill health strategy.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 12 September 2024]: The Department has no plans to publish a mental ill health strategy. We will fix the broken system to ensure that we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health, and that people can be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future and that is there when people need it, this Government will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays and provide faster treatment, which will also help ease pressure on the busy mental health services. We will also introduce a specialist mental health professional in every school in England and roll out Young Futures hubs in every community.

The Mental Health Bill announced in the King's Speech will deliver the Government's manifesto commitment to modernise the Mental Health Act 1983. It will give patients greater choice, autonomy, enhanced rights and support, and ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect throughout treatment.

■ **Midwives and Nurses: Training**

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[4237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to retain the £1000 three year continuing professional development budget for nurses and midwives.

Karin Smyth:

The Department's funding of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) ended in March 2023. NHS England's Long Term Workforce Plan, published on 30 June 2023, set out its commitment for the National Health Service to continue to support nurses, midwives, and allied health professions working in the NHS in England, with their CPD requirements.

■ **Migraines: Medical Treatments**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of access to (a) specialist care and (b) NICE-approved treatments for patients with migraine.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England is responsible for allocating funding to the integrated care boards (ICBs), which are in turn responsible for commissioning specialist migraine services that meet the needs of their populations, subject to local prioritisation and funding.

The process of commissioning services should take into account best practice guidance, such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidance on the diagnosis and management of headaches in over 12-year-olds, which was updated in December 2021. The NICE's guideline provides recommendations on principles of care for people with a migraine, which may include a multidisciplinary approach to care, based on clinical need, and involving access to a range of health professionals, including specialist neurology nurses, neurologists, and pain management specialists. Whilst NICE guidelines are not mandatory, the Government expects the healthcare system to take them fully into account when designing services.

Through its Technology Appraisals Programme, the NICE has recommended a number of calcitonin gene-related peptide inhibitors for the treatment of migraines, and these have been made routinely available to eligible National Health Service patients in England. Commissioners have a statutory responsibility to make funding available for a drug or treatment recommended by the NICE's Technology Appraisals Programme within 90 days of publication of guidance, unless specified in the guidance.

■ Mpx: Disease Control

Jim Shannon:

[\[3975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the World Health Organisation on (a) tackling and (b) the potential threat posed to the UK by mpox.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is engaged with our international partners, including the World Health Organisation (WHO), European, US and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and national public health agencies, ensuring we receive updates about international cases in a timely fashion. This information is then fed into the ongoing risk assessments that UKHSA are carrying out as the current mpox outbreak evolves.

In addition, I met with WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in July to discuss how we can work with the World Health Organisation (WHO) on a range of issues, including mpox.

The UK is the largest flexible donor to the WHO globally, helping them to allocate resources where they are needed most, including responding to health emergencies such as mpox.

■ Multiple Myeloma: Medical Treatments

Daisy Cooper:

[\[4164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will commission research to (a) track and (b) compare international access to myeloma treatments; whether his Department holds data on the use by other countries of isatuximab in combination with pomalidomide and dexamethasone for the treatment of myeloma patients; and when he expects NICE to publish its final guidance on the use of isatuximab with pomalidomide and dexamethasone in the treatment of such patients.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has no plans to commission research to compare international access to myeloma treatments. There are a number of independent publications that compare international access to new medicines, including cancer medicines, such as the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations' W.A.I.T Indicators, which is available at the following link:

<https://efpia.eu/media/vtapbere/efpia-patient-wait-indicator-2024.pdf>

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published guidance in November 2020 that recommended isatuximab with pomalidomide and dexamethasone as an option for the treatment of adults with relapsed and refractory multiple myeloma meeting specified clinical criteria within the Cancer Drugs Fund, for a period of managed access to collect more data and reduce the uncertainty in the available evidence base. The NICE is currently updating its guidance, taking into account real world evidence generated through the Cancer Drugs Fund and published final draft guidance in June 2024. The NICE has received appeals against its draft recommendations that will be heard by its independent appeal panel on 23 September 2024. The NICE will update stakeholders on timescales for its appraisal following the appeal hearing.

Isatuximab with pomalidomide and dexamethasone will remain available to eligible patients through the Cancer Drugs Fund in line with the NICE's guidance published in November 2020, pending the NICE's final updated guidance. If it is ultimately not recommended, patients who are receiving the treatment at the time will continue to do so in line with the managed access agreement entered into by the company with the NICE. There are a number of multiple myeloma topics that are currently being evaluated in the programme, some of which are expected to conclude late this year and early next year.

■ Neonatal Mortality and Sudden Unexplained Death

Victoria Collins:

[\[5175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will launch a nationwide review of neonatal (a) mortality rates and (b) unexplained deaths.

Karin Smyth:

The Government has no current plans to launch a nationwide review of neonatal mortality rates and unexplained deaths. Professor Lord Darzi's report on his independent investigation of the National Health Service in England has shone a light on the critical condition of the NHS, and the Government will continue to work closely with NHS England to ensure that women and babies receive safe, personalised, and compassionate care.

Neonatal mortality and neonatal unexplained deaths are measured by both the Office for National Statistics and the National Child Mortality Database. Since 2010, the neonatal mortality rate in England has decreased by 25% for babies with at least 24 weeks completed gestation. Since 2010, the number of babies who died unexpectedly in their first 28 days of life in England and Wales decreased from 40 to 29.

The NHS is working to further improve outcomes for babies and is rolling out the third version of the Saving Babies' Lives Care Bundle to all trusts. This provides maternity units with guidance and interventions to reduce stillbirths, neonatal brain injury, neonatal death, and preterm birth.

■ NHS: Carbon Emissions

Jim Shannon: [\[4208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps with NHS England to introduce a clear supplier roadmap for carbon reduction reporting for NHS suppliers; and what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of current carbon reduction reporting requirements.

Jim Shannon: [\[4209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made with NHS England of the cost of carbon footprint reporting by NHS Trusts.

Jim Shannon: [\[4210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department and NHS England have made of (a) the potential impact on the availability of appropriate medical devices on the NHS of the requirement for suppliers to report the carbon footprint of all their products available across the NHS and (b) the cost of this requirement to NHS suppliers.

Karin Smyth:

In 2021, NHS England published the NHS Net Zero Supplier Roadmap, which sets out a series of milestones to support National Health Service suppliers in aligning with NHS Net Zero ambitions. The 2027 requirement for suppliers to publicly report targets and emissions, and publish a Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP) for global emissions aligned with the NHS Net Zero targets, will build on milestones implemented in 2023 and 2024. Further information on the roadmap is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/get-involved/suppliers/>

The 1 April 2023 milestone required that suppliers bidding for any new contracts above £5 million per annum publish a CRP for their United Kingdom scope one and two emissions, and a subset of scope three emissions, as a minimum. This requirement was proportionately extended to all new procurements from April 2024, with a full CRP required for new procurements above £5 million per annum, and new frameworks operated by in-scope organisations. A Net Zero Commitment is required for procurements of lower value, as set out in the guidance, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/carbon-reduction-plan-requirements-for-the-procurement-of-nhs-goods-services-and-works/>

NHS England has proactively engaged with suppliers prior to and since the launch of the NHS Net Zero Supplier Roadmap, and continues to engage with regulators, suppliers, and industry bodies ahead of implementing future roadmap milestones, including the April 2027 milestone. NHS England's engagement approach has included regular supplier forums with trade bodies and external webinars, as well as horizon scanning of the global and UK regulatory and reporting landscapes.

A key enabler of decarbonising the NHS supply chain is to ensure our suppliers begin to understand and communicate the potential impacts of the products they supply. In doing so, we will always seek that product data asks be clear, and will not place a disproportionate burden or cost on the supply chain, whilst delivering on the purpose of the policy. The NHS has committed to working with suppliers and regulators to determine the scope and methodology of new requirements that enable information sharing regarding the carbon impact of products supplied to the NHS. These requirements are due to be introduced from April 2028, with NHS England currently undertaking engagement in the policy development phase, including aligning with the Government's medical technology strategy. Details around policy requirements are still being scoped, and as part of this process, we will seek to incorporate the feedback of the supply chain, and will take into account any concerns raised regarding the potential impact on the availability of devices. the Government's Medical technology strategy is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/medical-technology-strategy>

NHS trusts are required to provide an annual summary of progress on delivery of their Green Plan, however there is no requirement for trusts to carry out carbon footprinting, as NHS England provides annual estimates of the total NHS carbon footprint in the NHS England Annual Report and Accounts.

■ NHS: Drugs

Ben Lake: [5097]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) drug prices, (b) appliance prices and (c) fees paid to pharmacy contractors in the NHS Drug Tariff.

Ben Lake: [5098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of medication costs on community pharmacies.

Ben Lake: [5099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help community pharmacies with increases in the cost of medications.

Karin Smyth:

The Department undertakes a quarterly assessment of the adequacy of drug prices paid to community pharmacies through the medicine margin survey. The survey samples independent pharmacy contractors' sales invoices for the medicines they dispense, and compares the amount paid with the amount reimbursed by the National Health Service. This has found that more than the amount agreed as part of the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework has been delivered in total across the previous four financial years. Suppliers of appliances can optionally apply for an annual price increase on the NHS Drug Tariff. Fees in the tariff are routinely reviewed and updated when appropriate.

Medicine costs are considered as part of ongoing broader assessments of the financial health of the sector. However, if the selling price of a product goes above the reimbursement price in a given month, pharmacy contractors can request an increase to the reimbursement price from the Department via Community Pharmacy England. Where an increase is granted, this new price is known as a concessionary price. This ensures that the reimbursement prices set are reflective of real time market selling prices, and means that pharmacy contractors are paid fairly for the medicines they dispense.

■ **NHS: Employment**

Kim Leadbeater: [\[4938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking to steps to protect soft facilities management employment in the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

National Health Service trusts are independent employers who need to determine how best their services are delivered, which includes the provision of soft facilities management.

■ **Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Licensing**

Blair McDougall: [\[4563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he (a) is taking and (b) plans to take steps to prevent the online (i) purchase and (ii) use of harmful dermal fillers and botox injections by unqualified beauticians.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is currently considering what steps may need to be taken in relation to the safety of the non-surgical cosmetics sector. The Government will set out its position at the earliest opportunity.

■ **Obesity: Drugs**

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[4937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of online advertising regulations for prescription weight loss drugs.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 12 September 2024]: The advertising and promotion of medicines in the United Kingdom is set out under the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (Part 14). These legal requirements are set out in the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) Blue Guide, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blue-guide-advertising-and-promoting-medicines>

A UK business that provides a treatment service for consumers is required to comply with the law on the advertising of medicines. Such businesses may promote a

treatment service that may lead to the supply of a prescription only medicine (POM). However, they must not promote specific POMs to the public, as the law prohibits the issuing of an advertisement to the public likely to lead to use of a POM.

This regulation aims to protect public health by ensuring that the appropriate management of a condition for an individual consumer is done via joint consideration between the prescriber and the patient in a professional consultation, taking into account a potential range of medical factors and therapeutic options.

The website homepage of a business, and any linked social media content, should focus on medical conditions and the services provided, and casual browsers should not be presented with information on specific POMs.

The MHRA is obliged to consider complaints received about the advertisement of POMs to the public. Advertising investigations are done on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the circumstances of the particular case. Completed advertising investigations leading to the correction of advertising materials are published on the MHRA's website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/advertising-investigations-by-mhra>

The MHRA works closely with other regulators to help ensure that the public is protected from the advertising of POMs. In particular, a joint enforcement operation is in place with the Advertising Standards Authority to take targeted action against weight-loss treatment providers who use social media to promote POMs. Further information from the Advertising Standards Authority is available at the following link:

<https://www.asa.org.uk/news/prescription-only-weight-loss-products-an-enforcement-notice.html>

The MHRA also works closely with the General Pharmaceutical Council, who have issued guidance for pharmacies that operate at a distance, including online, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/about-us/news-and-updates/regulate/patient-safety-spotlight-improving-provision-weight-loss-services-through-shared-learning>

■ Older People: Advocacy

Rachael Maskell:

[4384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a Commissioner for Older People.

Stephen Kinnock:

The duties of such a role are covered by work elsewhere in the system. The Chief Nurse champions and raises the profile of nursing in social care and works alongside the Chief Social Worker for Adults, to increase the recognition and appreciation of all social workers in the care sector.

We are committed to building consensus to create a National Care Service, and we will engage with a range of stakeholders, including older people with lived experience

of social care, to inform our plans for long-term reform. Our 10-year health plan for change and modernisation to make the National Health Service fit for the future will also involve listening to patients because we want them to feel a difference in their daily lives.

■ Pilgrim Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments

Sir John Hayes: [\[4969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce accident and emergency waiting times at Pilgrim Hospital in Boston.

Sir John Hayes: [\[4971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce accident and emergency waiting times at Peterborough City Hospital.

Karin Smyth:

The Government has committed to supporting the National Health Service to improve performance and achieve the standards set out in the NHS Constitution, which includes that 95% of patients attending accident and emergency are admitted, transferred, or discharged within four hours.

As a first step, my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care appointed the Professor Lord Darzi to lead an independent investigation of NHS performance. The investigation's findings were published on 12 September 2024, and will feed into the Government's work on a 10-year plan to radically reform the NHS and build a health service that is fit for the future.

■ Prescriptions

Josh MacAlister: [\[4802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress the NHS England and College of Operating Department Practitioners working group has made on prescribing rights.

Karin Smyth:

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

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

This work was undertaken as part of the Chief Professions Officers' Medicines Mechanisms (CPOMM) programme. The Department is working with NHS England to consider the CPOMM's consultations and progress the extension of responsibilities to supply, administer, or prescribe medicines under the Human Medicines Regulations

2012 (HMRs 2012) to regulated healthcare professionals, where a clear need and benefits have been identified.

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

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[4433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support people (a) on lower incomes and (b) who are living with a long-term health condition with the cost of prescription charges.

Karin Smyth:

There are a wide range of exemptions already in place to help people afford prescriptions. Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge in the community in England, and those with chronic illnesses may already be eligible for an exemption. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, or whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are also available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with three-month and 12-month certificates available, and the 12-month PPC can be paid for in instalments.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[4434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to review the prescription charge medical exemption list annually.

Karin Smyth:

There are no current plans to review the list of medical conditions that entitle someone to apply for a medical exemption certificate. Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge in the community in England, and there is a wide range of exemptions from prescription charges already in place, for which those with chronic illnesses may be eligible. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, or whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are also available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with

three-month and 12-month certificates available, and the 12-month PPC can be paid for in instalments.

■ Primodos: Research

Esther McVey:

[4203]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister in response to the question from the hon. Member Bolton South and Walkden of 4 September 2024, Official Report, which new Primodos scientific publication is being reviewed; and which team will conduct the review.

Karin Smyth:

We remain hugely sympathetic to the families who believe that they have suffered due to the use of hormone pregnancy tests (HPTs). The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), together with the wider Government, have committed to review any new scientific evidence which comes to light since the conclusions of the 2017 independent Expert Working Group, convened by the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM).

This includes the publication by Danielsson et al, which is currently under review by the MHRA, and independent advice will be sought by our advisory body, the CHM, who will provide their expert advice on our assessment of this. The minutes and outcome of the CHM's discussion, including any further regulatory action identified, will be communicated and publicly available through GOV.UK website at the earliest opportunity.

■ Prostate Cancer: Health Education and Screening

Ben Maguire:

[4787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase awareness of (a) prostate cancer risk factors and (b) eligibility for PSA testing of patients aged 50 and above in (i) Cornwall and (ii) England.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England is taking steps to raise awareness of prostate cancer, where there are opportunities to do so. For example, NHS England partners with Cancer Alliances, charities, and local representatives to reach people through projects in the heart of their communities. Cancer Alliances have also been undertaking action to alert at risk groups about prostate cancer, which is determined at a local level and so will vary depending on local needs and priorities.

On 8 January 2024, NHS England also relaunched the Help Us Help You campaign for cancer, designed to increase earlier diagnosis of cancer by reducing barriers to seeking earlier help, as well as increasing body vigilance and knowledge of key red flag symptoms.

Routine Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) testing is not offered on the National Health Service, although men aged 50 years old or over can ask their general practitioner for

a PSA test, even if they do not have symptoms. This applies to anyone aged 50 years old or over with a prostate, in any part of England.

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) does not currently recommend screening for prostate cancer, as the PSA test does not meet the required accuracy for use in a national screening programme. Current methods offer insufficient benefits in relation to harms caused by overdiagnosis, such as invasive investigative procedures and unnecessary treatment, to warrant roll out as an organised screening programme. The UK NSC is due to review prostate cancer again in 2024, and will consider new evidence published since the last review.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Steve Darling:

[\[5237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to introduce national screening for prostate cancer by level of risk.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the National Health Service on all aspects of population and targeted screening. Screening for prostate cancer is currently not recommended in the United Kingdom. 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.

The UK NSC is currently undertaking an evidence review for prostate cancer screening, and plans to report within its three-year work plan. The evidence review includes modelling of several approaches to prostate cancer screening, which includes different potential ways of screening the whole population from 40 years of age onwards, and targeted screening aimed at groups of people identified as being at higher than average risk, such as black men or men with a family history of cancer.

■ Queen's Hospital Romford: Accident and Emergency Departments

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[4612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce accident and emergency waiting times at Queen's Hospital, Romford.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[4614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase bed capacity in Queen's Hospital, Romford.

Karin Smyth:

The provision and configuration of local services, including hospital bed capacity, is a matter for local National Health Service commissioners to consider, to best meet the needs of their local population and patients.

The Government has committed to supporting the NHS to improve performance and achieve the standards set out in the NHS Constitution, including that 95% of patients attending accident and emergency are admitted, transferred, or discharged within four hours.

As a first step, my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care appointed Professor Lord Darzi to lead an independent investigation of the NHS' performance. The investigation's findings were published on 12 September and will feed into the Government's work on a 10-year plan to radically reform the NHS and build a health service that is fit for the future.

■ Smoking: Hospitality Industry

Stuart Andrew: [\[4350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has carried out impact assessments of the Government's plans to ban (a) smoking and (b) vaping (i) in pub gardens, (ii) at outdoor restaurant tables, (iii) at outdoor shisha bar seating and (iv) in outdoor nightclubs.

Stuart Andrew: [\[4351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Government's proposals to ban outdoor smoking and vaping in and by pubs on the number of pub closures.

Stuart Andrew: [\[4352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has carried out an impact assessment of the Government's plans to ban (a) smoking and (b) vaping across university campuses.

Stuart Andrew: [\[4353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to consult on banning smoking and vaping outside pubs, nightclubs and restaurants; and whether he has a planned timetable for the proposed ban.

Stuart Andrew: [\[4359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of banning smoking and vaping outside pubs, restaurants and nightclubs on the (a) night-time economy and (b) viability of local high streets.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government will soon introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill into Parliament, which stands to be the most significant public health intervention in a generation, and will put us on track to a smoke-free United Kingdom.

The Government supports measures that will create a smoke-free environment, helping to reduce 80,000 preventable deaths, reduce the burden on the National Health Service, and reduce the burden on the taxpayer. Any proposed extension of

smoke-free legislation is subject to the approval of Parliament, as well as a full public consultation and further engagement with relevant organisations.

An impact assessment will be published on the new bill after it has been introduced, and further impact assessments will be published on new regulations when they are laid in Parliament. More details will be set out soon.

■ **Sodium Valproate and Surgical Mesh Implants: Compensation**

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[4239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to introduce a redress scheme for women affected by (a) vaginal mesh and (b) sodium valporate.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is carefully considering the valuable work done by the Hughes Report, and will respond as soon as possible.

Rebecca Harris:

[\[4979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the recommendations of the Hughes Report, Options for redress for those harmed by valproate and pelvic mesh, published on 7 February 2024.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is carefully considering the valuable work done by the Hughes Report, and will respond as soon as possible.

■ **Stonewall**

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[4236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance he issues to (a) his Department, (b) NHS England, (c) arms length bodies and (a) NHS trusts on using public funds to subscribe to Stonewall.

Karin Smyth:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not issued any specific guidance to the Department, NHS England, arms length bodies (ALBs) or NHS Trusts on using public funds to subscribe to Stonewall.

Guidance remains the same as set by the previous government.

■ **Tomography and Working Hours: Costs**

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[R] [\[4238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an estimate of the (a) capital cost of doubling the number of MRI and CT scanners and (b) running costs of incentives to work additional hours.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is working with NHS England to cost a range of investments needed to return the National Health Service to meeting the elective and cancer waiting time standards, including doubling magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography scanners.

The use of out of hours and weekend capacity remains at the discretion and autonomy of individual providers and systems, to choose the approach most suitable for their local context, where it is a cost-effective and sustainable means of delivery.

■ Trastuzumab Deruxtecan**Liz Jarvis:****[5192]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to review access to the cancer drug Enhertu.

Karin Smyth:

Decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the National Health Service in England are taken by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), on the basis of an evaluation of a treatment's costs and benefits. The NICE's methods are internationally respected, and have been developed through extensive work with industry, academics, and the public, to ensure they appropriately capture the costs and benefits, and best reflect social values. These are very difficult decisions to make, and it is important that they are made independently, and on the basis of the available evidence.

We understand that despite the NICE instigating an exceptional pause in the process to allow for commercial negotiations to take place with the companies, Daiichi Sankyo and AstraZeneca, a deal to enable patient access to this treatment on the NHS in England has not been reached.

We know that the NICE's announcement has come as a blow to many women and their families. The NICE and NHS England have already sought to apply as much flexibility as they can in their considerations of Enhertu for HER2 LOW breast cancer, and have made it clear to the companies that their pricing of the drug remains the main obstacle to access.

Within 16 weeks of the publication of final guidance, companies can also request a rapid review to consider new patient access scheme proposals, with the aim of establishing a pricing agreement that would improve cost-effectiveness and enable patient access to high-cost medicines. The Government wants to see a deal reached to make Enhertu available. The NICE and NHS England remain open to considering an improved offer from the companies through the rapid review process, and we strongly encourage the companies to come back to the table.

■ Visual Impairment

Jim Shannon:

[\[4720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in the UK have been diagnosed with severe visual impairments.

Stephen Kinnock:

Health is a devolved matter. In England, data is not collected centrally showing the total number of people diagnosed with severe visual impairments. Data is collected annually, showing the number of people certified as sight impaired, also known as partially sighted, or severely sight impaired, also known as blind, through the Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI). In 2022/2023, there were 23,993 CVI forms issued in England. Given certification is voluntary, this is likely to be an underestimation of those diagnosed with severe sight impairments.

■ Whipps Cross Hospital: Repairs and Maintenance

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[4582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September to Question 3677 on Whipps Cross Hospital: Repairs and Maintenance, whether he plans to provide £2.5 million in funding to complete the Outline Business Case.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 12 September 2024]: As stated in the answer of 9 September 2024 to question 3677, £1.2 million has recently been released to the Barts Health NHS Trust to support them in continuing the development of their Outline Business Case for the new Whipps Cross Hospital.

We are continuing to support schemes in progressing while the review is ongoing, with requests for funding during this time being considered on an individual basis. The review will conclude this autumn, and Parliament will be updated on the next steps for the programme.

■ Winter Fuel Payment

Rachael Maskell:

[\[4373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has asked the Chief Medical Officer to conduct an impact assessment of introducing means-testing for the Winter Fuel Payment.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 10 September 2024]: My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care meets regularly with the Chief Medical Officer to discuss key issues affecting the public's health, including winter pressures. In deciding on Winter Fuel Payment eligibility, the Government had regard to the equality analysis in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements. The equality analysis was published on 13 September 2024, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/responses-to-freedom-of-information-requests-on-equality-impact-assessments-produced-for-targeting-winter-fuel-payment/dwp-freedom-of-information-response>

The Government is committed to a preventative approach to the public's health. Keeping people warm and well at home, and improving the quality of new and existing homes, will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives, and reducing pressures on the National Health Service. The fuel poverty strategy for England, Sustainable warmth: protecting vulnerable households in England, was published in February 2021. The 2021 strategy is currently under review.

We will continue to stand behind vulnerable households this winter. Support includes delivering the £150 Warm Home Discount for low-income households from October 2024, extending the Household Support Fund with £421 million, to ensure local authorities can support vulnerable people and families, and ensuring around 1.3 million households in England and Wales will continue to receive up to £300 in Winter Fuel Payments. Through our commitment to protect the triple lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their State Pension increase by more than £1,000 over the next five years .

The fuel poverty strategy for England, Sustainable warmth: protecting vulnerable households in England, was published in February 2021. The 2021 strategy is currently under review. The Department of Health and Social Care works closely with the Department for Energy and Net Zero to ensure that fuel poor and health vulnerable households are supported.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Health Services

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[R] [4397]

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 proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment on (a) the number of (i) acute admissions to hospital, (ii) patients attending emergency departments, (iii) elderly people (A) with pneumonia, (B) requiring antibiotics and (C) GP appointments, (b) the risk of death in elderly people, (c) the number of deaths and (d) NHS expenditure.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 10 September 2024]: The Government is committed to a preventative approach to the public's health. Keeping people warm and well at home, and improving the quality of new and existing homes, will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives, and reducing pressures on the National Health Service.

In deciding on Winter Fuel Payment eligibility, the Government had regard to the equality analysis, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements. The equality analysis was published on 13 September 2024, and is available at the following link:

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The NHS is preparing for coming winter pressures as it does each year, and there will be an absolute focus on minimising long waiting times in accident and emergency and supporting patient safety.

We will continue to stand behind vulnerable households this winter. Support includes delivering the £150 Warm Home Discount for low-income households from October, extending the Household Support Fund with £421 million, to ensure local authorities can support vulnerable people and families, and ensuring around 1.3 million households in England and Wales will continue to receive up to £300 in Winter Fuel Payments. Through our commitment to protect the triple lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their State Pension increase by more than £1,000 over the next five years.

The fuel poverty strategy for England, Sustainable warmth: protecting vulnerable households in England, was published in February 2021. The 2021 strategy is currently under review. The Department of Health and Social Care works closely with the Department for Energy and Net Zero to ensure that fuel poor and health vulnerable households are supported.

HOME OFFICE

■ Anti-corruption Champion

John Glen:

[4996]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Prime Minister plans to appoint an anti-corruption champion.

Dan Jarvis:

I refer the Rt.Hon Member to my previous response, reference UIN 3572, answered on the 4th September 2024.

■ Antisocial Behaviour: Children

Jim Shannon:

[4712]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Police Service of Northern Ireland on underage (a) anti-social behaviour and (b) abuse of (i) alcohol and (ii) drugs.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

Policing in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter but the Home Office works with a wide range of partners to share best practice and knowledge.

■ Antisocial Behaviour: Hampshire

Alex Baker: [\[4930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of trends in the level of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in (a) Aldershot constituency and (b) Hampshire.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission. We understand that anti-social behaviour causes great harm and misery to our communities, and, if left unchecked, can lead to more serious offending.

We will crack down on the adults making neighbourhoods feel unsafe and unwelcoming by introducing new powers, such as Respect Orders with tough sanctions and penalties, to tackle repeat offending.

The Office for National Statistics annually publishes anti-social behaviour incidents reported to the police by Police Force Area. The latest available data covering year to March 2024 can be found here: [Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#). Data is also published at the Community Safety Partnership level. The latest available data covering year to March 2024 can be found here: [Recorded crime data by Community Safety Partnership area - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Monthly Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) police recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour are available through [police.uk](#). The latest data covering incidents to end of July 2024 can be found here: [Data downloads | data.police.uk](#)

■ Asylum: Applications

Neil O'Brien: [\[5105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of former asylum applicants who have withdrawn their applications (a) have left the country and (b) her Department knew the location of in each year since 2015.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office does not routinely publish the information you have requested, we are unable to provide this information, as it could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Asylum: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna: [\[4267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with contractors on the provision of appropriate accommodation for asylum seeker families in Northern Ireland.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Home Office officials meet regularly with our accommodation provider for Northern Ireland, Mears, who are obliged under the Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contract (AASC) to ensure that asylum accommodation meets all statutory requirements.

The AASC Statement of Requirements below gives a detailed breakdown of all of the services to be undertaken by our accommodation providers and the standards we expect: [http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1112/AASC - Schedule 2 - Statement of Requirements.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1112/AASC_-_Schedule_2_-_Statement_of_Requirements.pdf)(opens in a new tab).

■ **British Nationality: Assessments**

Nick Timothy:**[4869]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) names and (b) addresses are of all test centres used for the Life in the UK Test.

Seema Malhotra:

The full list of Life in the UK test centres as of 10 September 2024 is as follows:

NAME OF TEST CENTRE	ADDRESS	TOWN/CITY	POSTCODE
PSI @ North East Scotland College	Ground Floor, North East Scotland College, Gallowgate	Aberdeen	AB25 1BN
People 1st Belfast	Rosemont, 89 Malone Road,	Belfast	BT9 6SP
PSI Birmingham	Gateway House, 3rd Floor, 50-53 High Street	Birmingham	B4 7SY
Community Training Portal Blackburn	Suite 15, Kings Court, Kings Street,	Blackburn	BB2 2DH
MTS@Vantage Point, Brighton	7th floor, Vantage Point, New England Rd, Brighton	Brighton	BN1 4GW
Pitman/go train Bristol	Unit 9, Hide Market, Waterloo Road, St Philips	Bristol	BS2 0PL
MTS Cardiff	5th Floor, 5-7 Market Chambers, 5-7 St Marys Street	Cardiff	CF10 1AT

NAME OF TEST CENTRE	ADDRESS	TOWN/CITY	POSTCODE
MTS Coventry	1st floor, 101 Lockhurst Lane	Coventry	CV6 5SF
PSI Croydon	8th Floor, Grosvenor House, 125 High Street	Croydon	CR0 9XP
MTS @ Edinburgh	40 Sciennes, Newington	Edinburgh	EH9 1NJ
Episkopi e-LC	Episkopi LC	Episkopi/Cyprus	BFPO 58
We Can Train Pitman	Exam rooms Park Five Business Centre, Harrier Way, Sowton Industrial Estate	Exeter	EX2 7HU
PSI Glasgow	Adelphi Centre, 12 Commercial Road	Glasgow	G5 0PQ
Iranian Association	222 King Street, Hammersmith	Hammersmith	W6 0RA
Computer Learning Centre Hounslow	65 Kingsley Road	Hounslow	TW3 1QB
PSI Nairn Inverness	Nairn Community & Arts Centre	Inverness	IV12 4BQ
PSI at The Hub Business Centre Ipswich	2nd floor, Room 16a , 2 Civic Drive	Ipswich	IP1 2QA
PSI Leeds	Part 4th Floor, Oxford House, Oxford Row	Leeds	LS1 3BE
PSI Leicester	5th Floor, 60 Charles Street	Leicester	LE1 1FB
PDA (Training) Ltd Lewisham	107-109 Lewisham High Street	Lewisham	SE13 6AT
PSI Liverpool	1 Union Court, 4th Floor	Liverpool	L2 4SJ
Community Training Portal Luton	114-134 Midland Road,Luton,	Luton	LU2 OBL

NAME OF TEST CENTRE	ADDRESS	TOWN/CITY	POSTCODE
Synod Solutions @ Maidstone	1st floor, 114 Kestrel House, Knight Rider Street,	Maidstone	ME15 6LU
PSI Manchester	6th Floor, Boulton House, 17-21 Chorlton Street	Manchester	M1 3HY
MTS Milton Keynes	Gloucester House, MTS Ground Floor , 399 Silbury Boulevard	Milton Keynes	MK9 2AH
PSI Newcastle	Arden House, 4th Floor, Regent Centre, Gosforth	Newcastle	NE3 3LU
PSI Norwich	Room 23-24, Ground Floor, Sackville Place, 44-48 Magdalen Street	Norwich	NR3 1JU
Community Training Portal Nottingham	2 Pelham Court, Pelham Road, CTP Ground Floor (Palmer House)	Nottingham	NG5 1AP
PSI Oxford	Unit 1 (first entrance at Oxford the rear of the building), Watlington House, Watlington Road		OX4 6NF
PSI Penrith	Ground floor,Eden Rural Foyer,Old London Rd	Penrith	CA11 8ET
PSI at Online Exams Peterborough	Sefton House, Adam Court, Newark Road	Peterborough	PE1 5PP
PSI eAssessment Plymouth	Cobourg House, 3rd Floor, 32, Mayflower Street	Plymouth	PL1 1QX
Pitman/We can train Portsmouth	Portsmouth Technopole, Kingston Crescent	Portsmouth	P02 8FA

NAME OF TEST CENTRE	ADDRESS	TOWN/CITY	POSTCODE
Preston Academy of English	38 Ormskirk Road	Preston	PR1 2QP
PSI Reading	Highline, 6th Floor, 30 Greyfriars Road	Reading	RG1 1PE
PSI Sheffield	The Synergy Building, Bank Street Entrance, Bank Street, Hartshead	Sheffield	S1 2EL
PSI Stratford	2nd Floor, Boardman House, 64 Broadway, Stratford, London	Stratford	E15 1NT
Computeraid	4th Floor, 11 Wind Street	Swansea	SA1 1DP
Community Training Portal Watford	Suite W2 & W3 Victoria House, 45-47 Vicarage Road	Watford	WD18 0DE

■ Domestic Violence: Migrants

Tom Hayes:

[\[4805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to extend the Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain and Destitution Domestic Violence Concession to all migrant victims of domestic abuse regardless of immigration status.

Seema Malhotra:

Tackling violence against women and girls is a top priority for this government and our mission is to halve levels of violence against women and girls within a decade.

We are reviewing all the issues impacting migrant victims of domestic abuse including the scope of both the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (formerly the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession) and the provisions of Appendix Victim of Domestic Abuse (formerly Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain).

■ Extradition: USA

David Davis:

[\[4177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were extradited from the United States to the United Kingdom for (a) violent and (b) non-violent crimes in each year since 2003.

David Davis: [4178]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were extradited to the United States for (a) violent and (b) non-violent crimes in each year since 2003.

Dan Jarvis:

Due to the complexity of the accompanying table, the link below is to the web version of the answer:

[Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

■ Gender Based Violence

Tom Hayes: [4806]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to ensure that her Department collects (a) comprehensive, (b) comparable and (c) disaggregated data on (i) violence against women and girls, (ii) the protected characteristics of (A) victims and (B) perpetrators and (iii) their relationship.

Jess Phillips:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes a wide range of statistics collected across government on offences disproportionately experienced by women and girls. This includes data on the demographic characteristics of victims and their relationships with perpetrators.

The department is working with ONS and other government departments to improve and expand data collections in this area to provide a stronger evidence base to inform the Government's commitment to halve violence against women and girls.

Tom Hayes: [4807]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether future funding for organisations tackling violence against women and girls will (a) support the full running costs of services, (b) make provision for cost of living increases over the funding period and (c) allow for the remuneration of staff.

Jess Phillips:

To make our streets safe, we must drastically reduce serious violent crimes and violence against women and girls; increase confidence in the police; stop young people falling into crime and make our criminal justice system work for victims.

We have set out our mission to halve violence against women and girls within a decade.

This Government will treat tackling violence against women and girls as a national emergency and will use every tool to target perpetrators and ensure survivors have access to the support they need.

All decisions on funding will be made in due course as part of the Spending Review. The Majority of funding in this space is from MoJ and MHCLG.

■ Gender Based Violence: Crime Prevention

Jodie Gosling: [\[4954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support primary prevention regarding violence against women and girls.

Jess Phillips:

This Government will treat tackling violence against women and girls as a national emergency and prevention will be a key element of our approach.

With a mission to halve violence against women and girls within a decade.

■ Home Office: Equality

Rupert Lowe: [\[5193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many positions in her Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Home Office does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the Department's annual report and accounts.

■ Home Office: Staff

Nick Timothy: [\[4871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many employees of (a) Immigration Enforcement, (b) UK Visas and Immigration, (c) Border Force and (d) HM Passport Office were (i) suspended and (ii) dismissed for gross misconduct in each of the last 10 years.

Dame Diana Johnson:**(i) EMPLOYEES SUSPENDED IN EACH OF THE LAST 10 YEARS**

Business Area	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Border Force	17	NA	NA	55
Immigration Enforcement	9	NA	NA	12
Borders and Enforcement	NA	52	60	NA
HM Passport Office 6		10	NA	NA
Visas & Immigration	4	6	NA	NA
VIP except IHS and NA ISC		NA	30	72

*Suspension information is held centrally from April 2020 onwards, to retrieve this information before that time would be require disproportionate effort. The information in the table above is for all suspension regardless of the reason.

(ii) EMPLOYEES DISMISSED FOR GROSS MISCONDUCT IN EACH OF THE LAST 10 YEARS

Business Area	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Border Force	3	0	1	0	1	0	7	NA	NA	18
Immigration Enforcement	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	NA	NA	6
Borders and Enforcement	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	7	14	NA

(ii) EMPLOYEES DISMISSED FOR GROSS MISCONDUCT IN EACH OF THE LAST 10 YEARS

HM Passport Office	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	NA	NA
Visas & Immigration	1	0	2	0	0	1	3	2	NA	NA
VIP except IHS and ISC	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	14	22

The departmental data from 2021 onwards could not be structured as stipulated in the question, this is due to internal reorganisation within the Home Office - the timeseries provided represents figures as the organisation was structured as at 31st March each year.

Nick Timothy:

[\[4872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many employees of (a) Immigration Enforcement, (b) UK Visas and Immigration, (c) Border Force and (d) HM Passport Office have been found guilty of (i) corruption and (ii) immigration offences in each of the last 10 years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Note that we do not distinguish between immigration, crime and corruption stated in the request. We categorise all immigration crime as corruption and therefore provided a total figure.

A breakdown for each year is provided below:

YEAR	NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS
2014	1 UKVI - 1
2015	6 IE – 3 UKVI – 1 BF - 2
2016	2 UKVI - 1 HMPO - 1
2017	2 IE – 1 BF - 1
2018	1 UKVI - 1
2019	1 IE- 1
2020	0
2021	0

YEAR	NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS	
2022	1	UKVI - 1
2023	4	UKVI - 4
2024	1	UKVI - 1

■ **Illegal Migration Act 2023**

Tom Hayes:

[\[4812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to remove clauses 22-25 from the Illegal Migration Act 2023.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Secretary set out the government's position in respect of the Illegal Migration Act in her statement to the house on 22nd July 2024. Any legislative plans from the statement will be set out in the normal way in due course.

■ **Immigration: Sudan**

Nadia Whittome:

[\[4866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to increase access to resettlement to the UK for Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries who are at risk and cannot return to Sudan.

Seema Malhotra:

Over 300 Sudanese nationals have been resettled in the UK through our refugee resettlement schemes.

The UK resettlement schemes are not application based; instead, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refers individuals for resettlement in accordance with their standard resettlement submission criteria. These are based on an assessment of protection needs or vulnerabilities. The UK does not seek to intervene in or influence UNHCR's established selection processes.

■ **Immigration: Windrush Generation**

Dame Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[4962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost was to the public purse of (a) legal fees and (b) related costs incurred for the rejection of freedom of information requests between 30 March 2020 and 9 September 2024 seeking the publication of the report entitled, The Historical Roots of the Windrush Scandal.

Seema Malhotra:

We do not know the total legal fees incurred as we have not yet been billed for the complete period between 30 March 2020 to 9 September 2024, but we expect the final cost to be in the region of £20,000-£22,500. There was no awarding of costs in

the First Tier Tribunal judgment that the Department must disclose the Historical Roots of the Windrush Scandal report. The only other costs incurred were Home Office officials' time.

■ Knives: Crime

Chris Hinchliff: [4303]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce knife crime.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The government has set on a mission to halve knife crime over the next decade, and is already taking decisive action to prevent young people from being drawn into violent crime and to get dangerous knives off our streets.

■ Members: Surveillance

John Glen: [5003]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the then Prime Minister's Written Statement of 4 November 2015, Official Report, HCWS291, on the Wilson doctrine, what the Government's policy is on the Wilson doctrine.

Dan Jarvis:

The Wilson Doctrine is unchanged from the position set out in the Prime Minister's predecessor's Written Statement of 4 November 2015 (HCWS291).

Since the then Prime Minister's statement to the House in 2015, the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 was commenced which created statutory protections for communications of Members of Relevant legislatures through the "triple lock" process, set out at sections 26 and 99 of the Act.

■ Migrants: Detainees

Neil O'Brien: [5104]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have absconded from immigration detention in each year since 2004.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on escapes from immigration detention in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on escapes from detention centres and absconds from escort is published by year in table Det_05a of the '[Detention summary tables](#)'. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The published data covers the period from 2017 to 2023. Data prior to 2017 is not published. Data for the year 2024 is due to be published in the August 2025 edition of the publication.

■ Migrants: Housing

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[4535]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what form of accommodation has been provided to migrants who were staying on the Bibby Stockholm.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[4536]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what form of accommodation is being provided for newly arrived asylum seekers.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office continues to identify a range of options to minimise the use of expensive hotels and ensure better use of public money, tackling backlogs to reduce accommodation demands across the system as a whole.

The AASC Statement of Requirements below gives a detailed breakdown of all of the services to be undertaken by our accommodation providers and the standards we expect: [http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1112/AASC - Schedule 2 - Statement of Requirements.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1112/AASC_-_Schedule_2_-_Statement_of_Requirements.pdf) (opens in a new tab).

■ National Crime Agency

Sir John Hayes:

[4588]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers have (a) been recruited by and (b) left the National Crime Agency since January 2023.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The NCA recruits officers using the Civil Service Recruitment Principles of fair and open competition and appointment by merit. For campaigns run on this basis, it does not centrally record candidates' originator organisations. I am therefore unable to provide the breakdown of numbers of Police Officers who have been recruited into the agency since 2023 and Police Officers who have left.

The NCA also runs a programme of secondment only recruitment campaigns which are targeted at Police Forces and offer opportunities for Police Officers to work at the NCA for fixed periods of time before returning to their original force. Since April 2023, 20 officers have joined the NCA on secondment from Police Forces. The secondment route makes up only a very small proportion of our overall workforce planning process.

■ National Police Air Service: Finance

Stuart Anderson:

[5112]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the sufficiency of funding to the National Police Air Service.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The National Police Air Service (NPAS) provides borderless, round-the-clock, crewed police air support across England and Wales.

The Home Office supports NPAS through the provision of an annual capital grant. For the Financial Year 2024/25, this grant is £11.46m. The NPAS revenue budget is funded through contributions from police forces. For Financial Year 2024/25 this budget is £49.6m.

Funding for future financial years will be agreed as part of the ongoing Spending Review.

■ Offences against Children: Internet

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle online grooming of children.

Jess Phillips:

We are committed to working across government to take robust action to better safeguard children from all forms of child sexual abuse, including online grooming, and to ensure victims and survivors receive appropriate care and support while perpetrators face the full force of the law.

The Home Office funds a network of Undercover Online Officers (UCOLs) in Regional Organised Crime Units who deploy online to identify and pursue offenders seeking to groom or otherwise sexually abuse children.

Through the Online Safety Act, for the first time, tech companies will be held accountable to an independent regulator to keep their users safe. All in scope companies will need to take action to prevent the use of their services for criminal activity. Child sexual exploitation and abuse is categorised as priority illegal content, which includes grooming. In addition, officials engage directly with a range of tech companies to ensure they are taking a safety-by-design approach and are tackling the risks of child sexual abuse and exploitation on their platforms including grooming.

■ Overseas Students: Visas

Tom Hayes:

[\[5243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of using the Accreditation UK scheme for institutions providing courses to students on a Sponsored Study visa.

Seema Malhotra:

International students using the student and child student routes must be sponsored by an education provider that holds a Student sponsor licence.

Education providers wishing to sponsor international students must obtain and maintain a Home Office Sponsor licence to do so and must be assessed for educational quality by an Educational Oversight body. We keep our immigration policies and Student sponsorship system under constant review.

■ Police: Recruitment

Nick Timothy: [\[4870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress she has made in reforming vetting procedures for police recruits since 3 March 2021.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The framework for police vetting, which applies to the existing workforce as well as new recruits, is currently set by the College of Policing via its statutory code of practice on vetting and authorised professional practice (APP) guidance on vetting.

The vetting APP, which is reviewed on an ongoing basis, was last updated in March 2021. The College plans to publish a revised version this year following a public consultation in January and having considered recommendations from part 1 of the Angiolini Inquiry.

The government has committed to strengthening police vetting and will be bringing forward statutory measures to do so in due course.

■ Prisoners' Release: Foreign Nationals

Jo White: [\[5200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of foreign nationals who receive a custodial prison sentence are deported on completion of their sentence.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office regularly publishes statistics on the returns of foreign national offenders by nationality and year. These returns are published in the Returns Detailed Datasets, Year Ending June 2024, which are available at: Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The published statistics refer to enforced returns which include deportations, as well as cases where a person has breached UK immigration laws, and those removed under other administrative and illegal entry powers that have declined to leave voluntarily.

Figures on deportations, which are a subset of enforced returns, are not separately available.

We are committed to delivering justice for victims and safer streets for our communities. Foreign nationals who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will pursue their deportation and they will be swiftly removed from the country.

In order to reduce the FNO prison population and support the MoJ in alleviating current prison capacity issues, we are focussing resources on those cases currently serving custodial sentences and maximising returns directly from prison.

■ Public Service: Harassment**John Glen:** [\[5045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 31 July 2024, to Question 1220, on Public Service: Harassment, if she will place in the House of Commons Library a copy of the minutes for the roundtable to discuss political intimidation; and what the policy decisions from that meeting were.

Dan Jarvis:

There are no plans to place a copy of the minutes of the roundtable discussion on political intimidation in the House of Commons Library.

The discussions are considered confidential.

■ Refugees**Tom Hayes:** [\[4816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to extend the move-on period for newly-recognised refugees to a minimum of 56 days.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The government is aware of the need for a smooth transition out of asylum accommodation for recognised refugees. The Home Office works closely with MHCLG on ensuring move-on works effectively, so that those granted refugee status can integrate into society and work.

■ Shellfish: Animal Experiments**Sarah Champion:** [\[5059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the findings of the Decapods: Call for Evidence, published on 5 July 2023; and what recent estimate she has made of when the Animals in Science Committee will report on options for the future regulation of the use of decapod crustaceans in research.

Dan Jarvis:

Following earlier research and reports on this issue, the next step is for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to decide whether to regulate Decapods under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Any decision of publication of earlier research or the commissioning of further advice will follow in due course.

■ Shoplifting**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[4186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle the increase in shoplifting.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Shoplifting has increased to an unacceptable level in recent years, with more and more offenders using violence and abuse against shopworkers to do this. We will not stand for this. Everybody has a right to feel safe on the job.

This Government will end the effective immunity, introduced by the previous Government, granted to low level shoplifting of goods under £200. We will also introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores.

We welcome operational commitments made by the police in its October 2023 Retail Crime Action Plan. [NPCC Retail Crime Action Plan](#)

The plan contains a commitment for police across England and Wales to prioritise attendance where violence has been used towards shop staff, where an offender has been detained by store security, and where evidence needs to be secured by police personnel.

■ Shoplifting: Crime Prevention**Jim Shannon:****[5055]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to increase deterrents for shoplifting.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Shoplifting continues to increase at an unacceptable level, with more and more offenders using violence and abuse against shopworkers to do this. We will not stand for this. Everybody has a right to feel safe on the job.

This Government will end the effective immunity, introduced by the previous Government, granted to low level shoplifting of goods under £200 and introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores.

■ Shoplifting: Hampshire**Alex Baker:****[4928]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) reports of, (b) charges for and (c) convictions for shoplifting there were in (i) Aldershot constituency and (ii) Hampshire in each of the last three years for which data is available.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of shoplifting offences, and their investigative outcomes, recorded by the police in England and Wales. This information is published at the Police Force Area level including Hampshire.

The latest information, for the year ending March 2024, is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

Statistics on convictions at court are published by the MoJ and can be accessed via their outcomes by offence data tool, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2023>

Data are not available at the Parliamentary Constituency level.

■ Slavery: Victims

Tom Hayes: [4813]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Sections 14.128-131 of the Modern Slavery Guidance, published in May 2024, if her Department will take steps to amend the prioritisation criteria to ensure her Department prioritises conclusive grounds cases for people in the National Referral Mechanism that have waited the longest.

Tom Hayes: [4814]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that competent authorities issue decisions on (a) reasonable grounds within five working days and (b) conclusive grounds within 30 days of a reasonable grounds decision; and if her Department will provide support for all victims of modern slavery who have been given a positive conclusive grounds decision for at least 12 months.

Tom Hayes: [4815]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to amend the Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance, published in May 2024, to ensure that people who (a) have been referred to the National Referral Mechanism and (b) do not have legal representation cannot have support from her Department withdrawn from them.

Jess Phillips:

The Government is committed to tackling modern slavery; ensuring that victims are provided with the support they need to begin rebuilding their lives and that those responsible are prosecuted.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK's framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery which works to ensure that confirmed victims receive support until they no longer have recovery needs, or until these needs are met by other services, including if this takes 12 months, or longer.

The unprecedented increase in the volume of referrals into the NRM has presented significant challenges in resourcing and workflow, and we recognise that wait times are too long. Work has been done to increase capacity for decision making, improve operational effectiveness and testing alternative approaches to decision making, but recognise that more needs to be done and are considering options. I am as keen as you to ensure that this happens.

We keep all policies and processes under review.

The Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance sets out when access to modern slavery support may be withheld and that potential victims in the NRM can choose to have legal representation. It also sets out the current prioritisation approach and priorities can change periodically in line with Ministerial arrangements under the Equality Act 2010. Any changes to the prioritisation criteria will be reflected in this guidance.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Housing

Rupert Lowe: [4567]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average daily (a) upkeep and (b) accommodation cost is per irregular migrant; and what the total daily cost to the public purse incurred as a result of irregular migrants is as of 6 September 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to support and accommodate asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. It does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates asylum accommodation costs by type, or any broader cost information relating specifically to irregular migrants in the United Kingdom.

The total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

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

Rupert Lowe: [4834]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many beds are reserved to house irregular migrants; and what the cost is of those beds.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office does not reserve beds for irregular migrants. In accordance with the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, the Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide destitute asylum seekers with accommodation and subsistence support whilst their application for asylum is being considered. The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes identifying a range of options to reduce the use of hotels over time and ensuring efficiency and value for money across all accommodation arrangements.

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

As was the case under the previous government, the Home Office does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates asylum accommodation costs by type. The total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

■ Youth Services: Nuneaton**Jodie Gosling:** [\[5166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the suitability of Nuneaton constituency for a youth hub in the context of plans relating to the young futures unit.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to rolling out a network of Young Futures Hubs which will bring together services to help improve the way young people can access the support they need.

Over the coming weeks we will be engaging with local communities, the police, charities, and other key partners to support the design of the Young Futures programme, including hubs and explore options for their delivery.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing: Construction****Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[3006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's guidance entitled, Retained Right to Buy receipts and their use for replacement supply, updated on 30 July 2024, if she will make a forecast of the total number of new build affordable houses set to be built during this Parliament.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. We will update Parliament on our progress.

■ Almshouses: Finance**Victoria Collins:** [\[5176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of enabling alms houses to access section 106 funding and Community Infrastructure Levy in the same way as housing associations.

Matthew Pennycook:

It is up to local planning authorities to determine what contributions should be sought through Section 106 agreements, in line with statutory tests on their use set out in regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010.

Our consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework seeks views on whether changes are needed to the definition of 'affordable housing for rent' to make it easier for organisations that are not Registered Providers, including almshouses, to develop new affordable homes. This is intended to inform

our approach to National Development Management Policies. The consultation, which closes on 24 September, is published at the following [link](#).

■ **Buckinghamshire Council**

Callum Anderson: [\[4881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the financial sustainability of Buckinghamshire Council in the 2024-25 financial year.

Callum Anderson: [\[4882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to monitor the financial health of Buckinghamshire council; and what steps her Department takes to support councils that may be at risk of financial difficulties.

Callum Anderson: [\[4883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions her Department has had with Buckinghamshire Council on the adequacy of its financial reserves.

Callum Anderson: [\[4884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions her Department has had with Buckinghamshire Council on that Council's (a) financial resilience and (b) long-term sustainability.

Callum Anderson: [\[4885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of Buckinghamshire Council's financial planning, in the context of increases in levels of demand for services.

Jim McMahon:

Councils are responsible for their own financial management, and the department does not monitor their day-to-day business.

The Government is under no illusions about the scale of the pressures that local authorities are facing. We recognise the vital work that local councils do for their communities and stand ready to speak to any council that is experiencing financial difficulties.

The Government will work closely with councils to provide more stability through multi-year funding settlements, ending competitive bidding for pots of money and reforming the local audit system. Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement.

■ Buildings: Insulation**Ben Coleman:****[R] [4828]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Building Safety Fund will cover the cost for thermal performance improvements associated with fire safety measures for the external cladding of buildings, where those improvements are (a) required to meet building regulation energy efficiency standards or (b) go over and above building regulation energy efficiency standards.

Rushanara Ali:

The Building Safety Fund (BSF) was established to address life safety fire risks associated with cladding on high rise residential buildings. Remediation works must meet Building Regulations requirements, including minimum standards for energy efficiency. BSF applicants may choose to self-fund further energy efficiency measures.

Paula Barker:**[5131]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to support residents of buildings with unsafe cladding.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government is committed to protecting qualifying leaseholders from the costs of fixing historic building safety defects that were not their fault. Legislation has been introduced to ensure that qualifying leaseholders are both protected from costs and can pursue building owners and developers for contributions to fix these issues. Pathways are in place for all residential buildings over 11 meters in England to fix unsafe cladding through government funds, developer contributions, or registered providers of social housing.

Too many buildings still have unsafe cladding, and the pace of remediation has been too slow. Any building owner who fails to make their building safe faces enforcement action. The Code of Practice for the Remediation of Residential Buildings requires all remediation projects to treat residents as key stakeholder in the remediation process.

Government continues to put residents at the heart of the building safety agenda and conducts fortnightly building visits to engage residents to better understand their experiences and to support them.

■ Buildings: Safety**Jenny Riddell-Carpenter:****[4487]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many building assessment certificate applications had been received by the Building Safety Regulator by 30 June 2024; and how many building safety certificates have been (a) issued and (b) refused.

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter:

[\[4488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications for (a) higher-risk building work and (b) a stage of higher-risk building work had been received by the Building Safety Regulator by 30 June 2024; and how many (i) of those applications were determined within 12 weeks of being received, (ii) extensions to the 12-week determination period have been agreed by the Regulator with the applicant and (iii) how many applications have been refused.

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter:

[\[4489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications for building work to an existing higher-risk building had been received by the Building Safety Regulator by 30 June 2024; and how many (a) of those applications were determined within eight weeks of being received, (b) extensions to the eight-week determination period have been agreed by the Regulator with the applicant and (c) applications have been refused.

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter:

[\[4490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many completion certificate applications for (a) higher-risk building work, (b) a stage of higher-risk work and (c) building work to an existing higher-risk building had been received by the Building Safety Regulator by 30 June 2024; and how many (i) of those completion certificate applications were determined within eight weeks of being received, (ii) extensions to the eight-week determination period have been agreed by the Regulator with the applicant and (iii) applications have been refused.

Rushanara Ali:

The new regulatory approach for building control on higher-risk buildings puts the onus on applicants to demonstrate how they will comply with the Building Regulations. This is a fundamental shift in the approach to building control and regulation, ensuring building safety is at the heart of applications.

Within the period up to 30 June, the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) received 606 applications for amendments to existing higher-risk buildings (HRB), with 12 determined within the eight week period and 271 extensions agreed with the applicant. Within this category, there were almost as many refused applications, totalling 260.

BSR received 62 new applications, with four determined within the 12 week period, 22 extensions agreed and 10 refusals.

An application can initially be invalidated when an applicant has not provided the most basic administrative documents or followed the process that demonstrates they comply with the Building Regulations. This is not a formal refusal and it provides the applicant with the opportunity to reconsider what documentation and information is required for the application. Refusal is when an application fails to demonstrate compliance with the Building Regulations after being assessed.

Up to 30 June 2024, the BSR has received 14 applications for completion certificates for existing higher risk buildings, agreed extensions for six buildings and refused four applications. No applications have been received, extended, or refused for new higher risk buildings at either single stage or multi-stage.

The BSR has requested applications for Building Assessment Certificates for 236 higher-risk buildings. Up to 30 June 2024 the BSR had received the documentation for 230 applications and these are currently being assessed by the BSR and its regulatory partners. No Building Assessment Certificates had been issued or refused by 30 June 2024.

This Government is committed to both building safety and housebuilding. Our expectation is that once the new requirements, systems and processes bed in and all parties get used to the building safety regulations, that timelines for processing applications are met much faster. The BSR has been building capacity and developing their operational functions to improve building safety and ensure we never see a repeat of the Grenfell tragedy.

■ Combined Authorities

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of enabling district councils to become constituent members of Combined County Authorities.

Jim McMahon:

Existing combined county authority legislation provides that only upper tier local authorities in the area of a combined county authority can be constituent members. District councils are an important part of local government, and as non-constituent members can play an active role in any combined county authority in their area should they wish.

Jodie Gosling:

[\[4957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing district councils to be constituent members of Combined County Authorities.

Jim McMahon:

Existing combined county authority legislation provides that only upper tier local authorities in the area of a combined county authority can be constituent members. District councils are an important part of local government, and as non-constituent members can play an active role in any combined county authority in their area, should they wish.

It is important that all local authorities are engaged and actively involved in improving their areas, working across all levels of government for the interests of the local community.

■ Community Development: Finance**Liam Byrne:** [\[4599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Communities Opportunities Fund has been abolished.

Edward Argar: [\[4725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to reopen the next round of the Community Ownership Fund for applications.

Alex Norris:

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

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

■ Council Housing: Finance**Siân Berry:** [\[2675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Right to Buy and associated discounts on the value for money of grant spending on new council housing through the Affordable Housing Programme.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities can bid for grant funding through the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) to support delivery of affordable homes. If a home built using AHP grant is sold via the Right to Buy, then the local authority must either recycle the relevant grant or return it to Homes England or the Greater London Authority so that it can be used for another permitted purpose, including the delivery of new homes. These requirements ensure that grant issued through the AHP is used efficiently and in a way that secures value for money. As such, we have not made a specific assessment as outlined in the question.

The Government is undertaking a rapid review of the increased Right to Buy discounts introduced in 2012 and will bring forward more detail and secondary legislation this Autumn. We will also review the Right to Buy more widely, including looking at eligibility criteria and protections for new homes and will bring forward a consultation in the Autumn.

■ Council Tax: Single People**Sir Alec Shelbrooke:** [\[4980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of recipients of the single person discount on council tax are (a) women, (b) over 66 and (c) in households with dependents under 18.

Jim McMahon:

The Government has not historically collected data on the individual characteristics of residents of households receiving a single person council tax discount.

■ Devolution: East of England**David Simmonds:** [\[5230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2991 on Devolution: East of England, whether (a) mayoral and (b) directly-elected leader elections will take place in (i) Suffolk and (ii) Norfolk in May 2025.

David Simmonds: [\[5231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2991 on Devolution: East of England, whether mayoral or directly elected leader elections will take place in (a) Suffolk and (b) Norfolk in May 2025.

David Simmonds: [\[5232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will list the (a) local council and (b) council mayoral and (c) combined authority mayoral elections that will take place in May 2025.

Jim McMahon:

This Government has recently announced that it will not be proceeding with the existing devolution deal with Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council respectively. Instead, Government will continue discussions with Norfolk and Suffolk to deliver a more ambitious agreement.

This Government strongly believes that the benefits of devolution are best achieved through the establishment of combined institutions with a directly elected mayor. We want every part of England to take their place on the Council of Nations and Regions, with strong and effective partnerships in place with councils and other partners to deliver the missions we have set out to transform the country.

Mayors should have a unique role in an institution which allows them to focus fully on their devolved strategic responsibilities, working hand in glove with council leaders who will vitally also focus on the delivery of the essential services for which they are responsible. Conflating these two responsibilities into the same individual and institution, as is the case under the mayoral Single Local Authority model of

devolution, would risk the optimal delivery of both and is not in line with the direction of travel we are setting out on ahead of the English Devolution Bill.

Regarding the decision taken by a council to change its' governance arrangements for a directly elected local authority mayor, that is a decision which rests with the councils concerned.

■ Devolution: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has for district councils in the Greater Lincolnshire devolution deal.

Jim McMahon:

The Government is committed to ensuring that every part of England can rapidly benefit from devolution, moving power out of Westminster back to those who know their areas best, and this will be underpinned further by the landmark English Devolution Bill.

Existing combined county authority legislation provides that only upper tier local authorities in the area of a combined county authority can be constituent members. District councils are an important part of local government, and as non-constituent members can play an active role in any combined county authority in their area, should they wish. It is important that all local authorities are engaged and actively involved in improving their areas, working across all levels of government for the interests of the local community.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Stuart Anderson:

[\[4843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will include (a) shotgun licences and (b) veteran ID cards as accepted forms of voter identification in (i) general and (ii) local elections.

Alex Norris:

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

■ Empty Property and Second Homes: Council Tax

David Simmonds:

[\[5229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the report entitled Summary of responses and government's response to the consultation on proposals to exempt categories of dwellings from the council tax premiums in England, published on 11 March 2024, whether it is her policy to bring forward legislative proposals to provide a 12-month exception to the (a) second home and (b) empty home council tax premium for properties that (i) are actively marketed for (A) sale and (B) let and (ii) have been granted (1) probate and (2) letters of administration.

Jim McMahon:

This Government intends to introduce the exceptions to council tax premiums as set out in the consultation response published on 11 March 2024.

■ Empty Property: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes: **[4173]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the number of unoccupied dwellings in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Sir John Hayes: **[4337]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the number of unoccupied dwellings there are in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Matthew Pennycook:

Statistics on vacant dwellings in England and in each local authority district, as reported for the purposes of council tax, are published in the Ministry's live table 615 which is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>.

Statistics on vacant dwellings at parliamentary constituency level, as reported for the purposes of council tax, are not centrally collected.

■ Flats: Fire Prevention

Shockat Adam: **[5238]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to make it a statutory responsibility of (a) owners of and (b) responsible persons for residential buildings taller than 11 metres to carry out (i) an EWS1 survey and (ii) a Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls to ensure the mortgageability of any leasehold flat in the block.

Rushanara Ali:

An EWS1, which is not a government process or statutory requirement, should not be required for leaseholders in buildings 11 metres and above to re-mortgage or sell their property. As of 18 March 2024, 10 mortgage lenders have signed a joint statement on cladding, confirming they will consider lending on properties in buildings 11 metres and above, regardless of whether works have started.

A Responsible Person is required to ensure that their building has a Fire Risk Assessment, and the Fire Safety Act 2021 clarified that this should include the external walls. In many cases, it will be obvious through inspection that the risk to life from external fire spread is not such to warrant a more detailed Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls. Where a more detailed fire risk appraisal is required, this should follow the British Standards Institution PAS 9980 methodology.

■ Football: Northern Ireland**Jim Shannon:** [\[5056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to provide levelling-up funding for community football grounds in Northern Ireland.

Alex Norris:

At Spring Budget 2024, £2.2 million of levelling up investment was committed to the redevelopment of the South Stand at Crusaders FC. The Chancellor's July 'Public Spending: Inheritance' speech forecasted an overspend of £21.9 billion above limits set by the Treasury in the Spring. We must ensure that we are making responsible decisions on public spending. Decisions that have fallen on this Government to take. In this context, the Chancellor has set out a path to confirming plans for this year and next at the forthcoming Budget on October 30th.

■ Foreign Investment in UK: Telford**Shaun Davies:** [R] [\[3311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate her Department has made of the (a) economic growth, (b) new homes and (c) new jobs that will be delivered by the Telford Land Deal; and whether her Department will take steps to extend the scope of the deal to other Government-owned land.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Department and Homes England are working with Telford and Wrekin Council through the Telford Land Deal and Funding and Co-operation Agreement to deliver up to 2,800 homes as well as 8,500 jobs and 300,000 sqm of employment floorspace. Homes England continues to engage with Telford and Wrekin Council and other councils across England on opportunities in their areas.

■ Green Belt: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:** [\[4595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to protect the greenbelt in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Matthew Pennycook:

There is no Green Belt in the South Holland and The Deepings constituency, and none has been designated by any of Lincolnshire's seven district or borough council areas.

■ Haydon Etherington**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[2976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether Mr Haydon Etherington was appointed to her Department following open competition; or

what date he was appointed; what his pay band is; and for what reason he was appointed as a civil servant rather than a Departmental special adviser.

John Glen: [\[5015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether there are restrictions on Mr Haydon Etherington's activity as a member of the Labour Party whilst serving as Senior Policy Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Alex Norris:

There are clear rules governing recruitment and appointment of civil service roles which are regulated by the Civil Service Commission. We do not comment on individual staffing matters. The approach to recruitment and staffing levels is in line with the approach taken for these central functions under the previous administration.

■ Help to Buy Scheme

Sir John Hayes: [\[4336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to extend the Help to Buy scheme for first-time buyers.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government recognises that the affordability challenges facing prospective first-time buyers mean that too many people are now locked out of homeownership. 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. We will keep under review additional measures to support first-time buyers.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Lee Anderson: [\[4416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent steps her Department has taken to identify buildings affected by (a) dangerous cladding and (b) other fire safety issues.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government has been clear that more must be done to accelerate the pace of remediation of unsafe buildings across the country.

After the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the Government prioritised identifying and providing funding for the highest risk buildings with unsafe cladding. Fire and rescue services and local authorities conducted a risk review of high-rise buildings over 18 metres in height, and building owners were required to register high-rise buildings with the department and apply for government funding to remove dangerous cladding.

The Building Safety Act 2022 establishes a new regulatory regime for high-rise buildings, which requires all residential buildings above 18m to be registered with the Building Safety Regulator by October 2023. The regulator has powers to pursue any building owner who fails to comply, including prosecuting for non-compliance.

In 2022, the Cladding Safety Scheme (CSS) was launched, to meet the cost of addressing life safety fire risks associated with cladding in buildings over 11 metres. We estimate that there may be as many as 7,000 buildings that need remediation that have not yet applied for the scheme. Eligible building owners must apply for this scheme, and leaseholders can utilise 'Tell us tool' to self-refer their building. [Tell us about life-safety fire risks on the external wall system of your building - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/about-life-safety-fire-risks-on-the-external-wall-system-of-your-building) The department is working at pace to identify buildings eligible for funding that are not coming forward. We are utilising specialist data sources and AI technology tools, and the CSS is contacting owners of identified buildings to check whether they have been assessed for unsafe cladding.

The Government has pressed the need for urgent action by local regulators to identify and assess buildings for unsafe cladding and other defects. The Government is supporting local authorities to boost their inspection and enforcement action by providing training, guidance and over £14 million in new burdens funding to date. We are writing to all metro mayors in England to ask for their support in driving forward local remediation acceleration plans to ensure buildings are identified and remediated at pace. We will set out further steps on plans to accelerate remediation this autumn.

■ Homelessness: Departmental Coordination

Rachel Blake:

[\[4570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress her Department has made on developing the cross-departmental strategy to end homelessness; and what her planned timeline is for publishing that strategy.

Rushanara Ali:

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

■ Homelessness: Temporary Accommodation

Tom Hayes:

[\[4818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to introduce a legal right to (a) suitable emergency accommodation and (b) adequate support for people at risk of street homelessness.

Rushanara Ali:

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

The Homelessness Reduction Act, which came into force in April 2018, places duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness. These duties provide help to all eligible people, including single people who do not have priority need. If homelessness cannot be prevented or

relieved, the local authority may owe the applicant a duty to provide them with temporary accommodation until settled accommodation is secured.

Homelessness legislation includes eligibility criteria, consideration of vulnerability and whether someone is intentionally homeless to ensure that resources, including temporary accommodation and access to settled housing, are prioritised effectively and accommodation is there for people who need it most. The Homelessness Code of Guidance, which local authorities must pay regard to, contains advice for assessing vulnerability.

Rachel Blake:

[4860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the National Audit Office report entitled *The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness*, published on 23 July 2024, what steps her Department is taking in response to (a) that report's findings that (i) funding sources are complex, fragmented and uncertain and (ii) there has been limited progress in improving the quality and suitability of temporary accommodation and (b) other findings in that report.

Rushanara Ali:

The Government recognises that homelessness levels are far too high and that this can have a devastating impact on those involved. That is why we will take the action needed to tackle this issue and develop a long-term, cross-government strategy working with Mayors and Councils to put us back on track to end homelessness for good. The NAO's report shines a light on this important issue, and we will consider their recommendations as we develop our strategy.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Visas

Nadia Whittome:

[3239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle barriers to (a) accommodation, (b) employment and (c) education for people on Ukraine scheme visas unable to (i) enter into contracts and (ii) start courses beyond their existing visa.

Alex Norris:

Ukrainians in the UK under the Ukraine schemes will be able to apply for permission to remain in the UK through the Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme due to open in early 2025. UPE will provide an additional 18 months' permission, and will provide the same rights and entitlements to access work, benefits, healthcare and education as the existing schemes.

The STEP-Ukraine programme continues to provide access to English language courses and employment support for up to 12,500 Ukrainians. Ukrainians can access the Adult Education Offer through their Local Authorities (LAs) which provide ESOL classes. People on Ukraine scheme visas seeking to start educational courses which extend beyond their visas will likely be eligible for a further extension under UPE to complete the course.

Local authorities continue to receive a tariff of £5,900 per Ukrainian arrival. This is unringfenced, which allows councils to use the funding to support households as best suits the local area, including measures to support access to accommodation and education.

■ Hospitality Industry: Smoking

Stuart Andrew:

[\[4527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department has taken to facilitate (a) restaurants and (b) pubs to offer outdoor smoking facilities since 2010.

Matthew Pennycook:

The provision of outdoor smoking facilities on the premises of an individual business is currently a matter for the business itself. However, where a business has a pavement license allowing it to have seating on the public highway, the national 'smoke free seating condition' must be followed. This requires the licence holder to make reasonable provision for seating where smoking is not permitted, so that where space is provided for smokers, customers will also have the option of sitting in a non-smoking area.

■ Housing Infrastructure Fund

Rachel Blake:

[\[4857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much of the previous Government's £4.2 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund remains (a) unspent and (b) unallocated.

Rachel Blake:

[\[4858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the (a) number of homes that have been unlocked by the Housing Infrastructure Fund and (b) number and proportion of those homes that have (i) received planning consent, (ii) started on site and (iii) been completed as of 9 September 2024.

Rachel Blake:

[\[4859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of utilising unallocated funds from the Housing Infrastructure Fund to directly fund delivery of new social homes.

Matthew Pennycook:

The £4.2 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) is now fully allocated to HIF projects. As of the end of June this year, £1.8 billion had been drawn down by local authorities.

The Department estimates that HIF has unlocked c260,000 homes. Local Authorities report starts and completions on housing developments facilitated by HIF investment

to Homes England and the Department. Based on these returns, c29,000 homes have been started of which c18,500 have been completed.

It should, however, be noted that these Local Authority returns are not verified by government and should not be regarded as official statistics.

■ Housing: Construction

Sarah Green: [4449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the impact of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 on airspace development.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Department conducted an impact assessment for the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2022 which included the impact of the Act's provisions on development and housing supply. The assessment can be found [here](#).

Sarah Green: [4450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of airspace development to help tackle housing shortages.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government recognises the value of upward extensions in delivering urban intensification where appropriate. We are consulting on further support for upward extensions as part of our consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, which began on Tuesday 30 July and closes on Tuesday 24 September.

Dr Simon Opher: [4956]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ensure that new houses are built with specifications that enable them to be carbon neutral.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government remains committed to meeting its target of net zero emissions by 2050 and recognises the important contribution that the energy efficiency of buildings has to make in meeting it.

The Future Homes and Buildings Standards consultation was published in December 2023 and closed in March 2024. A Government response has not yet been issued.

We fully support the need for low carbon homes, fit for a net zero future. We are reviewing proposals and feedback from the Future Homes and Buildings Standards consultation and will publish the Government response in due course.

■ Housing: Havering

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[4974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with representatives of the London Borough of Havering on the adequacy of levels of development of new build homes in that borough.

Matthew Pennycook:

While the standard method is the basis for establishing total housing need in London, responsibility for its overall distribution lies with the Mayor rather than individual London boroughs.

The London Borough of Havering's local development plan must be in general conformity with the London Plan. Havering adopted its Local Plan in 2021 with a housing target of 1,262 homes per year.

Average annual net additions in Havering were 830 between 2020/21 and 2022/23. The Housing Delivery Test 2022 shows that Havering scored 55%, meaning the borough is subject to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The Government is committed to working in partnership with the Mayor of London and all London boroughs to significantly increase housing delivery across the capital.

■ Housing: National Landscapes and National Parks

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[\[4908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether land allocated to (a) National Landscapes and (b) National Parks will be taken into consideration for housing requirements (i) generally and (ii) in Chichester District.

Matthew Pennycook:

National planning policy makes clear that land designated as National Landscapes and National Parks should be taken into account by local authorities when establishing a housing requirement for their area. Local authorities are expected to evidence and justify their approach through local plan consultation and examination.

In our consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, we made clear that land safeguarded by existing environmental designations, including National Parks and National Landscapes, will maintain its current protections.

■ Housing: Sales

Claire Hazelgrove:

[\[4951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of levels of house (a) buyers and (b) sellers withdrawing from a sale at the last minute.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government recognises that the current home buying and selling process in England is slow, costly and stressful, and that transactions falling through can contribute to this.

On average, around one in three transactions fall through before completion, costing consumers around £400 million in direct costs alone.

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

■ Investment Zones: Northern Ireland**John Cooper:**[\[4334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to (a) implement the Northern Ireland Enhanced Investment Zone and (b) extend that zone to cover Stranraer and Cairnryan.

Alex Norris:

The Government remains committed to working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Executive on delivering growth for Northern Ireland. Given the need to repair the public finances we must ensure that we are making responsible decisions about public spending. The Enhanced Investment Zone will be addressed as part of the process for confirming plans for this year and next at the forthcoming Budget on October 30th, and plans beyond that at the Spending Review in Spring 2025.

■ Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[3009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which legislative provisions from the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 have been commenced; which provisions have not been commenced; and whether she plans to commence the remaining provisions.

Matthew Pennycook:

Following Royal Assent of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act in October 2023, a small number of provisions were commenced by the previous Government, for example relating to pavement licensing. Since then, we have made clear in our recent consultation on national planning policy that we do not intend to take forward provisions that would cut across our commitments to streamlining the planning process and unlocking development, such as the Infrastructure Levy.

We do, however, intend to implement a new Local Plan system; move to a universal strategic planning system; reform the compulsory purchase process and compensation rules; and replace authority-wide design codes with detailed codes for growth/priority areas. We are actively deciding how to implement these provisions, as well as which other provisions best support our growth objectives, and will provide updates in the coming months.

■ Local Government Finance

Stuart Andrew: [\[4632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to redistribute assets and wealth between different (a) local authorities, (b) communities and (c) local government through the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Stuart Andrew: [\[4634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to change the local government funding formula in the upcoming Local Government Finance Settlement; and whether she plans to consult on (a) technical changes and (b) data sources before publication.

Jim McMahon:

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged. The department will work with local government leaders to ensure they are better able to fulfil their statutory duties.

We want to hear from councils about the financial challenges they are facing and we are committed to stabilising the local government finance landscape in this Parliament.

David Simmonds: [\[5228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 3748 on Private Education: Business Rates and to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2980 on Private Education: Business Rates and VAT, what other local government finance policy measures will be included in the Local Government Finance Bill.

Jim McMahon:

There are currently no plans for the referenced Bill to include measures beyond those indicated in the technical note published on 29 July 2024. I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [3748](#) on 5 September 2024 and Question UIN [2980](#) on 9 September 2024.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Civil Servants

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[2981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of civil servants by (a) title and (b) pay band have been employed by her Department without open competition since the General Election.

Alex Norris:

MHCLG made 35 appointments by exception to fair, open and merit-based recruitment principles from 1 July to 31 August 2024.

All appointments were at grades below the Senior Civil Service.

As a proportion, the exceptions appointed during this time equate to 0.89% of the workforce.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Equality**

Rupert Lowe: [\[5195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many positions in her Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Alex Norris:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the department's annual report and accounts.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Redundancy Pay**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[3043\]](#)

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

Alex Norris:

Ministerial severance payments are reported annually in the Annual Report and Accounts produced by the department.

Any severance payments post 31 March 2024 will be reported in the Annual Report and Accounts for 2024-25 when it is laid in Parliament next year.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Religious Persons**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[2453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which religious leaders she has met as Secretary of State.

Alex Norris:

The Deputy Prime Minister has held introductory meetings with the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev and Rt Hon Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, and the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE.

The Faith Minister, Lord Khan, chaired a roundtable with Muslim leaders on 8 August, and held a roundtable with interfaith practitioners on 9 August. He has met faith and community leaders following his visit to Southport and the North East on 21 August. Lord Khan has also met Pope Francis as part of an official visit to the Holy See. Visits

to places of worship to meet the country's faith communities will be carried out over the coming months.

On 10 September, Lord Khan chaired an introductory roundtable event with key faith and belief stakeholders to mark his appointment as Minister for Faith. The meeting was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister. The roundtable was attended by representatives from the following faiths and beliefs; Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, the Bahá'í Faith and Humanism. The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Faith, Communities and Resettlement are committed to continuing to engage with Faith and Belief groups and will continue to do so.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Staff**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[2978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many staff (a) work in the Deputy Prime Minister's Policy and Strategy Unit, at each grade, (b) have been recruited from outside the Civil Service, (c) were appointed through open competition, (d) positions have been publicly advertised and (e) are due to be further recruited.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[2979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the (a) remit and (b) responsibilities are of her Policy and Strategy Unit.

Alex Norris:

The Deputy Prime Minister's Policy and Strategy Unit helps to ensure her key priorities are delivered across both her remit as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Deputy Prime Minister.

The approach to recruitment and staffing levels is in line with the approach taken for these central functions under the previous administration, and the policy and strategy unit performs a similar role to equivalent units established under previous administrations.

There are clear rules governing recruitment and appointment of civil service roles which are regulated by the Civil Service Commission. We do not comment on individual staffing matters.

■ **Multiple Occupation: Private Rented Housing**

Damien Egan: [\[5219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) quality and (b) adequacy of the regulation of houses in multiple occupation in the private rented sector.

Matthew Pennycook:

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are subject to mandatory licensing in properties where five or more persons in two or more households share facilities.

Local authorities also have the power to introduce additional licensing for smaller HMOs which are home to three or four people from two or more households who share facilities. All HMOs, even those that do not require a licence, must also comply with HMO management regulations.

The Renters' Rights Bill will improve standards in the private rented sector. In particular, it will introduce a Decent Homes Standard to the PRS for the first time, which will set a minimum standard for all housing in the sector, including HMOs.

■ **Owner Occupation: Homelessness**

Paula Barker:

[5130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to help increase access to home ownership for (a) homeless and (b) displaced people.

Rushanara Ali:

Homelessness and rough sleeping levels are far too high. This can have a devastating impact on those affected.

We are taking action by setting up a dedicated Inter-Ministerial Group, which the Deputy Prime Minister will chair, to develop a long-term strategy to put us back on track to ending homelessness.

We are also taking action to address homelessness by delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and building 1.5 million new homes, as well as abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions for renters, and empowering people to challenge unreasonable rent increases.

In addition to increasing the supply of homes of all tenures, we are committed to helping more people into home ownership by introducing a permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme and to giving first-time buyers the first chance to buy homes.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Evictions**

Paula Barker:

[5134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to (a) end Section 21 evictions and (b) support tenants facing eviction under a Section 21 notice before that time.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government introduced the Renters' Rights Bill on Wednesday 11 September. It delivers on our manifesto commitment to overhaul the regulation of the private rented sector, including by abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions.

We want to see tenants benefit from these reforms as quickly as possible. We have therefore determined to introduce the new tenancy system for the private rented sector in one stage. Upon the commencement date, the new tenancy system will

apply to all private tenancies – existing tenancies will become periodic, and any new tenancies will be governed by the new rules.

Tenants facing eviction and threatened with homelessness as a result of being served a Section 21 notice should contact their local council, who if satisfied the applicant is threatened with homelessness and eligible must take reasonable steps to help them secure appropriate accommodation.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Pets**

Claire Hazelgrove:

[\[4945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made a recent assessment of the level of availability of pet-friendly accommodation in the private rental sector; and whether her Department is taking steps to increase the availability of pet-friendly accommodation.

Matthew Pennycook:

In 2021, the English Private Landlord Survey showed that almost half of landlords were unwilling to let to tenants with pets. The Government wants to ensure more tenants can experience the benefits of pet ownership – including the benefits to mental and physical health. The Renters' Rights Bill will give tenants the right to request a pet and ensure landlords cannot unreasonably withhold consent. Landlords will be required to respond to any requests by a tenant to keep a pet within 28 days, instead of the 42 that had been proposed by the previous Government. Tenants will be able to challenge unfair decisions.

■ **Public Houses**

John Glen:

[\[4681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which Department is responsible for Government policy on community pubs.

Alex Norris:

The policy for community assets, including community pubs, sits within MHCLG.

■ **Public Lavatories**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[2723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will have discussions with councils on maintaining free public toilets in (a) towns and (b) villages.

Jim McMahon:

The final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25 made available up to £64.7 billion, the majority of which is un-ringfenced in recognition of local authorities being best placed to understand local priorities, including on the important provision of public toilets whether they are operated by local councils directly or through community schemes.

■ Public Sector: Equality**Tom Hayes:** [\[4811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions she has had with local authorities on using (a) the Public Sector Equality Duty and (b) equality impact assessments to ensure that (i) women and (ii) women with intersecting protected characteristics are treated equally in all decision-making processes.

Jim McMahon:

It is each local authority's own responsibility to ensure it fulfils its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on gov.uk.

■ Recreation Spaces: Havering**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[4615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to (a) protect and (b) promote parks and green spaces within the London Borough of Havering.

Alex Norris:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given in response to Question UIN [2052](#) on 4 September 2024.

■ Rents: Increases**Tom Hayes:** [\[4819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will introduce annual limits to in-tenancy rent increases linked to (a) inflation and (b) real median income growth.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has no plans to do so. Our recently introduced Renters' Rights Bill includes provisions designed to empower private renters to challenge unreasonable rent increases.

■ Retail Trade: Empty Property**Stuart Andrew:** [\[4983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the oral contribution of 2 September 2024 by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Official Report, Column 3, if she will publish a timetable for implementing high street rental auctions.

Alex Norris:

Government is committed to supporting high streets and town centres, empowering communities and tackling the problem of persistent vacancy. Owing to the complex and technical nature of the policy, secondary legislation is required to implement High

Street Rental Auctions. We are working through the legislative process and will confirm the commencement date in due course.

■ Right to Buy Scheme

Dr Simon Opher: [\[4837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of ending the Right to Buy scheme.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer I gave to Question UIN [4158](#) on 12 September 2024.

■ Shared Ownership Schemes

Jim Shannon: [\[4714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she is taking steps to promote shared ownership for potential homeowners.

Matthew Pennycook:

Prospective buyers can find out more about shared ownership from the information provided on Gov.UK. This information includes a search tool that prospective buyers can use to find social landlords in their local area offering homes for sale on shared ownership terms. The Government would always encourage prospective buyers to take independent professional and legal advice before purchasing a shared ownership home.

■ Social Services: Finance

Stuart Andrew: [\[4633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Local Government Finance Settlement will contain measures to reform adult social care funding.

Jim McMahon:

We recognise the financial pressures that local authorities face and remain committed to supporting local government to deliver improved outcomes for local people through the adult social care system. We are committed to delivering a multiyear settlement in this Parliament giving certainty on allocations going forward to create a more sustainable, simplified adult social care funding system. Our Government's manifesto set out our intention for a programme of reform to create a National Care Service. The National Care Service will deliver consistent and high quality care across the country, which will be locally delivered, supporting people to live independently for as long as possible. We will engage with local government as we develop this programme of reform.

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged. The

department will work with local government leaders to ensure they are better able to fulfil their statutory duties.

■ **Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development and Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020**

Mike Amesbury: [\[2468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of repealing the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development and Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has not announced plans to remove or curtail permitted development rights. We will keep recent changes to permitted development rights under review.

■ **Travellers: West Sussex**

Jess Brown-Fuller: [\[4912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of transit sites for Travellers in West Sussex.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites makes clear that it is the responsibility of local planning authorities to produce an assessment of need for traveller sites. This includes permanent and transit site accommodation needs. In February 2019, local authorities were reminded of their duties to assess the need for transit sites, in addition to permanent sites, through a Written Ministerial Statement.

JUSTICE

■ **Civil Disorder: Criminal Proceedings**

Joy Morrissey: [\[4420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of violent disorder cases were heard by (a) district judges and (b) lay magistrates in August.

Heidi Alexander:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Courts**

Kim Johnson: [\[4552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to reduce the backlog in court cases.

Heidi Alexander:

We are committed to reducing the outstanding caseloads across jurisdictions and bringing down waiting times to ensure cases move through our system without delay.

Criminal courts

Over 90% of criminal cases are dealt with at the magistrates' courts where the outstanding caseload remains well below its peak during the pandemic. We continue to invest in the recruitment of more magistrates, aiming to recruit 2,000 new and diverse magistrates this year and similar numbers of each in the coming years.

The Crown Court outstanding caseload remains one of the biggest challenges facing the Criminal Justice System. The outstanding caseload has increased in recent years as more cases come before our criminal courts. To address this, we plan to sit at least 105,000 working days at the Crown Court this financial year, alongside considering further measures to speed up justice.

Family courts

In March this year the Family Justice Board agreed clear and measurable priorities for the family justice system, with a clear focus on closing the longest running cases and increasing the proportion of public law cases concluding within the 26-week statutory timeline.

To deliver this, we plan to sit 102,500 days in the family court this financial year and are investing £10m to develop, test and evaluate new initiatives to address the longest delays in public law cases.

We are also working to reduce the number of private law cases coming to court by supporting earlier resolution of family disputes. As of August 2024, over 32,000 separating parents have accessed the Family Mediation Voucher scheme, which provides £500 towards the cost of mediation, sparing many families from lengthy courtroom battles.

The outstanding caseload for public and private family law was 11,162 and 42,255 respectively (HMCTS MI published 8 August 2024). This is a reduction when compared to the same period last year, where there were 11,297 outstanding public law cases and 45,938 private law cases. (HMCTS MI published 11 July 2024).

Civil courts and tribunals

The civil courts have been under significant pressure in recent years. This has come from increased volumes and judicial capacity being both limited and often shared with the family jurisdiction.

It is important to note, though, that timeliness is not the sole indicator of performance in the civil justice system, and speedy resolution is not necessarily the best or most feasible justice outcome for every kind of case; some claims simply take time to resolve.

This Government is working to support people to resolve their civil disputes as swiftly and effectively as possible. We are doing this by promoting, where appropriate,

simpler, less costly, more consensual methods of dispute resolution, including mediation. This has the potential to significantly reduce the burden on the court system and deliver better outcomes for parties to disputes and society.

As part of HMCTS Reform, 94% of civil court services are, or are becoming, available online.

■ Criminal Proceedings: Standards

Kim Johnson: [\[4553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to help ensure that victims of crime do not wait more than a year for cases to reach trial.

Kim Johnson: [\[4554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to help ensure that victims of rape do not wait more than a year for cases to reach trial.

Alex Davies-Jones:

We want to make sure every victim has the swift access to justice they deserve, and we are committed to reducing the Crown Court caseload and bringing waiting times down.

To ensure we are hearing as many cases as possible, we plan to sit at least 105,000 working days in the Crown Court this financial year (FY24/25). We continue to hear criminal cases at Nightingale Courts, which increase the physical capacity of the court estate. We are also considering other measures to reduce the caseload and will make further announcements in due course.

We also know that, due to the complex nature of cases, rape victims can experience disproportionately long wait times for their trial.

Addressing this issue is central to this Government's commitment to halve violence against women and girls within a decade. We have committed to fast-track rape cases through the courts, working with the judiciary to drive down waiting times for the victims and survivors of this abhorrent offence.

■ Domestic Abuse: Sentencing

Jodie Gosling: [\[4284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of differences in sentencing for violent crimes committed (a) within domestic settings and (b) outside the home.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Sentencing in individual cases is a matter for the independent courts. Courts take into account the specific facts of each case and have a statutory obligation to follow any relevant sentencing guidelines. The Sentencing Council's guideline on domestic abuse, published in 2018, makes clear that the domestic context of an offence

increases its severity. This is because it represents a violation of trust and security that normally exists in an intimate or family relationship.

We know, however, that sentences which offenders receive often do not make sense either to victims or the wider public, and this is particularly worrying for offences against women and girls. That is why this Government has committed to carry out a review of sentencing, to ensure it is consistent and makes sense to victims and the public.

We are also aware that there are specific issues in relation to domestic homicide sentencing, due to the effects of the 25-year starting point for murders committed with a knife or other weapon taken to the scene with intent. In opposition, this Government welcomed the legislation introduced by the previous administration which implemented some of Clare Wade KC's independent Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review recommendations. We recognise, however, that there is more to be done and Ministers are continuing to meet stakeholders on this complex issue.

■ **Horizon IT System: Convictions**

Jerome Mayhew:

[4865]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many letters informing postmasters and former postmasters that their conviction has been quashed under the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act 2024 her Department has sent.

Heidi Alexander:

I refer the honourable Member to the answer I gave on 10 September 2024 to Question 4254 (<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-09-04/4254>).

The Government will begin to release monthly management information on the progress of the Post Office Convictions casework team. The first release of this management information will be on 3rd October 2024.

■ **Legal Aid Scheme: Rented Housing**

Tom Hayes:

[4820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will introduce legal aid for tenants for (a) housing repair issues and (b) enforcing legal housing rights.

Heidi Alexander:

Legal aid is available for those facing homelessness, and disrepair claims (when there is a serious risk of illness or injury) subject to a financial means test. Tenants in this situation should contact the Civil Legal Aid telephone helpline for assistance.

Legal aid is available for anyone facing the loss of their home through the Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service (HLPAS). HLPAS provides free early legal advice on housing, debt, council tax reduction and welfare benefits problems from the moment someone is faced with losing their home.

HLPAS also provides free legal advice and representation from a duty solicitor on the day of their court hearing. Where no face-to-face coverage is available, users can access remote early legal advice through HLPAS providers in other areas or via the Civil Legal Aid helpline or by going to <https://find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk>.

There is no means or merits test for this service.

■ Ministry of Justice: Equality

Rupert Lowe: [\[5196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many positions in her Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Ministry of Justice does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the Department's annual report and accounts.

■ Prison Accommodation

Sir John Hayes: [\[4586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of sending prisoners serving sentences in England and Wales to prisons overseas.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We have prisoner transfer agreements with over 100 countries which enable us to send foreign national offenders to serve the remainder of their prison sentence in their home country. We are reviewing the opportunities to strengthen or expand these arrangements.

The previous Government explored the possibility of sending British prisoners to rented prisons overseas. There are no current plans to introduce this measure, which we believe carries considerable cost. This Government is in the market for practical approaches that work, and not for costly gimmicks, unlike our predecessors

Edward Argar: [\[4726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the number of prison places made available in the adult male estate as a result of the prisoner early release scheme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The modelled estimates for the number of prison places made available in the adult male estate as a result of this change were published in the Impact Assessment for the Statutory Instrument to Amend the Standard Determinate Sentence Automatic Release Point.

This can be found at:

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2024/117/pdfs/ukia_20240117_en.pdf. Further statistics will be published in due course.

■ Prisoners' Release

Andrew Cooper:

[4856]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of making actual bodily harm an excluded offence under SDS40 when being served concurrently with sexual or domestic abuse offences.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Offenders' eligibility for Standard Determinate Sentences (SDS40) is determined by each specific sentence. Release provisions for different sentence types and length are fixed by law. This change has amended the automatic release point for standard determinate sentences that are not excluded. This means that by law, an offender serving multiple sentences could have a mixture of some sentences that are eligible for the 40% release point and others that are not. Someone serving a sentence for an excluded offence will not see their custodial time for that sentence reduced.

Assault occasioning actual bodily harm is excluded where the sentence is four years or more. Other offences have also been excluded from the change, including sex offences irrespective of sentence length; other 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.

Offenders who are eligible for release at the 40% point are subject to a robust risk assessment to manage them safely in the community. This will include checks with partners from other agencies, such as the police. Once released, offenders will be subject to the same set of strict licence conditions that would apply had they been release at a 50% automatic release point, for example to prohibit the offender from having contact with named persons, such as the victim or victim's family, or to impose exclusion zones to prevent the offender from going to specified places.

■ Prisoners' Release: Domestic Abuse

Sir John Hayes:

[4593]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an estimate of the number of people who (a) have been convicted of domestic abuse and (b) will be released early from prison as part of the SDS40 scheme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

There is no single offence for domestic abuse defined in legislation as many other criminal offences can include domestic abuse.

The SDS40 change has exclusions for specific offences linked to domestic abuse including stalking, coercive or controlling behaviour and non-fatal strangulation. This

represents a change from the previous Government's End of Custody Supervised Licence Scheme which failed to exclude domestic abuse sentences.

SDS40 data will be published in due course.

■ Prisoners' Release: Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences

Andrew Cooper:

[4854]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact on victims of SDS40 applying to sentences being served concurrently with sentences of sexual or domestic abuse.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Offenders' eligibility for SDS40 is determined by each specific sentence. Release provisions for different sentence types and length are fixed by law. This change has amended the automatic release point for standard determinate sentences that are not excluded. This means that by law, an offender serving multiple sentences could have a mixture of some sentences that are eligible for the 40% release point and others that are not. Someone serving a sentence for an excluded offence will not see their custodial time for that sentence reduced, but any sentences for non-excluded offences will be impacted.

Certain offences have been excluded from the Standard Determinate Sentences SDS40 change. These include 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).

If victims are part of the Victim Contact Scheme (VCS) or Victim Notification Scheme (VNS), they will be informed about a change to an offender's release date. Victims of a sexual, violent or terrorism offence are eligible for the VCS where an offender receives a specified custodial sentence of 12 months or more. They are eligible for the VNS if they are a victim of a stalking or harassment offence regardless of the length of the custodial sentence. This includes breach of a restraining order.

For victims of domestic abuse, there are national helplines that victims can also contact for more immediate help and support, which do offer translation services if your first language is not English. These are 24 hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline; the Men's advice line for domestic abuse; and the 24 hour National Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence helpline in Wales.

■ Prisoners' Release: Foreign Nationals

Jo White:

[5220]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many of the prisoners released under the early release scheme (a) are foreign nationals and (b) will be deported.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We are unable to provide the requested prisoner release figures at this time, as they form a subset of prisoner releases data scheduled for future publication. Numbers of custodial releases for the period covering July 2024 to September 2024 will be published on 30 January 2025, here: [Offender management statistics quarterly - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly).

All foreign national offenders in receipt of custodial sentences are referred to the Home Office to be considered for deportation. The Home Office make all final decisions relating to deportation, taking into account individual circumstances in each case, meaning it is not possible to predict future deportation numbers.

■ Prisoners' Release: Housing

Edward Argar:

[4223]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the potential merits of using accommodation contracted by the Home Office to provide housing for prisoners released when they have served 40% of their sentences.

Edward Argar:

[4224]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the number and proportion of prisoners who will be released having served 40% of their sentences who will not have stable accommodation to be released to.

Edward Argar:

[4225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of recent changes to the prisoner early release scheme on demand for housing from local authorities.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Individuals released through the Standard Determinate Sentence changes, known as SDS40, and at risk of homelessness can be referred to HMPPS's Community Accommodation Service, which can provide up to 12-weeks temporary accommodation.

The Chief Probation Officer wrote to all Local Authority Chief Executives on 02 August sharing early data on the total volume of expected prison releases for SDS40 cases and this was followed up by a meeting with all Local Authorities. This provided a high-level estimate of the potential volumes of releases by Local Authority. The indicative figure provided was that there would be c400 individuals who were at risk

of homelessness; however, through assessment and intervention by Probation, we are expecting that number will now be significantly lower.

We are working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and the Welsh Government to mitigate any impact on Local Authorities, as well as taking practical steps to minimise the chances that individuals are released homeless. This includes ensuring data is shared with the 49 Strategic Housing Specialists based in prisons and the Probation-based Homeless Prevention Teams to make sure plans are in place for those who need accommodation support.

We expect the vast majority to be supported by this provision, but should there not be enough, the Lord Chancellor has authorised probation directors to make use of alternative arrangements, including budget hotels, as a temporary measure for the cases that we will see in the next few weeks.

■ Prisoners' Release: Norfolk

Rupert Lowe: **[4566]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people will be released from prisons in Norfolk under the early release scheme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Our best national release estimates were published in the Statutory Instrument to Amend the Standard Determinate Sentence Automatic Release Point Impact Assessment published on 17 July 2024:

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2024/117/pdfs/ukia_20240117_en.pdf.

Further statistics will be published in due course.

■ Prisoners' Release: Reoffenders

Rupert Lowe: **[4565]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has made an estimate of reoffending rates for prisoners released under the early release scheme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Prisoners released on SDS40 will be subject to licence and liable to recall to prison if they do not comply or are judged a risk to public safety. Reoffending rates are published regularly on an annual and quarterly basis. The most recent rates are available at the link below:

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

A critical element of reducing reoffending is ensuring offenders leaving prison can access the support they need to resettle effectively into the community. An offender's resettlement needs are assessed on their arrival into the prison estate, with appropriate provision arranged in advance of release. When the release date is changed, as is the case with SDS40, this provision is realigned to that new release date.

There are clear processes in place to ensure all releases are carefully managed by Prison and Probation staff.

■ Prisoners' Release: Victims

Sir John Hayes: [4963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has had recent discussions with the Victims' Commissioner on the potential impact on victims of her Department's scheme to temporarily reduce the proportion of some custodial sentences served in prison from 50% to 40%.

Sir John Hayes: [4964]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department informs victims when perpetrators of crimes against them are due to be released under her Department's scheme to temporarily reduce the proportion of some custodial sentences served in prison from 50% to 40%.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Ministers and officials regularly meet with the Victims' Commissioner. I can confirm recent meetings have included discussions about the impact on victims of the prison capacity measures announced on 12 July, and the processes in place to ensure that victims have access to information and support they may need.

Victims who are eligible for and have opted into either the Probation Service's Victim Contact Scheme or Victim Notification Scheme are provided with updates about an offender that perpetrated crimes against them, including when these offenders are due to be released from custody. This includes providing these victims with the opportunity to make representations as to the licence conditions that they would like to be in place on an offender's release such as an exclusion zone.

■ Prisoners: Foreign Nationals

Rupert Lowe: [5222]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many foreign-born criminals (a) are in prisons and (b) were released under the revised terms of the early release scheme in Norfolk since 10 September 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Information on the number of Foreign Nationals in prisons can be found in Table 1_Q_12 here: Source:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a1167cce1fd0da7b592c8d/Prison-population-30-June-2024.ods>.

We are unable to provide the requested prisoner release figures at this time, as they form a subset of prisoner releases data scheduled for future publication. Numbers of custodial releases for the period covering July 2024 to September 2024 will be published on 30 January 2025, here: [Offender management statistics quarterly - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

■ Prisons: Crimes of Violence

Lee Anderson:

[\[4788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to tackle physical violence between prisoners in prisons.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Reducing violence in prisons remains a key priority. We are working hard to make prisons as safe as possible and are continuing our efforts to address the levels of violence in prisons.

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

To support those at raised risk of being violent, we have introduced the Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan (CSIP), a case management approach that is centred around the individual and addressing the underlying causes of their violence, including specific risk factors and needs, to help them manage and move away from violent behaviours.

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

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

■ Probation

Anna Dixon:

[\[4313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the probation service has the capacity to cope with recent increases in prisoner releases.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Probation staff do an extraordinary job in extremely challenging circumstances.

The eight weeks since the Lord Chancellor's announcement of prisoner release under SDS40 has given the Probation Service more time to prepare than a release on the previous Government's End of Custody Supervised Licence (ECSL) scheme afforded. We have also committed to recruiting 1000 new probation officers by March 2025.

Once released, offenders will be subject to the same set of strict licence conditions. These can include electronic monitoring, alcohol tags and exclusion zones. Should offenders breach these conditions they face being immediately recalled to prison.

Since July 2024, the Probation Service has implemented a set of measures designed to help alleviate workload pressures in response to the impact of prison capacity. This involves prioritising early engagement at the point where offenders are most likely to

breach the requirements of their licence or community sentence. In turn that ensures that staff can maximise supervision of the most serious offenders.

■ **Victim Support Schemes: Grants**

Kim Johnson: [\[4550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Victims Grant will continue to be given to Police and Crime Commissioners.

Kim Johnson: [\[4551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to ensure that funding for victims of crime is provided to Police and Crime Commissioners in a timely fashion after 31 March 2025.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government is committed to supporting victims of crime. The Ministry of Justice provides annual grant funding to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to commission local practical, emotional, and therapeutic support services for victims of all crime. Supporting victims to cope is essential in helping them move forwards following the impact of the crime.

Funding after March 2025 will be agreed through the next Spending Review process, which we cannot pre-empt. We appreciate the importance of notifying PCCs and providers about future funding as early as possible in order to effectively commission, plan and deliver services.

■ **Young Offender Institutions: Pepper Spray**

Edward Argar: [\[4226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether Ministers in her Department have had discussions with the Prison Officers' Association on the issuing of PAVA spray to prison officers in the youth estate since the general election.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Whether PAVA spray should be made available to officers in the youth estate was one of the matters discussed when the Secretary of State and the Minister for Prisons met representatives of the Prison Officers Association in July. We are considering all available information on this complex matter, including hearing the representations from a number of stakeholders with a range of perspectives.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Journalism: Northern Ireland**

Claire Hanna: [\[5125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with the Police Service of Northern Ireland on recent threats of violence against a Sunday World journalist.

Hilary Benn:

Journalists play a vital role in our society. It is unacceptable that they should find themselves threatened for doing their job.

I meet regularly with the Chief Constable and his senior team regarding national security and discuss a range of issues. I commend the PSNI on the progress they have made to address journalist safety in Northern Ireland. Two Journalist Safety Officers have been appointed and are notified of all reports of threats to journalists. An internal Journalist Safety Group has also been established.

Claire Hanna:[\[5126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking to ensure that journalists in Northern Ireland are protected from (a) threats of violence from paramilitary groups, (b) surveillance from security forces and (c) pressure to reveal sources.

Hilary Benn:

A free, independent media is a cornerstone of our democracy. It is vital that journalists are able to continue their work without the fear of attack or threat. The Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport is responsible for the National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists which sets out our approach to increase the safety of journalists.

We work closely with the Northern Ireland Executive in their efforts to tackle the threat and harm caused by paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. I commend the PSNI on the progress they have made to address journalist safety in Northern Ireland. Two Journalist Safety Officers have been appointed and are notified of all reports of threats to journalists. An internal Journalist Safety Group has also been established.

There are a number of robust legal protections afforded to journalists and their sources. These include Article 10 of The European Convention on Human Rights, the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, and the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. In addition, the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) can consider allegations of unlawful intrusion by public bodies, including the UK intelligence services and Police.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Equality**Rupert Lowe:**[\[5197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many positions in his Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Hilary Benn:

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) has not held any positions with (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity, and (d) equality in the job title in each of the last five years.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Animal Experiments****Sarah Champion:****[4212]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1045, if he will make it his policy to publish a timetable by Christmas 2024 for phasing out animal testing.

Feryal Clark:

The government is committed to reducing use of animals in scientific research in the long term. Our approach has been to support the development and application of approaches that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs).

It is not yet possible to replace all animal use due to the complexity of biological systems and regulatory requirements for their use.

We recognise that any work to phase out animal testing must be science led, in lock step with partners, and so we will not be setting arbitrary timelines for reducing their use.

Andrew Rosindell:**[4524]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to continue the previous Government's work on accelerating the (a) development, (b) validation and (c) update of (i) technologies and (ii) methods to reduce reliance on the use of animals in science.

Andrew Rosindell:**[4526]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when his Department plans to publish the roadmap to phase out the use of animals in testing; who will be involved in development of the roadmap; what the first practical steps of the roadmap will be; and whether he plans to take further steps in addition to the roadmap.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to supporting the uptake and development of alternative methods to the use of animals in science. The Labour Manifesto includes a commitment to "partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing", which is a long-term goal.

We take seriously the importance of this work and recognise that any work to phase out animal testing must be science-led and in lock step with partners. We are currently engaging with partners as to how we will take this commitment forward.

Andrew Rosindell:**[4525]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what plans his Department has to replace the use of animals in science.

Feryal Clark:

The Government has committed to partnering with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the requirements for phasing out of animal testing and discussions on this subject are already underway.

It is not yet possible to replace all animal use due to the complexity of biological systems and regulatory requirements for their use.

We recognise that any work to phase out animal testing must be science led, in lock step with partners, and so we will not be setting arbitrary timelines for reducing their use.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[4605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the report by Ipsos MORI entitled Attitudes to animal research in 2018, published by his Department on 24 May 2019, whether he plans to commission updated research on this matter.

Feryal Clark:

The Government last commissioned a survey on public awareness of, and attitudes towards, the use of animals in scientific research in 2018. This survey was the third in a series started in 2014. No decision has been taken on the future of the survey.

Artificial Intelligence**Andrew Griffith:**[\[4948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps to continue the work of the AI Opportunity Forum.

Feryal Clark:

The AI Opportunity Forum was established in January 2024 to run until the summer. Driving AI adoption across the private and the public sector is a government priority. In July 2024, the AI entrepreneur, Matt Clifford, was appointed to develop the AI Opportunities Action Plan. This will include actions designed to boost the responsible adoption of AI across all parts of the economy.

Databases: Havering**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[4610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will have discussions with Havering Council on the proposed East Havering Data Centre.

Chris Bryant:

This is exclusively a planning matter for Havering Council, but I welcome any opportunity to discuss the potential for data centres to accelerate innovation, improve consumers' experience and drive growth - including with local authorities.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Equality

Rupert Lowe:

[\[5185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many positions in his Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Feryal Clark:

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost.

Information on spending and staffing can be found in the Department's annual report and accounts.

■ Emily Middleton

John Glen:

[\[5016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will publish the submission that authorised the appointment of Ms Emily Middleton.

Feryal Clark:

Yes. The department will publish the submission relating to the approval of Emily Middleton's appointment in due course on the department's GOV.uk pages in response to a Freedom of Information request.

■ Government Departments: WhatsApp

John Glen:

[\[5006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what plans he has to revise the guidance entitled Non-corporate communication channels for government business, published on 30 March 2023, in relation to the use of WhatsApp on private devices.

Feryal Clark:

The guidance "Using non-corporate communication channels (e.g. WhatsApp, private email, SMS) for government business" will be reviewed on or before 31 December 2025.

■ ICT: Innovation

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department has made an estimate of the cost-benefit return of the projected Edinburgh supercomputer.

Feryal Clark:

The exascale project was announced at the March Budget 2023, but no new funding was allocated for it. Future investment decisions will be informed by a long term plan and subject to business case approvals. We will provide further updates in due course.

■ **Innovate UK: Finance****Andrew Griffith:**[\[4950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when Innovate UK will commence its next funding round.

Feryal Clark:

Innovate UK's funding competitions are published on the Innovation Funding Service at <https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/search>. This includes current active competitions and those due to launch shortly.

■ **Internet: Lincolnshire****Sir John Hayes:**[\[4598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what estimate he has made of the number of households that do not have internet access in (a) South Holland and The Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Chris Bryant:

According to the independent website ThinkBroadband.com, over 93% of premises in the South Holland and The Deepings constituency have access to superfast broadband speeds (≥ 30 Mbps) and 69% can access a gigabit-capable (>1000 Mbps) connection. In Lincolnshire, 95% of premises have access to superfast broadband speeds and 72% can access a gigabit-capable connection.

Approximately 2.8% of premises in South Holland and The Deepings and 2.6% of premises in Lincolnshire cannot access a decent broadband connection, defined by the Broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) as less than 10Mbps.

■ **Life Sciences: Finance****James Wild:**[\[4783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2023, whether he plans to make £520 million available for life sciences.

James Wild:[\[4784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2023, when stakeholders will be able to apply for the £520 million in funding from 2025-26 to support transformational manufacturing investments in life sciences.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to supporting Life Sciences manufacturing to deliver an NHS fit for the future and stimulate economic growth across the UK. It has invested over £405 million to secure vaccine manufacturing through the Vaccine Taskforce and is providing up to £118 million in capital grants to boost UK manufacturing investment.

DSIT is discussing plans to support investment in the sector with the Treasury. The £520 million funding announced in the Autumn Statement for Life Sciences manufacturing is part of these discussions.

■ National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research: Finance**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[4523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his policy is on future funding of the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research.

Feryal Clark:

In our commitment to accelerate the development, validation, and enhancement of technologies and methodologies aimed at reducing reliance on animal testing in scientific research, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is currently investing £50m for investment over the five-year period up to April 2025 in the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs). In addition, there has been £5m additional funding for NC3Rs for this financial year.

UKRI will also be conducting a thorough strategic review in 2024, followed by a science review, to determine the optimal level of future investment.

■ Research: Investment**Neil O'Brien:**[\[5106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to page 6 of the policy document entitled Statement of Levelling Up Missions, published on 25 January 2024, whether it remains his Department's policy that levels of public investment in research and development outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40% by 2030.

Feryal Clark:

This public R&D regional investment target is committed to in legislation via the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.

Increasing productivity right across the UK is fundamental to our mission to kickstart economic growth. Through our Industrial Strategy and the development of Local Growth Plans, we will build on local strengths to ensure that public and private R&D investment right across the UK helps local places to reach their potential.

■ Satellites

Andrew Griffith: [\[4941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to promote direct to device mobile connectivity from satellites.

Chris Bryant:

Although this is a nascent field, government recognises the emerging potential of direct-to-device (D2D) connectivity, in particular in hard to reach or remote areas.

Ofcom has recently published a call for input on the potential supply of and demand for D2D.

To support the building of UK capability in D2D technologies, the UK Space Agency is supporting UK companies to apply for European Space Agency funding for D2D research & development. UK Research and Innovation's £70m Future Telecoms Technology Missions Fund also includes a research mission on the integration of non-terrestrial and terrestrial communications networks, which is relevant to the development and deployment of these technologies.

■ Satellites: Broadband

Andrew Griffith: [\[4943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help provide supplemental broadband coverage via satellite in rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

The vast majority of premises are expected to be covered by commercial activity or Project Gigabit. However, we do accept there will be a small number of premises not connected and we are considering alternative technologies to improve connectivity for these populations, such as fixed wireless access.

The satellite market is developing at pace, with significant changes to terminal equipment, speeds and service packages expected in the coming years, including new suppliers entering the market via the launch of new satellite constellations. Over 40,000 people in the UK have taken up a LEO satellite broadband service, and it is clear it has the potential to play a significant part in improving rural connectivity. We continue to monitor the development of this market.

■ Satellites: Manufacturing Industries

Andrew Griffith: [\[4942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to support the manufacture of low earth orbit satellite manufacturing in the UK.

Chris Bryant:

The UK has helped pioneer the low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite sector through support to highly innovative companies such as SSTL, Clyde Space and Open Cosmos, all of which have been supported by different Government mechanisms.

Government continues to support this fast-moving sector, including through the UK Space Agency's Connectivity in Low Earth Orbit (C-LEO) scheme, which supports high volume satellite production.

The UK Space Agency also contributes funding to the European Space Agency's Advanced Research in Telecommunications Systems (ARTES) programme. ARTES contributes to UK LEO satellite manufacturing by supporting technology and business development in the ground, space, and network segments.

■ Semiconductors**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[4601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will ensure that the UK Semiconductor Advisory Panel has a membership from the whole of the UK.

Feryal Clark:

The Semiconductor Advisory Panel is representative of the UK's semiconductor industry, and the ecosystem that supports it. In selecting the panel, consideration was given to representation across UK specialisms in design, compound semiconductors and R&D, company size and geographic location.

We continue to speak with the full spectrum of the UK's semiconductor industry, including regular engagement with companies and representatives from across the UK.

■ Smart Devices: China**Blair McDougall:**[\[4468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to pages 4 and 5 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, what steps he is taking to tackle the threat to UK national security posed by the use of Chinese-manufactured cellular Internet of Things modules.

Feryal Clark:

The security of the UK is a top priority for the government. We are taking robust action to ensure new and existing technologies are safely developed and deployed across the UK. The Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act requires manufacturers, importers and retailers to ensure IoT products meet minimum security requirements. In telecoms specifically, we have been working to promote a more open, innovative, and diverse technology supply chain and to strengthen our legislative frameworks. The Government is taking a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK

and global interests. 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.

SCOTLAND

■ Scotland Office: Equality

Rupert Lowe: [\[5198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many positions in his Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Ian Murray:

The Scotland Office has not had any positions that have included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity or (d) equality in their job title in any of the last five years.

TRANSPORT

■ Airports

Alex Mayer: [\[4294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department will introduce a new National Airport Strategy.

Mike Kane:

This Government is committed to securing the long-term future of the UK aviation sector, recognising the vital connectivity it provides between the UK and the rest of the world. Currently, the Department has no plans to introduce a new National Airport Strategy.

■ Aviation: Qualifications

Munira Wilson: [\[4546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had recent discussions with the (a) Secretary of State for Business and Trade and (b) Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations on the potential merits of negotiating a mutual recognition of professional qualification agreement with the European Commission for the aviation sector.

Mike Kane:

The Government has been clear that the UK's trading relationship with the EU can be improved in several areas. The Department continues to engage with the European Union (EU) Commission on areas where future cooperation or recognition could support UK interests. Any further details will be provided in due course, as engagement progresses.

■ Department for Transport: Equality**Rupert Lowe:** [\[5186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many positions in her Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Mike Kane:

The Department for Transport does not routinely collate information on specific words and collating this information would come at a disproportionate cost. Information on spending and staffing can be found in the Department's annual report and accounts.

■ East West Rail Line: Aylesbury**Callum Anderson:** [\[4888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of the Aylesbury spur of the East-West Rail link for the (a) Buckinghamshire and (b) UK economy.

Lilian Greenwood:

Along with East West Rail Company and Network Rail, the Department for Transport is considering the merits of providing an East West Rail link to Aylesbury, and shared both cost information and the results of business case analysis with the local authority. A final decision will be made in due course.

■ Ford Motor Company: Engines**Katie White:** [\[5169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the safety of Ford EcoBoost engines.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Ford EcoBoost engine is a series of engines introduced around 14 years ago that covers a range of engine sizes and Ford vehicle models.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) investigates potential safety defects within the terms of the United Kingdom's Code of Practice on Vehicle Safety Defects (the Code), which has the support of the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (as amended). This has specific requirements as to what can and cannot be considered a safety defect and is clear on its requirement of evidence to support any conclusions made.

As the appointed regulating body, the DVSA's Market Surveillance Unit acts solely on the evidence available and will demand safety recall action by a manufacturer whenever the requirement to do so presents itself.

The DVSA regularly audits manufacturers to ensure that their policies and procedures fully meet with the expectations of the Code. This is demonstrated by

recall action generally taken voluntarily by manufacturers and prior to DVSA formally mandating action.

The DVSA continues to review all reported cases and investigates whether they present a road safety concern. Should remedial action be required, the DVSA will work with the manufacturer to ensure swift action is taken and that the manufacturer informs vehicle keepers directly.

In the past, safety recalls have been conducted for parts of the EcoBoost range, and investigations continue into potential defects today relating to 'belt failures' and whether this could constitute a safety defect, although there are no immediate concerns.

Consumers experiencing issues with Ford EcoBoost engines should contact Ford or the retailer directly to resolve the issue. Consumers can also contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133 for advice.

■ Hammersmith Bridge: Repairs and Maintenance

Sarah Olney:

[\[4754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish the memorandum of understanding between (a) her Department, (b) Transport for London and (c) the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham on the cost of the Hammersmith Bridge repairs.

Simon Lightwood:

A Memorandum of Understanding on the split of responsibilities for the repair of Hammersmith Bridge was drafted but not agreed in 2021. However, the Department has continued to work productively with both LBHF and TfL and has contributed almost £13m towards the Hammersmith Bridge restoration project to-date. A reconvened Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce is currently being organised, which will help to move this project forward.

■ Public Transport: Disability

Zarah Sultana:

[\[4261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the accessibility of (a) buses, (b) trains and (c) other public transport for disabled people; and what steps she plans to take to improve such accessibility.

Simon Lightwood:

This Government is fully committed to our promise to deliver reliable, affordable and accessible transport, with accessibility at the heart of our bold reforms for bus and rail reform and improved passenger standards across the transport network.

The Department has recently published an annual evaluation of accessibility through the Inclusive Transport Strategy scorecard, based upon analysis by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). In addition to this the department publishes annual statistics on disability, accessibility and blue badge holding, which includes data on public satisfaction with different aspects of public transport provision. The

Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee is the Department's expert committee on accessibility, making sure that proper consideration and assessment of disabled people's views and needs are central to our decision making.

■ Public Transport: Gender Based Violence

Paula Barker:

[\[5133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department plans to take with Cabinet colleagues to help reduce violence against women and girls on public transport.

Simon Lightwood:

This Government is committed to tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and we have set out our unprecedented mission to halve it within a decade. Achieving this means concerted work on prevention and overhauling every aspect of society's response to these devastating crimes.

The Department for Transport is working across government to address these issues. We are also piloting Transport Safety Officers in five areas in England, including officers specifically trained to respond to incidents of VAWG.

The Department also continues to work closely with transport partners, including the British Transport Police, on a range of initiatives to address the problems faced by all passengers, on the transport network. This includes the Railway Guardian app which provides safety advice, links to partner organisations and enables reporting of incidents to the force directly. BTP uses specialist teams of plain clothed and uniformed officers across the network to target and identify offenders. It also uses enhanced patrols, with a directed, intelligence-led focus around the nighttime economy, providing high visibility presence to reassure rail staff and the public.

■ Railway Stations: Access

Blake Stephenson:

[\[4291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that stations without step free access are made accessible for all.

Simon Lightwood:

We are carefully considering the best approach to accessibility at stations across Britain. This Government is committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognise the social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

■ Railways: Mobility Scooters

Andy McDonald:

[\[4218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance her Department has issued on increasing (a) station accessibility and (b) rolling stock accessibility for mobility scooters on the rail network.

Simon Lightwood:

The Secretary of State publishes Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations, which licenced operators must follow whenever they install, renew or replace infrastructure or facilities in Great Britain.

Train and station operators are required by their operating licences to establish and comply with an Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) which must be approved by the Office of Rail and Road. An ATP sets out, among other things, the arrangements and assistance that an operator will provide to protect the interests of disabled people using its services and to facilitate such use.

The guidance states that operators must set out their policies regarding the carriage of mobility scooters and other mobility aids for mobility-impaired people on their trains. Operators must make the reasoning behind their policies clear, particularly with regard to any policy excluding the carriage of some or all mobility scooters and mobility aids.

Operators must also provide as part of their ATP a separate document that gives details of services and facilities at all of the stations they manage, and other stations called at by their services, including relevant stations operated by Network Rail.

Andy McDonald:[\[4219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring passenger rail franchise operators to accommodate mobility scooters.

Simon Lightwood:

Train and station operators are required by their operating licences to establish and comply with an Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) which must be approved by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). An ATP sets out, among other things, the arrangements and assistance that an operator will provide to protect the interests of disabled people using its services and to facilitate such use.

Operators may offer a scooter card scheme which allows passengers to apply for a permit for the carriage of their scooter based on its dimensions and other relevant information reasonably requested by the operator. This flexibility is allowed by the ORR given the variety of mobility scooters, different types rolling stock that may call at an operator's station (often for different operators' services), as well as the potential infrastructure restrictions at stations. ORR require operators to publish clear information about what mobility scooters they do / don't accept, and where and this information is available on operators' websites.

Andy McDonald:[\[4220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) stations and (b) rolling stock units in service were mobility-scooter friendly on the rail network in each year since 2010.

Simon Lightwood:

This government is committed to making the railway more accessible. Since 2006, the Access for All Programme has upgraded more than 250 stations to deliver step

free access across Great Britain. Details on the accessibility and facilities for each station can be found on the National Rail Enquires or individual train operating company websites.

All trains in service meet the relevant accessibility requirements and are built around accommodating wheelchair dimensions of 1200mm by 700mm but not mobility scooters.

Operators may offer a scooter card scheme which allows passengers to apply for a permit for the carriage of their scooter based on its dimensions and other relevant information reasonably requested by the operator. This flexibility is allowed by the ORR given the variety of mobility scooters, different types rolling stock that may call at an operator's station (often for different operators' services), as well as the potential infrastructure restrictions at stations. ORR require operators to publish clear information about what mobility scooters they do / don't accept, and where and this information is available on operators' websites.

Since 2010, over 8,800 new vehicles out of a fleet of over 15,200 vehicles have been ordered by train operators to replace vehicles that did not meet modern accessibility requirements.

■ Railways: Nationalisation

Wendy Morton: [\[4221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of determining the sequencing of when train operating companies will be brought into public ownership by their operational performance.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government has been clear that passenger train operations will transfer to a public-sector operator as current contracts end or reach their contractual break point, avoiding the need to pay compensation to the current operators. The Secretary of State is considering the timing of the transfer of services under each contract and is continually monitoring performance. She will not hesitate to take appropriate action when operators fall short, up to and including termination if the relevant contractual conditions are met.

■ Railways: Veterans

Graeme Downie: [\[4571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Veterans Railcards have been issued since they were introduced.

Simon Lightwood:

Data on the number of Veteran's Railcards issued is collected by the Rail Delivery Group but is not published due to its commercial sensitivity. Access to this data can be requested, on application, from RDGPublicAffairs@raildeliverygroup.com.

Graeme Downie: [\[4572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many journeys have been booked using a Veterans Railcard in each month since its introduction.

Simon Lightwood:

Data on the number of journeys made using a Veteran's Railcard is collected by the Rail Delivery Group but is not published due to its commercial sensitivity. Access to this data can be requested, on application, from RDGPUBLICAFFAIRS@RAILDELIVERYGROUP.COM.

■ **Transport: Stroud**

Dr Simon Opher: [\[4958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure that transport infrastructure in the M5 corridor north of Bristol is developed in a way that allows housing targets in the Stroud district council local plan to be achieved.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government recognises the need to ensure that housing growth is appropriately supported by transport infrastructure provision. I am unable to comment on specific proposals, it is for the local authority in consultation with infrastructure providers to determine the infrastructure requirements to support proposed growth in local plans. National Highways has worked collaboratively with the local council throughout the Local Plan process and continues to work constructively with them.

■ **Transport: West Yorkshire**

Paul Davies: [\[5212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve transport links in West Yorkshire.

Simon Lightwood:

My Department is committed to improving transport links in West Yorkshire, and across the country. West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) has been allocated £830m of City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements funding over a five-year period, to help transform local transport into an integrated and inclusive network. Included in the investment is £160m set aside for mass transit development in West Yorkshire.

WYCA has also received £13.373m of additional Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding for 2024/2025, helping deliver their vision for better buses in West Yorkshire. The Department's Buses Bill will support WYCA in their vision to bring buses back under local control, ensuring their networks can meet the needs of the communities who rely on them.

Additionally, as part of improving rail connectivity in West Yorkshire and the rest of the country, we have established Shadow Great British Railways to bring a major overhaul of the rail network, putting passengers first and driving up performance.

■ West Coast Main Line: Standards

David Taylor: [\[4861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of (a) signalling safety, (b) service reliability and (c) maintenance on the West Coast Mainline.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government is clear that performance on the West Coast Main Line has not been good enough with too many cancellations and delays.

Ministers recently met with the Managing Director of Avanti West Coast and the Network Rail West Coast South Route Director to challenge them on poor performance and demand immediate action to deliver urgent improvements relating to service reliability. Ministers will be meeting them again next month to follow-up and to ensure progress.

In their capacity as the independent safety regulator, the Office of Rail and Road has not raised any concerns regarding signalling safety on the West Coast Mainline.

TREASURY

■ Bank Cards: Fees and Charges

Angus MacDonald: [\[5158\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of rising transaction fees for non-European Economic Area cards on small businesses in (a) the Highlands and (b) other tourist areas; and whether her Department has plans to take steps to reduce those transaction fees.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government is committed to promoting competition in the payments sector and recognises the importance of ensuring the fees charged for card payments are fair for all parties, including merchants.

Card transaction fees are made up of different components. These include interchange fees paid to card issuers, and scheme and processing fees paid to the card scheme operators. Domestic interchange fees are capped under law and the Payment Systems Regulator is responsible for enforcing these caps.

The PSR also has a broader programme of work to review aspects of card fees and assess whether the markets are working well, including for merchants. For example, earlier this year, the PSR published the interim findings of its investigation review into recent increases in scheme and processing fees, which can be found [here](#).

■ Banking Hubs

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[4779\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of opening a banking hub in (a) St Ives, Cambridgeshire and (b) other market towns that have experienced bank closures.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and high streets, and is committed to championing sufficient access for all as a priority. This is why the Government is working closely with industry to roll-out 350 banking hubs across the UK, which will provide individuals and businesses with critical cash and banking services.

Over 60 banking hubs are already open and Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, expect 100 hubs to be open by the end of the year.

The specific location of these hubs is determined independently by LINK, the operator of the UK's largest ATM network. LINK considers criteria such as whether another bank branch remains nearby, the local population, the number of cash-accepting businesses and the financial vulnerability of the community.

■ Business: Taxation

Jerome Mayhew:

[\[5110\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when her Department plans to publish a business tax roadmap.

James Murray:

The Government will outline a tax roadmap for business at the Budget to offer the certainty that encourages investment and gives business the confidence to grow, including our commitment to cap corporation tax at 25% for the duration of this Parliament and to retain full expensing.

■ Cash Dispensing: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4590\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the number of pay to use ATMs in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Tulip Siddiq:

The government recognises that cash continues to be used by millions of people across the UK, including those who may be in vulnerable groups, and is committed to protecting access to cash for individuals and businesses.

The operator of the UK's largest ATM network, LINK, publishes data on the number of ATMs across each parliamentary constituency. This includes a breakdown of the number of pay-to-use ATMs operated by the LINK network. In the constituency of

South Holland and the Deepings, LINK data identifies that there are 7 pay-to-use ATMs of 48 ATMs overall. This data can be found at <https://www.link.co.uk/data-research/the-atm-network>.

Whilst no breakdown is available for Lincolnshire as a whole, LINK operates a cash locator tool which provides data on the location and character of ATMs across the UK, and can be searched by local area. This includes a breakdown of the number of pay-to-use ATMs, free-to-use ATMs, as well as other cash-related services such as those provided at Post Office counters.

The tool can be accessed at: <https://www.link.co.uk/cash-locator>.

■ Civil Service: Trade Union Officials

John Glen: [4637]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Office for Value for Money will investigate the value for money of (a) expenditure relating to in the Civil Service and (b) trade union facility time in the Civil Service.

John Glen: [4708]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether (a) her Department and (b) the Office for Value for Money plans to issue guidance on the value for money of (i) domestic and (ii) international flights.

John Glen: [4709]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Office for Value for Money will investigate value for money in (a) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion spending and (b) trade union facility time in the civil service.

Darren Jones:

The Office for Value for Money (OVfM) has two primary roles. First, to provide targeted interventions, working with Treasury and departments, so that value for money governs every decision government makes. Second, to recommend system reforms to ensure any changes support the government's missions and deliver value for money.

The OVfM is focussed on tackling wider systemic challenges that impact Government operations. Internal teams across departments already consider the value for money on respective policies and external interactions, using existing tools to consider their impact.

■ Council Tax: Wales

David Simmonds: [5155]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will list (a) each of the variables and (b) the source of data for each variable used in the new Automated Valuation Model for the Valuation Office Agency's council tax revaluation in Wales.

James Murray:

The variables used in the AVM model include property attributes, locations, and sales details. While much of this data is sourced from VOA records, the VOA supplement this with data available across Government and through the Public Sector Geospatial Agreement, including from the Office for National Statistics, HM Land Registry and Ordnance Survey.

David Simmonds:[\[5223\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what advice the Center for Appraisal Research and Technology provided to the Valuation Office Agency for its work on an automated valuation model for council tax revaluation in Wales.

James Murray:

To support the model development, VOA let a short-term advisory contract with the Centre for Appraisal Research and Technology ([CART](#)) who provided advice on:

1. Specific statistical and modelling techniques employed by VOA to ensure appropriate use, focusing on published academic research and international best practice among government property tax/valuation authorities;
2. Alignment of VOA modelling procedures with international standards;
3. Any additional statistical tests and analyses VOA should consider as part of their modelling work.

David Simmonds:[\[5224\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether (a) artificial intelligence and (b) machine learning were used in the automated valuation model in the Valuation Office Agency's work for council tax revaluation in Wales.

James Murray:

The Automated Valuation Model (AVM) utilises supervised machine learning, where a model is trained using known transaction values. Statistical techniques are used to calculate the impact of the property's inherent characteristics and location on the value of a property. While the AVM supports the valuation process, its outputs are reviewed and refined by valuers and analysts before making a final judgement on the appropriate band a property is placed in.

■ Energy: Taxation**Andrew Bowie:**[\[4758\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report by Offshore Energies UK entitled Impact of UKCS fiscal policy on UK economic growth, published on 2 September 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) increasing the headline rate of the Energy Profits Levy to 78%, (b) extending the Energy Profits Levy for a year and (c) removing all allowances associated with the Energy Profits Levy on the level of capital investment on the UK continental shelf in the period between 2025 and 2029.

Andrew Bowie:

[\[4759\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report by Offshore Energies UK entitled Impact of UKCS fiscal policy on UK economic growth, published on 2 September 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) increasing the headline rate of the Energy Profits Levy to 78%, (b) extending the Energy Profits Levy for a year and (c) removing all allowances associated with the Energy Profits Levy on the total economic value of the sector in the period between 2025 and 2029.

Andrew Bowie:

[\[4760\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report by Offshore Energies UK entitled Impact of UKCS fiscal policy on UK economic growth, published on 2 September 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) increasing the headline rate of the Energy Profits Levy to 78%, (b) extending the Energy Profits Levy for a year and (c) removing all allowances associated with the Energy Profits Levy on (i) demand for supply chain companies and (ii) business decisions on the location of (A) resource capability and (B) assets in that sector.

Andrew Bowie:

[\[4761\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report by Offshore Energies UK entitled Impact of UKCS fiscal policy on UK economic growth, published on 2 September 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) increasing the headline rate of the Energy Profits Levy to 78%, (b) extending the Energy Profits Levy for a year and (c) removing all allowances associated with the Energy Profits Levy on the (i) level of employment and (ii) number of projects that will start in the period to 2029.

James Murray:

In July, the government confirmed changes to the Energy Profits Levy (EPL), including extending the levy's end date to March 2030, increasing it by three percentage points to 38%, removing the levy's main 29% investment allowance, and reducing the generosity of capital allowances when calculating profits taxable by the EPL. The government will confirm further details of these changes at Budget on October 30, including the rate of the EPL's decarbonisation investment allowance, which has been retained. We are currently consulting with the sector to finalise these changes and ensure a phased and responsible transition for the North Sea.

Money raised from these changes will support the transition to clean energy, increasing security and independence while providing sustainable jobs for the future and helping to protect electricity bills against future price shocks. Full costings certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) will be published at Budget on October 30. Forecasts for investment in the sector will also be published by the OBR at this time, and will take into account policy decisions impacting the production of oil and gas across the UK and UK Continental Shelf.

■ Enterprise Investment Scheme

Rupert Lowe:

[R] [\[4862\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will review the implementation of the Enterprise Investment Scheme; and if she will meet the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth to discuss that scheme.

James Murray:

The Enterprise Investment Scheme was recently evaluated, with reports published in November 2023. These are available on gov.uk.

■ Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness

John Glen:

[\[4696\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what government efficiency savings planned by the previous government she plans to (a) continue and (b) discontinue.

Darren Jones:

Departments are responsible for managing their budgets and delivering efficiency savings, both those in plans from the previous government, and those announced by the new government.

The government has secured £5.5 billion of savings in 2024-25 rising to £8.1 billion in 2025-26. That means it has already managed down the £21.9 billion spending pressure to £16.4 billion.

The Government will set out its further plans on efficiencies in the multi-year Spending Review that will conclude Spring 2025.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Taxation

Angus MacDonald:

[\[5157\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of terminating the furnished holiday lettings tax regime on local (a) economies and (b) employment in tourist destinations.

James Murray:

The Government will abolish the Furnished Holiday Lets (FHLs) tax regime from April 2025, which will equalise the tax treatment of landlords' property income and gains.

The government wants to support visitor accommodation alongside housing for long term-residents to rent or buy. Achieving this balance is crucial in supporting the tourism sector, and many of the people who work in the sector need access to local housing.

■ Income Tax and Social Security Benefits: Foreign Nationals

Nick Timothy:

[\[4879\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to publish what the total value of (a) income tax paid, (b) National Insurance Contributions paid, (c) tax credits claimed and (d) child

benefit claimed for non-UK nationals is, broken down by nationality, for each of the last five years.

James Murray:

HMRC no longer produce a breakdown of Income Tax paid, National Insurance contributions paid, tax credits claimed and Child Benefit claimed by nationality. The latest [publication](#) was in August 2022.

■ **Inheritance Tax: Agriculture**

Kevin Hollinrake: **[5066]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of agricultural relief for Inheritance Tax in supporting farming businesses.

Kevin Hollinrake: **[5067]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of business relief for Inheritance Tax in supporting family owned businesses.

James Murray:

HMRC publishes data regularly about the number of claims and the cost of non-structural tax reliefs, such as agricultural property relief and business property relief. The information can be found at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/main-tax-expenditures-and-structural-reliefs.

■ **LetterOne: Sanctions**

James Cartlidge: **[4388]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the sanction compliance of LetterOne's recent acquisition of a 15 per cent stake in Harbour Energy.

Tulip Siddiq:

The UK's financial sanctions regime is overseen by HM Treasury's Office for Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI). OFSI's position regarding the ownership and control status of LetterOne is that the entity is not subject to UK financial sanctions.

In relation to wider control of Harbour Energy, following consideration under the National Security and Investment Act 2021, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster allowed the proposed acquisition of 46.5% of Harbour Energy Plc by BASF Handels- und Export GmbH to proceed, subject to necessary and proportionate measures to address national security concerns. Details can be found in the [Final Order](#) published by the Cabinet Office on 30th July on gov.uk. The Government cannot comment on detail of national security assessments.

■ Pension Credit

Pete Wishart:

[\[4603\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much funding her Department has allocated to the Pension Credit Week of Action campaign, launched on 2 September 2024.

Darren Jones:

The Government wants those eligible for Pension Credit but not currently claiming it to receive the benefits they are entitled to, including their Winter Fuel Payment. We will continue to maximise opportunities to promote Pension Credit – such as the recent Week of Action - and to raise awareness of its wider benefits and to encourage pensioners to apply.

In the five weeks following the Chancellor's statement on 29 July we have seen a 115% increase in claims for Pension Credit, compared to the five weeks before. This is a welcome increase, but we must continue to raise awareness. We are now focusing on a paid media partnership and a national Pension Credit marketing campaign through to 21 December to maximise take-up.

Campaign activity is funded from DWP's budget. We will confirm department's control totals for 2024-25, and expenditure limits for 2025-26 alongside the Budget on 30 October.

■ Private Education: VAT

Damian Hinds:

[\[4620\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to exempt pupils awaiting an Education Health and Care Plan from the introduction of VAT on independent school fees.

Damian Hinds:

[\[4622\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has received representations over the timing of her Department's consultation on Applying VAT to Private School Fees and Removing the Business Rates Charitable Rates Relief for Private 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.

This change will not impact pupils with the most acute additional needs, where these can only be met in private schools. Local Authorities (LAs) fund pupils' places in private schools where their needs can only be met in a private school. For example, in England, where attendance at that private school is required by a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), LAs will be able to reclaim the VAT on the fees from HMRC. In Northern Ireland, it will be the Education Authority who fund placements in private schools and will be able to reclaim the VAT.

If parents have chosen to pay the fees to place their child in a private school while going through an EHC needs assessment, they will be liable for any fees. As part of the EHC assessment process, the LA will consider what school or college to name on the plan. 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.

A technical consultation was published on 29 July and remained open until 15 September. This gave schools 6 weeks to prepare a consultation response, including around 2 weeks from the end of the school holidays. It is important that the consultation closed on 15 September to provide enough time to analyse responses and consider any changes to the draft legislation ahead of Budget.

■ Public Sector: Productivity

John Glen:

[\[4984\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to (a) promote public sector reform and (b) increase public sector productivity.

Darren Jones:

The Chancellor has launched a multi-year Spending Review to conclude in Spring 2025 that will establish a new approach to public service reform to drive greater productivity in the public sector.

The Government will use the Spending Review to change the way public services are delivered by embedding a mission-led approach, driving forward public service reform and making the best use of technology to better deliver services. The Spending Review will set spending plans for a minimum of three years of the five-year forecast period.

■ Rent a Room Scheme

Tom Hayes:

[\[5244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the Rent a Room Scheme tax-free earnings threshold.

James Murray:

Rent a room relief provides an incentive for people to make spare rooms available for rent.

As with all aspects of the tax system, the Government will keep this under review.

■ Revenue and Customs: Newcastle upon Tyne**Josh Fenton-Glynn:** [\[4914\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had recent discussions with HMRC on (a) industrial relations at the Benton Park View office in Newcastle and (b) the appropriate use of disciplinary practices in that office.

James Murray:

HMRC has clear policies and processes on conduct which ensure all staff are treated fairly. HMRC is aware that, as Ministers, we value the role of the trade unions in the workplace.

■ Small Businesses: Business Rates**Jerome Mayhew:** [\[5108\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the burden of business rates on small and medium-sized businesses.

Jerome Mayhew: [\[5109\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of the rate of the business rates multiplier in (a) England and (b) Wales.

James Murray:

Recent trends in the rate of the business rates multiplier can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/calculate-your-business-rates>.

A number of reliefs are available to support businesses with their business rate liabilities. The eligibility criteria for them can be found on [GOV.UK](#). This includes the 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 and £15,000. SBRR means that over a third of the smallest non-domestic properties in England pay no business rates.

I am unable to comment on the Welsh business rates system, as business rates is a devolved policy area which means this is a matter for the Welsh government.

■ Tax Evasion: Small Businesses**Paula Barker:** [\[5137\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of developing a system to tackle trends in the level of tax evasion from small businesses.

James Murray:

The Government is committed to tackling all forms of non-compliance, including evasion. Each year HMRC estimates the size of the tax gap, and the latest published tax gap (2022-23) was 4.8% of theoretical liabilities, or £39.8bn. The element attributable to small businesses is 60% (£24.1bn) of that overall tax gap.

HMRC publishes these estimates in its annual 'Measuring the Tax Gap' report.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/measuring-tax-gaps>

Small businesses play a vital role in the UK economy and most businesses pay what they owe. A small minority fail to pay their fair share of tax, thereby depriving public services of vital funding and leading to unfair competition between businesses.

■ Tobacco: Smuggling

Sir John Hayes:

[4972]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking at a retail level to tackle the illicit tobacco trade.

James Murray:

HMRC works closely with local authorities to help tackle illicit tobacco trade at a retail level.

In January 2021 HMRC and National Trading Standards launched Operation CeCe. This joint initiative builds on decades of partnership working with local Trading Standards Officers.

HMRC funds Operation CeCe with the money being allocated by National Trading Standards to local authority Trading Standards. This supports them to undertake enforcement activity including the sharing of information and intelligence to target and seize illegal tobacco, disruption of the illicit tobacco market and prevention of fraud in their area.

In its first two years of operation more than 28 million cigarettes and nearly 8 tonnes of illicit hand rolling-tobacco were seized.

In July 2023 new powers were given to Trading Standards to make referrals to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) where they find evidence of tobacco products that do not comply with the UK Tobacco Track and Trace System.

In January 2024, HMRC published a new Illicit Tobacco Strategy 'Stubbing out the problem'. The Strategy sets out how HMRC intends to build on the success of Operation CeCe by increasing the level of funding available to Trading Standards.

■ Treasury: Equality

Rupert Lowe:

[5194]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many positions in her Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

James Murray:

There are currently 3 members of HM Treasury staff who have (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity or (d) equality in their job title. We do not hold this information for previous years.

As the total number of individuals is less than 5, HM Treasury is unable to release salary information as doing so would mean these individuals may be identifiable. This is in line with HM Treasury's data reporting policy.

■ Treasury: Senior Civil Servants

John Glen: [\[4635\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department's Director of Special Advisers and Chancellor Engagement post was advertised (a) externally or (b) internally; and whether the post was filled by open and fair competition.

John Glen: [\[4636\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) job description and (b) pay band is for the Director of Special Advisers and Chancellor Engagement.

John Glen: [\[4665\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 1260 on Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment, whether the Director of Special Advisers and Chancellor Engagement role was open to external candidates.

James Murray:

The grade of the Director of Special Advisers and Chancellor Engagement post is SCS pay band 2.

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

■ Valuation Office Agency: Wales

David Simmonds: [\[5154\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, If she will publish (a) the agreement and (b) the terms of reference between the Welsh Government and the Valuation Office Agency in relation to (i) the Agency's work for a council tax revaluation in Wales and (ii) the development of the Automated Valuation Model in Wales.

David Simmonds: [\[5156\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the cost to the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) of the council tax revaluation in Wales; and what payments the Welsh Government has (a) made and (b) agreed to make to the VOA to finance this work.

James Murray:

The Welsh Government have previously responded on this matter in June 2024.

The answers can be viewed here:

- [Written Question - WQ93146 - Welsh Parliament \(senedd.wales\)](#)
- [Written Question - WQ93148 - Welsh Parliament \(senedd.wales\)](#)
- [Written Question - WQ93350 - Welsh Parliament \(assembly.wales\)](#)

WALES

■ Wales Office: Equality

Rupert Lowe:

[\[5199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many positions in her Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Jo Stevens:

No positions in my Department had diversity, inclusion, equity, or equality in their job titles in the last five years, as such there were no related salary costs.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Local Government Finance

David Simmonds:

[\[5233\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 2316 on Equality, whether the socio-economic duty will apply to (a) the Government determining council tax referendum principles and (b) councils setting their budgets and council tax levels.

Anneliese Dodds:

The duty will require public bodies, when making strategic decisions, to actively consider how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Guidance will be developed that will help relevant authorities comply with the duty once commenced. We will be updating Parliament on this in due course.

■ Public Sector: Equality

John Glen:

[\[4686\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 12 August 2024 to Question HL421 on Employment, what steps she plans to take to implement the Government's policy on strengthening equality impact assessments for public sector bodies.

John Glen:

[\[5022\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 12 August 2024 to Question HL421 on Employment, if she will make an estimate of the potential impact of

the proposal to strengthen equality impact assessments on compliance costs for public bodies.

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government is committed to strengthening equality impact assessments for public authorities and we are currently considering the best way to achieve this.

The Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities, and those carrying out public functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Child Maintenance Service

Tom Hayes:

[\[4808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to reform child maintenance services by (a) abolishing fees for survivors of violence against women and girls and (b) implementing robust enforcement measures for non-paying parents.

Andrew Western:

A consultation on proposed reforms to the CMS was published by the previous Government on 8 May 2024. This included removing Direct Pay and changing the charging structure, with all CMS cases managed in one service to allow the CMS to tackle non-compliance faster. The consultation also explores how victims and survivors of domestic abuse can be better supported.

This Government has extended the consultation to the 30 September 2024 to ensure full stakeholder engagement can take place. We will then consider the next steps for CMS.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Domestic Abuse

Andrew Cooper:

[\[4853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Child Maintenance Service in protecting victims of domestic abuse when using their service.

Andrew Cooper:

[\[4855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of victims of domestic abuse experiencing financial abuse while using the Child Maintenance Service.

Andrew Western:

The Department is assessing how it can provide statistics on domestic abuse now the application fee exemption statistics are no longer published. The Department's Chief

Statistician will oversee the development of these statistics to make sure they meet the Code of Practice for Statistics.

The Department takes the issue of domestic abuse extremely seriously and the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) offers an accessible, safe, and secure service for all parents. All CMS caseworkers receive training on how to identify the different types of abuse, including financial abuse and how they can appropriately support and signpost victims and survivors.

The CMS reviews its domestic abuse training regularly to ensure caseworkers are equipped to support parents in vulnerable situations and the Department will continue to meet stakeholders regularly to maintain an open dialogue on how to improve the service.

There are several secure ways to receive maintenance directly without having to divulge sensitive personal details, including for victims of domestic abuse and other vulnerable parents. The CMS can help arrange for payments to be made to bank accounts that cannot be traced to a physical location which helps to protect the parent's location. The CMS does not put parents directly in touch with each other, nor does it share their current location via correspondence.

A consultation on proposed reforms to the CMS was published by the previous Government on 8 May 2024. This included removing Direct Pay and managing all CMS cases in one service to allow the CMS to tackle non-compliance faster and explore how victims and survivors of domestic abuse can be better supported. This follows the Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act receiving royal assent in July 2023.

The consultation has been extended to the 30 September 2024 to ensure full stakeholder engagement can take place.

■ Children: Maintenance

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[4401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many parents are (a) making child maintenance payments through the Child Maintenance Service and (b) in arrears on those payments.

Andrew Western:

The principle of the Child Maintenance Service is to increase levels of cooperation between separated parents and encourage parents to meet their responsibilities to provide financial support for their children through their own family-based arrangements where possible. Where a family-based child maintenance arrangement is not suitable we offer a statutory scheme to those parents who need it.

The Government is dedicated to ensuring parents meet their obligations to children and the Child Maintenance Service will do everything within its powers to make sure parents comply. Where parents fail to pay their child maintenance, the Service will not hesitate to use its enforcement powers, including deductions from earnings

orders, removal of driving licences, disqualification from holding a passport, and committal to prison. The Service is committed to using these powers fairly and in the best interests of children and separated families.

The Department publishes quarterly statistics for the [Child Maintenance Service](#) and the latest statistics are available up to [March 2024](#). The number of Paying Parents using the Collect and Pay service are published on [Stat-Xplore](#) in the [CMS Paying Parents](#) dataset.

In the latest quarter ending on 31 March 2024, there were 188,945 parents due to pay through the Collect and Pay service. Information on the full arrears status of those parents is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Nick Timothy:

[4873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims were processed by the Child Maintenance Agency in each of the last five years; and how many appeals were (a) lodged, (b) fully processed, (c) upheld and (d) rejected.

Andrew Western:

A principle of child maintenance is to increase levels of cooperation between separated parents and encourage parents to meet their responsibilities to provide their children with financial support.

Where a family-based child maintenance arrangement is not suitable the Child Maintenance Service offers a statutory scheme for those parents who need it.

When a parent joins the statutory scheme Child Maintenance Service will do everything within its powers to ensure parents comply and meet their obligations to children.

In the 12 months up to March 2024 there were 131,300 claims to the child maintenance statutory scheme (rounded to the nearest 100) and the child maintenance service arranged £1.4 billion child maintenance through the statutory scheme, an increase from £1.2 billion during the previous 12 months.

CMS are wholly committed to delivering the best possible service to all customers within our growing caseload. When a Parent or their representative disagrees with a decision about a child maintenance calculation, they have the right to appeal. Before they do this, they must first ask for a Mandatory Reconsideration.

If the Child Maintenance Service decides not to change its decision the parent can follow the formal appeal process, handled by HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) where an independent tribunal will look at the Child Maintenance Service's decision.

The Department publishes quarterly statistics for the [Child Maintenance Service](#) (CMS) and the latest statistics are available up to [March 2024](#).

Table 3 from the latest [National tables](#) contains the number of arrangements joining the Child Maintenance Service each quarter from January 2015 to March 2024. Table

11 contains information on the number of appeals made by parents to His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service to review a decision made by the Child Maintenance Service each quarter from April 2015 to March 2024.

Excerpts for the last five years for both tables are shown below.

Table 3: Intake, Great Britain, April 2019 to March 2024

Due to the complexity of the accompanying table, the link below is to the web version of the answer:

[Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

■ **Children: Poverty**

Alex Baker:

[4922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to reduce the levels of child poverty in Aldershot constituency.

Alison McGovern:

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

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

The vital work of the Taskforce comes alongside the Government's commitments to roll out free breakfast clubs at all primary schools, setting every child up at the start of the day ready to learn, expanding childcare to deliver work choices for parents and life chances for children, provide stronger protection for families who rent privately as well as deliver our plan to make work pay.

The Government is also extending the Household Support Fund for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

This means that Local Authorities in England will receive £421 million to support those in need locally.

■ **Death: Weather**

Rachael Maskell:

[3722]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of estimates of the number of deaths in cold housing.

Emma Reynolds:

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

The Government will invest an extra £6.6 billion over this Parliament in clean heat and energy efficiency through the Warm Homes Plan, upgrading five million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation to reduce emissions and cut bills.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Equality**Rupert Lowe:****[5187]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many positions in her Department included (a) diversity, (b) inclusion, (c) equity and (d) equality in their job title in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of the salaries of each such job was in each of those years.

Andrew Western:

The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change**Sir John Hayes:****[4338]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether Ministers in her Department have met representatives of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change since 5 July 2024.

Andrew Western:

Details of ministers' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK and can be found [here](#).

The most recent publication of transparency data took place on 9 September 2024.

■ Disability Living Allowance: Bournemouth East**Tom Hayes:** [\[4494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people applying for child Disability Living Allowance waited longer than 20 weeks in Bournemouth East constituency in the last 12 months for which data is available; and what proportion of benefit decisions for applicants from residents of Bournemouth East constituency were not made within the target timeframe set by her Department in each of the last 12 months for which data is available.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The information requested on waiting times for a child disability living allowance decision is not readily available. To provide this would incur a disproportionate cost.

The current waiting period at national level for child DLA claims, under normal rules, is 86 days on average. Whilst we do not have a target timeframe, we aim to make decisions as quickly as possible to ensure that families of disabled children receive the support to which they are entitled and are always working towards reducing waiting times.

■ Employment: Disability**Tom Hayes:** [\[4822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to close the disability employment gap by 2030.

Alison McGovern:

The Government has ambitious plans relating to employment, including disability employment, and we will be setting this out through a forthcoming White Paper, the Employment Rights Bill and the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill. We know that there is more to do to address the labour market challenges of today and tomorrow. A fully inclusive labour market that enables disabled people and people with health conditions to have access to the same opportunities as everyone else to the benefits of work is crucial to meeting our ambition for an 80% employment rate.

■ Employment: Multiple Sclerosis**Chris Law:** [\[4736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department plans to take to help ensure that people with multiple sclerosis are (a) treated fairly and (b) supported at work.

Alison McGovern:

The Government has ambitious plans relating to employment, including disability employment, and we will be setting this out through a forthcoming White Paper, the Employment Rights Bill and the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill. We know that there is more to do to address the labour market challenges of today and tomorrow.

Appropriate work is generally good for health and wellbeing, so we want everyone to get work and get on in work, whoever they are and wherever they live. We want people to avoid poverty, and for this to happen we must ensure that disabled people with health conditions, including **multiple sclerosis**, have the opportunity to work and save for as long as they wish and are able to.

A fully inclusive labour market that enables disabled people and people with health conditions to have access to the same opportunities as everyone else to the benefits of work is crucial to meeting our ambition for an 80% employment rate. As part of the Get Britain Working Plan, more disabled people and those with health conditions will be supported to enter and stay in work, by devolving more power to local areas so they can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer that suits the needs of the people they serve.

Employers play a key role in increasing employment opportunities and supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, including multiple sclerosis, to thrive as part of the workforce. Our support to employers includes increasing access to Occupational Health, [a digital information service for employers](#) and the Disability Confident scheme.

Under the Equality Act 2010, protection is available where a worker or job applicant's condition fits the definition of a disability set out in section 6 of the Act. Where a person meets the Act's definition of a disabled person, the employment provisions in the Act make it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against disabled employees and applicants. As with all provisions under the Act, it is for the person who believes they have been discriminated against in the provision of services to personally seek advice or redress. Should they wish to do so, they can begin this process by contacting the Equality Advisory and Support Service, which provides free bespoke advice to individuals with discrimination concerns.

■ Employment: Parents

Dr Neil Hudson:

[5147]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps her Department has taken to help ensure that parents of children with special educational needs can find work that meets their needs.

Alison McGovern:

One of the Government's primary missions is to grow the economy, getting more people into work and helping those in work get better paid jobs is central to achieving this. The Government recognises and appreciates the vital contribution made by informal carers who provide invaluable support for children, relatives, partners, friends, and neighbours who may need care.

Support is offered to those carers in receipt of Universal Credit, either on a voluntary basis for those eligible for Universal Credit Carer Element and / or Carers Allowance, or through individualised work coach support for part time carers. This support can include help from a work coach to access skills provision, referrals to contacted

provision such as Restart, careers advice, job search support and access to the Flexible Support Fund to aid job entry.

As part of our commitment to reform employment support through delivery of a new national jobs and careers service we will transform the current service and consider the specialist needs of specific groups in designing our new approach.

Alongside employment support, the Government have also announced Plans to Make Work Pay, which will create a new partnership between business, trade unions and working people. The Plan to Make Work Pay will end exploitative zero hours contracts; end the scourge of fire and rehire practices; and introduce basic rights from day one to parental leave, sick pay, and protection from unfair dismissal. We will strengthen the collective voice of workers and create the Fair Work Agency to ensure employment rights are upheld.

■ **Employment: Specific Learning Difficulties**

Alex Baker:

[\[4925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support people with learning difficulties who are seeking paid employment in Aldershot constituency.

Alison McGovern:

We believe learning disabled and neurodiverse people should have an equal opportunity to work. In our plan to make work pay, we committed to raising awareness of neurodiversity in the workplace.

In Aldershot, we have a dedicated Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) who supports learning disabled and neurodiverse customers alongside partner organisations that we work closely with.

Other specialist initiatives which can provide support include the Work and Health Programme and joining up health and employment support around the individual through Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care.

We are also exploring how we will build upon the recommendations outlined in the Buckland Review of Autism Employment to be more inclusive to support all neurodiverse people to enter, remain in or return to employment.

■ **Food Banks**

Luke Taylor:

[\[4899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to make additional support for food banks available.

Alison McGovern:

Whilst food banks are independent, charitable organisations and government has no role in their operation, we are committed to tackling poverty and reducing mass dependence on emergency food parcels. On 30th July, the Secretary of State held the

first food poverty roundtable with food poverty experts to understand the priorities in this area.

We promised concrete actions in our manifesto to support children and families. Our initial steps to tackle poverty include free breakfast clubs in every primary school so children don't go hungry, protecting renters from arbitrary eviction, slashing fuel poverty and banning exploitative zero-hours contracts. Good work is the foundation of our approach, and our New Deal for Working People, including ensuring that the minimum wage is a genuine living wage along with reformed employment support, will mean that many more people will benefit from the dignity and purpose of employment.

In addition, the Government is extending the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further 6 months from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An estimated total package of approximately £500 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF, including funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion. This means that Local Authorities in England will receive £421 million to support those in need locally.

Alongside this, the Child Poverty Taskforce has started urgent work to publish the Child Poverty Strategy in Spring and will explore all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty.

■ Local Housing Allowance: Hampshire

Alex Baker:

[4921]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Local Housing Allowance for residents in (a) Aldershot constituency and (b) Hampshire.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) determines the maximum housing support for tenants in the private rented sector. It ensures that claimants in similar circumstances living in the same area are entitled to the same maximum rent allowance regardless of the contractual rent paid.

LHA rates are set within geographical areas referred to as Broad Rental Market Areas so that a household's LHA rate reflects private rents where they live.

LHA rates were restored to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024, at a cost of £1.2 billion for 2024/25.

There were 3,134 households receiving housing support via either Housing Benefit or the Housing Element of Universal Credit subject to the LHA in the Aldershot constituency in May-24. Of those, 34% have an eligible rent above their applicable LHA rate, with a mean monthly difference, or shortfall, of £208.24. Equivalent figures for Hampshire are not readily available and to provide them would incur disproportionate cost.

Any future decisions on LHA will be taken in the context of the Government's missions, housing priorities, and the fiscal context and will include the consideration of current rents.

For those who face a shortfall in meeting their rental costs and need further support, Discretionary Housing Payments are available from local authorities.

■ Pension Credit

Gregory Stafford:

[\[3656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to support pensioners suffering from long-term illnesses who are not eligible for pension credit in the winter.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: This Government is committed to pensioners. Everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement. We will do this through protecting the triple lock, keeping energy bills low through our Warm Homes Plan, and bringing real stability to people's lives.

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

For 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, can be worth up to £9,583.60 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.

Further, over the course of this Parliament over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their new State Pension increase by around £1700 as a result of our commitment to protect the Triple Lock.

We also know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. The government will work with external partners and local authorities to boost the uptake of Pension Credit. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that all people eligible for pension credit are able to claim it.

Emma Reynolds:

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 are 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:**[3954]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of pensioners were living in (a) relative poverty after housing costs and (b) absolute poverty after housing costs were in receipt of Pension Credit in the latest period for which data is available.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: For the latest year 2022/23, 1.9 million pensioners were in relative poverty after housing costs (AHC) in the UK. Of these, 300,000 pensioners were in receipt of Pension Credit, approximately 15%. A household is in relative poverty if its income is less than 60 per cent of the median household income in a given financial year.

For the latest year 2022/23, 1.4 million pensioners were in absolute poverty AHC in the UK. Of these, 200,000 pensioners were in receipt of Pension Credit, approximately 14%. A household is in absolute poverty if its income is less than 60% of median household income in 2010/11, uprated by inflation.

‘Households Below Average Income’ provides estimates on the number of and percentage of people living in low-income households based on their household disposable income. As an income measure, it does not include other available resources that might impact on a household’s poverty levels such as savings.

These numbers have been rounded to the nearest 100,000 and percentages rounded to the nearest whole per cent.

This data is available on Stat-Xplore at <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk> in the ‘Households Below Average Income’ dataset.

More Information on the data included in the ‘Households Below Average Income’ dataset can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households->

[below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2023/households-below-average-income-series-quality-and-methodology-information-report-fye-2023#income-definition](#).

Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/index.html>.

An account is not required to use Stat- Xplore, the 'Guest Login' feature gives instant access to the main functions.

Pete Wishart:

[4604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much funding was allocated to the Pension Credit week of action campaign, launched on 2 September 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government's Pension Credit awareness week of action, during which the DWP joined up with key stakeholder organisations such as Age UK, Citizens Advice, and local authorities to promote Pension Credit, was one part of the Department's ongoing promotion of Pension Credit; it did not have its own separate funding allocation.

Alex Sobel:

[4775]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) simplifying and (b) automating the process to apply for Pension Credit.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department continues to assess the Pension Credit service. This led to the introduction of the online claim process, providing customers with a convenient alternative claim route, alongside the existing telephony and paper application methods. As the Department continues to modernise the Pension Credit service, we continue to review the user experience, balancing simplification of application with capturing the right information to ensure accuracy of award.

Andrew Bowie:

[5079]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the potential impact of the steps her Department has taken to increase the number of people claiming Pension Credit on the cost to the public purse of expenditure on that benefit.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government announced on the 29 July 2024 that eligibility for Winter Fuel payments will be linked to those on Pension Credit or other means tested benefits for pensioners from Winter 2024. 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 is compared to around 17,900 Pension Credit claims in the 5 weeks preceding the announcement. This represents a 115% increase in Pension Credit claims received by the Department in the past 5 weeks compared to the 5 weeks before. These published statistics can be found here: Weekly Pension

Credit claims received from 1 April 2024 to 1 September 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). It is not currently possible to estimate the expenditure that will result from this.

■ Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payment

Jess Asato:

[3440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of pensioners not in receipt of Pension Credit living in (a) relative and (b) absolute poverty; and what estimate she has made of the number of additional pensioners who will be living in (i) relative and (ii) absolute poverty as a result of no longer receiving the Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

For the latest year 2022/23, 1.9 million pensioners were in relative poverty after housing costs (AHC). Of these, 1.6 million pensioners were not in receipt of Pension Credit.

For the latest year 2022/23, 1.4 million pensioners were in absolute poverty AHC. Of these, 1.2 million pensioners were not in receipt of Pension Credit.

A household is in relative poverty if its income is less than 60 per cent of the median household income in a given financial year. A household is in absolute poverty if its income is less than 60% of median household income in 2010/11, uprated by inflation.

'Households Below Average Income' provides estimates on the number of and percentage of people living in low-income households based on their household disposable income. As an income measure, it does not include other available resources that might impact on a household's poverty levels such as savings.

These numbers have been rounded to the nearest 100,000.

This data is available on Stat-Xplore at <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk> in the 'Households Below Average Income' dataset.

More Information on the data included in the 'Households Below Average Income' dataset can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2023/households-below-average-income-series-quality-and-methodology-information-report-fye-2023#income-definition>.

Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/index.html>.

An account is not required to use Stat- Xplore, the 'Guest Login' feature gives instant access to the main functions.

Recognising the wide-ranging causes of pensioner poverty, we will explore how we can use all the available levers we have across government, external partners and

local authorities. This includes boosting the uptake of Pension Credit to ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

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 a range of other benefits – depending on circumstances, these could be worth hundreds of pounds that could really help them.

■ Pension Credit: Aldershot

Alex Baker:

[4927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of people eligible for but not claiming Pension Credit in Aldershot 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.

■ Pension Credit: Newcastle-under-Lyme

Adam Jogee:

[3480]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are claiming Pension Credit in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

Caseload statistics are routinely published and made publicly available via [DWP Statxplore](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/statistics). At February 2024, there were 1,878 people claiming Pension Credit in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Adam Jogee:

[3481]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has had made of the number of people in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency eligible for but not in receipt of pension credit.

Emma Reynolds:

Information relating to Pension Credit eligibility is only available via take-up statistics. The latest available Pension Credit take-up statistics for Great Britain cover the financial year 2021 to 2022 and are available at: [Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year ending 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](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.

■ Pension Credit: South Holland and the Deepings**Sir John Hayes:****[3679]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in South Holland and the Deepings constituency claimed pension credit in the 2023-24 financial year.

Emma Reynolds:

Caseload statistics are routinely published and made publicly available via [DWP Statxplore](#). At February 2024, there were 2,340 people claiming Pension Credit in South Holland and the Deepings constituency (2010 Boundries).

■ Pensioners: Aylesbury**Laura Kyrke-Smith:****[4580]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support pensioners with increases in the cost of living in Aylesbury constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

The State Pension is the foundation of income in retirement and will remain so, protecting 12 million pensioners through the triple lock. Based on current forecasts, the full rate of the new state pension is set to increase by £1,700 over the course of this Parliament.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

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

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

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

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

■ Pensioners: Hampshire

Alex Baker:

[\[4920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of inflation on living standards of pensioners in (a) Aldershot constituency and (b) Hampshire.

Emma Reynolds:

No such assessment of inflation on living standards has been made.

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%.

■ Pensioners: Poverty

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to develop a strategy to end pensioner poverty.

Emma Reynolds:

This Government takes pensioner poverty extremely seriously – everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement.

The department continues to maximise opportunities to promote Pension Credit and to raise awareness of its wider benefits and to encourage pensioners to apply.

The department uses a range of creative media including TV, press, radio and social media to boost awareness of the benefit. We engage with stakeholders, including other Government Departments, Councils, and charities, to harness their help and support to raise awareness through their networks and channels.

The Government is also ensuring pensioners are supported through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their new State Pension increase by around £1700 over the course of this Parliament.

Additionally, the Government will invest an extra £6.6 billion over this Parliament in clean heat and energy efficiency through the Warm Homes Plan, upgrading five million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation to reduce emissions and cut bills.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill.

This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[4517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she is taking steps to establish a long-term strategy to end pensioner poverty.

Emma Reynolds:

This Government takes pensioner poverty extremely seriously – everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement.

As part of Pension Credit Awareness 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.

The Government is also ensuring pensioners are supported through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their new State Pension increase by around £1700 over the course of this Parliament.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

Additionally, the Government will invest an extra £6.6 billion over this Parliament in clean heat and energy efficiency through the Warm Homes Plan, upgrading five million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation to reduce emissions and cut bills.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[5234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will set up a Pensioner Task Force to (a) assess intersecting issues of income, housing, health and fuel costs and (b) make recommendations to tackle pensioner poverty.

Emma Reynolds:

We are determined to support pensioners and give them the dignity and security they deserve in retirement. The Government has committed to reviewing the pensions landscape. The first phase, focusing on investment outcomes, began in July and we will follow that later this year with the next phase that will consider further steps to improve pension outcomes, including assessing retirement adequacy.

Immediate support for pensioners includes our commitment to the Triple Lock, with over 12 million pensioners set to benefit through the course of this parliament, with the full yearly rate of the new State Pension forecast to increase by around £1,700.

Pension Credit continues to provide a safety net for the poorest pensioners and those with additional needs, such as those with a severe disability, caring responsibility, responsibility for a child or certain housing costs. We want everybody who could be eligible to claim it, which is why we have launched a nationwide Pension Credit take-up campaign.

The Household Support Fund (HSF) is also being extended for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025, to support those most in need, including vulnerable pensioners. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

■ Personal Independence Payment**Katie White:**[\[4836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the length of time to undertake a PIP review.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We continue to prioritise new claims to PIP to ensure claims are put into payment as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, this means many customers are waiting longer than expected for their review to be undertaken.

We have been actively recruiting additional Case Managers to meet increased demand for PIP, which means we are now in a position to begin to deploy additional resource onto award reviews. This will increase the number of review cases we can complete 'in house'.

We have just moved to a new contract for the delivery of health assessments and our new suppliers will be taking steps to ensure they have sufficient capacity to deliver the required volume of assessments. However, this may take time and there is an extensive training period for new Healthcare Professionals to ensure quality standards are maintained.

We have introduced processes to increase efficiency and move cases through the system more quickly:

- Where sufficient evidence/information is available, Case Managers can make decisions on reviews, avoiding the need for a functional assessment, which means many customers receive a decision faster.
- Healthcare Professionals now complete most assessments by telephone, which means the vast majority of customers who need an assessment do not need to attend a face-to-face appointment at an Assessment Centre.
- We've introduced a change for customers with the most severe conditions, on the highest level of support, who now receive an ongoing PIP award which is only subject to a light touch review every 10 years. .

For customers waiting for a review, we keep them regularly updated using SMS text messages. We also ensure all PIP customers awaiting a review remain in payment, extending awards for up to 12 months where necessary, notifying customers in writing to allay concerns.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Aldershot

Alex Baker:

[\[4924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of claimants for Personal Independence Payments were (a) initially turned down and (b) successful on appeal in Aldershot constituency in the latest period for which data is available.

Sir Stephen Timms:

In Aldershot in the Financial Year 2022/23, 450 people who had registered to claim PIP were disallowed after assessment, this is 51% of all initial decisions. Of these, 40 claims were subsequently awarded PIP following an appeal, this is 5% of all initial decisions in the Financial Year 2022/23.

Note:

- Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
- Percentages have been rounded to the nearest percent.
- This data is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and it may be subject to future revision.
- These figures include appeal outcomes up to March 2024, the latest date for which published data is available. Note that more appeals could be made and completed after March 2024, so numbers may change as it can take some time for an appeal to be lodged and then cleared after the initial decision.
- Figure provided for the number of applicants first awarded PIP at appeal stage include claims that were awarded via a lapsed appeal after a disallowed initial decision and no change to award at MR.

o A lapsed appeal is where DWP changed the decision in the customer's favour after an appeal was lodged but before it was heard at a tribunal hearing.

■ Poverty

Tom Hayes: [\[4821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will bring forward legislation to introduce target dates to eradicate poverty for vulnerable groups.

Alison McGovern:

We are committed to tackling poverty. As set out in our manifesto, good work will be the foundation of our approach for people of working age. Our New Deal for Working People, including ensuring that the minimum wage is a genuine living wage, along with reformed employment support will mean that many more people will benefit from the dignity and purpose of employment.

We have also announced a number of initial steps to support children and families including free breakfast clubs in every primary school so children don't go hungry, protecting renters from arbitrary eviction and banning exploitative zero hours contracts.

Our Ministerial Taskforce, jointly chaired Work and Pensions and Education Secretaries, has started urgent work on an ambitious Child Poverty Strategy and will explore all available levers to drive forward actions across government to reduce child poverty, tackle its root causes and give every child the best start in life. The Strategy will be published in Spring 2025.

■ Social Security Benefits

Nick Timothy: [\[4874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the total number of claimants broken down by nationality for all benefits.

Andrew Western:

The Department does not hold data on the current nationality of those claiming benefits. As such there are no plans to publish the total number of customers broken down by nationality for all benefits. Decisions regarding the development and publication of Official Statistics are the responsibility of the Chief Statistician.

DWP policy responsibility lies in establishing the eligibility of non-UK / Irish claimants to claim benefits. An individual's specific nationality does not play a role in this. Eligibility differs by benefit but is usually determined by an individual's immigration status, alongside their ability to meet the requirements of the Habitual Residence Test (for income-related benefits), the Past Presence Test (for disability benefits), and / or having the necessary National Insurance contributions (for contributions-based benefits).

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Chris Law:

[4735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to implement the proposals outlined in the consultation entitled *Modernising support for independent living: the health and disability green paper*, published in April 2024.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The consultation on *Modernising support for independent living: the health and disability green paper* ran for 12 weeks and closed on Monday 22 July.

The Department received over 16,000 responses to the consultation. This demonstrates the depth of feeling about the previous Government's proposals. I thank the British public, as well as the numerous charities and organisations who responded on behalf of their members, for the time and effort taken to share their thoughts and views.

Whilst engaging with responses, I can confirm that responses to the set of proposals on the reform of Personal Independence Payments was mixed and for some proposals consistently negative.

We will be setting out our own plans for social security in due course and will fulfil our continued commitment to work with disabled people so that their views and voices are at the heart of all that we do.

■ Social Security Benefits: Domestic Abuse

Tom Hayes:

[4809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will extend the Domestic Violence Easement available to survivors claiming (a) Job Seekers' Allowance and (b) Universal Credit to disabled survivors who (i) claim Employment Support Allowance and (ii) are in the Support Group for Universal Credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Claimants in the Support Group for legacy Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and for those with Limited Capability for Work and Work-related Activity (LCWRA) in New Style Employment Support Allowance (NS ESA) or Universal Credit have no work-related requirements imposed on them.

Where a legacy ESA or NS ESA claimant in the work-related activity group (WRAG) has recently been a victim of domestic abuse, any work-related requirements are paused for a period of 13 consecutive weeks from when the claimant notifies the department. This is the same as the compulsory easements prescribed in Universal Credit legislation where work coaches must switch off work availability and work search requirements for the prescribed length of time. The work coach will decide if the break can be extended beyond 13 weeks in extreme circumstances.

The arrangements are described here [Help available from the Department for Work and Pensions for people who are victims of domestic violence and abuse - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/help-available-from-the-department-for-work-and-pensions-for-people-who-are-victims-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse)

To keep our easement policies clear, fair, and effective in supporting vulnerable claimants, we keep the conditionality and sanctions policies and processes under continuous review.

■ State Retirement Pensions

Angus MacDonald:

[\[5160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that people over the age of 65 receive adequate financial support through the State Pension.

Emma Reynolds:

We are absolutely committed to supporting pensioners and giving them the dignity and security they deserve in retirement.

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%.

Over 12 million pensioners will benefit through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock. Over the course of this parliament, the full yearly rate of the new State Pension is forecast to increase by around £1,700.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Uprating

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[4050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to negotiate a reciprocal agreement with the Australian government on uprating state pensions.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: There are no plans to negotiate a new reciprocal social security agreement with Australia.

UK State Pensions are payable worldwide, without regard to nationality, and are only uprated abroad where there is a legal requirement to do so - for example in countries with which we have a reciprocal agreement that provides for up-rating.

The policy on up-rating UK State Pensions paid overseas is a longstanding one and has been supported by successive Governments for over 70 years.

Up-rating is based on levels of earnings growth and price inflation in the UK which has no direct relevance where the pensioner is resident overseas.

Over many years, priority is given to those living in the UK when drawing up expenditure plans for additional pensioner benefits.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Women

Kim Johnson:

[\[3184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman entitled Women's State Pension age: our

findings on injustice and associated issues, published on 21 March 2024, HC 638, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of women born in the 1950s who have been affected by the State Pension age changes considered in that report.

Emma Reynolds:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report published on 21 March 2024 considers the communication to 1950s born women of the equalisation and increase of the State Pension age introduced by the Pensions Acts of 1995, 2007 and 2011. The Acts (collectively) increased the State Pension age for all women born after 5 April 1950. Based on current ONS figures it is estimated that there are around 3.5 million women who saw an increase in their State Pension age and were born in the 1950s.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a hardship fund for women affected by the change to the State Pension age.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government believes the best way to support people, including women who have been affected by the change to the State Pension Age is to help them to retrain, return to or progress in work. That is why the Government is reforming employment support to ensure it supports people of all ages and we will set out more details in a forthcoming White Paper.

For those women who are unable to work but who are not eligible for pensioner benefits because of their age, financial support is still available through the welfare system.

Josh Simons:

[\[5217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to compensate women wrongly underpaid their state pension.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department is addressing two areas which have resulted in the underpayment of State Pension. We expect the majority of customers affected to be women.

On the State Pension Underpayment Legal Entitlements and Administrative Practices (LEAP) exercise and the Home Responsibilities Protection LEAP exercise we are identifying and correcting any errors, making arrears payments and amending ongoing State Pension awards.

The Department understands the importance of putting right any errors we find and adjusting State Pension payments without delay. Everyone should receive the State Pension payments to which they are entitled. Giving pensioners the security and dignity they deserve in retirement is a priority for this Government.

■ Statutory Sick Pay

Chris Law:

[\[4737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Labour Party's publication entitled Labour's plan to make work pay: Delivering a new deal for working people, published in May 2024, whether she plans to incorporate (a) that plan and (b) the proposed changes to statutory sick pay outlined in that plan into the Employment Rights Bill.

Alison McGovern:

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

■ Temporary Accommodation: Housing Benefit

Rachel Blake:

[\[4780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will remove the cap on housing benefit subsidy rates for temporary accommodation.

Sir Stephen Timms:

DWP pays local authorities a Housing Benefit subsidy for temporary accommodation cases. There are restrictions on the amount paid, including a subsidy cap which is £500 per week in certain areas of London or £375 elsewhere.

We appreciate these are difficult times and local authorities are subject to many funding pressures. However, any increases to the Housing Benefit subsidy paid to local authorities would need to be taken in the context of the government's missions, goals on housing, and the fiscal position.

We will continue to keep the subsidy arrangements under review.

■ Ulcerative Colitis: Disability

Claire Hazelgrove:

[\[4952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether ulcerative colitis is classified as an official disability; and what protections in law are available to people with that condition.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Government does not provide an exhaustive list of recognised or protected disabilities. Rather, the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) defines disability as "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a

person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". The Act describes "long-term" as an impairment that has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least 12 months, or where the impairment is likely to last for the rest of a person's life; while "substantial" is defined as an impairment that is more than minor or trivial.

The Act is clear that it is not necessary for the cause of the impairment to be established, nor does the impairment have to be the result of an illness. A disability can therefore arise from a wide range of impairments, and any person that falls within this definition - which may include those with ulcerative colitis - will already be protected as having a disability.

■ Unemployment: Young People

Alex Baker:

[4923]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of long-term youth unemployment in (a) Aldershot constituency and (b) Hampshire; and what (i) financial and (ii) other steps she is taking to tackle long-term youth unemployment in those areas.

Alison McGovern:

There are 100,000 people aged 16-24 who have been unemployed for over 12 months, 16.8% of all 16-24s who are unemployed.

The sample sizes from survey data for Aldershot and Hampshire are too small, so it is not possible to make a robust estimate of the level of long-term youth unemployment for these areas.

My department, working closely with the Department for Education, are developing the Youth Guarantee, to offer localised support to all young people aged 18-21 years old not in education, employment or training. We will ensure they have access to quality opportunities for training, an apprenticeship or help to find work that is sustainable.

In Aldershot, service delivery teams are working with a range of local partners and employers across the community to support to young people into work, including the care leaver charity Step by Step, Rushmoor Borough Council and other providers.

In Hampshire, a range of Flexible Support Funded local courses are in place to deliver place based employment support to young people with additional barriers, such as care leavers, neurodivergence and mental health. More widely, there are a number of Youth Hubs in Hampshire, ensuring a joined up approach with multiple partners to co-deliver employment, training and life skills support to bring them closer to employment.

Paula Barker:

[5132]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to (a) identify and (b) reduce the barriers facing young people not in work or education.

Alison McGovern:

Our plan to get Britain Working includes a new 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 will set out further detail in the upcoming 'Get Britain Working' White Paper.

Currently through the Youth Offer, we provide labour market support to young people aged 16-24 claiming Universal Credit through a range of tailored interventions to help reduce the barriers young people may face, bringing them closer to work or education.

Jobcentre Plus School Advisers target support to young people that schools have identified as being at greatest risk of not being in work or education, or who may be disadvantaged in the labour market.

■ Winter Fuel Payment**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[2222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the cost to the public purse was of the winter fuel allowance in 2022/23; what estimate she has made of the savings to the public purse of only paying the winter fuel allowance to people claiming pension credit; how many excess winter deaths there were in each of the last three years; and what estimate she has made of the annual cost of administering a means-tested winter fuel allowance.

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.

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 for future years. Details of excess winter deaths in England and Wales can be found at: [Winter mortality in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

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

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

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

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

Our continued commitment to the triple lock means the full new state pension is forecast to increase by a further £1,700 over this course of the parliament.

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

Our other steps include cutting waiting times in the NHS which will help many pensioners currently waiting in pain and discomfort for treatment, and delivering the economic stability which is so crucial for pensioners.

John McDonnell:

[2710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish an (a) impact statement and (b) equalities impact assessment of means-testing the winter fuel payment.

Emma Reynolds:

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

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.

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. The equality analysis was published on Friday 13th September, and can be found here: [FOI2024_65546_13_09_24.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

Clive Lewis:

[2955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to support the health of pensioners living in energy inefficient homes when Winter Fuel Payment is withdrawn.

Emma Reynolds:

Energy support is the responsibility of Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

We are providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This will support investment in insulation and low carbon heating – upgrading millions of homes over this Parliament. Our long-term plan will protect

billpayers permanently, reduce fuel poverty, and get the UK back on track to meet our climate goals.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

The Home Upgrade Grant provides grants to low-income households to upgrade the energy performance of the worst quality, off gas grid homes in England by installing multiple energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating. This will typically include insulation measures in combination with a heat pump to make the home heat efficient and suitable for the future as we build towards net zero.

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

The Government is ensuring pensioners are supported through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their new State Pension increase by around £1700 over the course of this Parliament.

Shivani Raja:

[3344]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to communicate the changes to Winter Fuel Payments to people affected; and what support she plans to provide to help pensioners (a) understand their eligibility and (b) access alternative support.

Emma Reynolds:

From mid-October, all pensioners will receive a letter explaining the changes to Winter Fuel Payments this year and encouraging anyone who may be eligible to claim Pension Credit by 21st December.

The Winter Fuel Payment page on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) has been updated with the new eligibility rules.

The Department will proceed at pace with its communication campaign to raise awareness of the changes and to promote Pension Credit. This will be followed by a Paid Partnership and national media campaign. There will then be continued marketing activity promoting the take-up of Pension Credit.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to

enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

Manuela Perteghella:

[3875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of pensioners whose income is less than 10% above the threshold for Pension Credit who will not qualify for Winter Fuel Payment during Winter 2024-25.

Emma Reynolds:

Information on number of pensioners whose income is less than 10% above the threshold for pension credit who will not qualify for the Winter Fuel Allowance during Winter 2024-25 is not held.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[4015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate the number of pensioners who will see a reduction in their disposable income as a result of her proposed reforms to Winter Fuel Payments by (a) household type, (b) age and (c) region and; what the average loss is.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 September 2024]: The estimated number of pensioners who will see a reduction in their disposable income as a result of proposed reforms to winter fuel payments by age and region, for Great Britain are shown in below tables (1+2). This analysis is not available by household type and average loss.

This is the number of pensioners that will no longer receive Winter Fuel Payment as they do not claim Pension Credit. Therefore, we are assuming these people will see a reduction in their disposable income as they will no longer be receiving Winter Fuel Payments. 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 each region and age group from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for each region and age group. Please note that the Pension Credit data that is used should be based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024, in order to be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payments statistics.

In addition to that, the above figures do not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up we might see as a result of the 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)

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

Table 1:

REGION (GREAT BRITAIN)	WFP CLAIMANTS PRE-POLICY CHANGE NOT CLAIMING PENSION CREDIT [AN ESTIMATE OF THOSE WHO WILL NO LONGER RECEIVE WFP]
North East	432,162
North West	1,123,461
Yorkshire and the Humber	857,346
East Midlands	800,580
West Midlands	914,627
East of England	1,062,241
London	778,851
South East	1,550,446
South West	1,090,058
Wales	539,092
Scotland	866,295

Table 2:

AGE GROUP (GREAT BRITAIN)	WFP CLAIMANTS PRE-POLICY CHANGE NOT CLAIMING PENSION CREDIT [AN ESTIMATE OF THOSE WHO WILL NO LONGER RECEIVE WFP]
Up to 69	2,369,989

AGE GROUP (GREAT BRITAIN)	WFP CLAIMANTS PRE-POLICY CHANGE NOT CLAIMING PENSION CREDIT [AN ESTIMATE OF THOSE WHO WILL NO LONGER RECEIVE WFP]
70-74	2,708,756
75-79	2,275,970
80 and over	2,659,950

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an estimate of the potential impact of changes to the eligibility criteria for Winter Fuel Payment on mortality rates in winter 2024-25.

Emma Reynolds:

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

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

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

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

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

Lee Anderson:

[\[4541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support pensioners who are no longer eligible for winter fuel payments.

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.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

The State Pension is the foundation of income in retirement and will remain so protecting 12 million pensioners through the triple lock. Based on current forecasts, the full rate of the new state pension is set to increase by £1,700 over the course of this Parliament.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

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

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

Neil O'Brien:

[5107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 2476 on Winter Fuel Payment, if she will provide this information for current constituency boundaries.

Emma Reynolds:

Winter Fuel Payment statistics covering winter 2023/24 are due to be published on 24 September at 9:30am: [Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2023 to 2024 - Official statistics announcement](#). This publication will include information for the current constituency boundaries.

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Aldridge-Brownhills**

Wendy Morton:

[5060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments on pensioners in Aldridge-Brownhills constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

The State Pension is the foundation of income in retirement and will remain so protecting 12 million pensioners through the triple lock. Based on current forecasts,

the full rate of the new state pension is set to increase by around £1,700 over the course of this Parliament.

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

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

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

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

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Disability

Dr Marie Tidball:

[4831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help mitigate the potential impact of the withdrawal of Winter Fuel Payments on disabled non-Pension Credit recipient pensioners.

Emma Reynolds:

Disability benefits provide a tax free, non-income-related contribution towards the extra costs people with a long-term health condition or disabilities can face, such as additional heating costs.

Attendance Allowance can be worth up to £5,600 a year. 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.

Pensioners in receipt of Attendance Allowance and on a low-income may qualify for Pension Credit including an additional amount for disability providing they meet the other eligibility criteria.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Eligibility

Sir John Hayes:

[2738]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of households that will be affected by the proposed change to the eligibility criteria for winter fuel payments by (a) ethnicity and (b) socio-economic status.

Emma Reynolds:

An Equality Analysis was produced by the Department prior to the Government announcing targeting the Winter Fuel Payment from 2024-25 and is available here: [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). However, the requested information is not recorded on our administrative data systems and is therefore not available.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Great Yarmouth

Rupert Lowe:

[4835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pensioners in the Great Yarmouth council area will no longer receive the winter fuel allowance.

Emma Reynolds:

It is estimated that around 19,300 pensioners in Great Yarmouth will be impacted by the decision to amend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment. This is based on February 2024 Pension Credit statistics which are available via [DWP Stat-xplore](https://www.dwp.gov.uk) and the Winter Fuel Payment statistics for Winter 2022 to 2023 which are available via [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of people claiming Pension Credit in Great Yarmouth from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in Great Yarmouth. This is essentially the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients who are not claiming Pension Credit pre-policy change, as an estimate of those who will no longer receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

Please note that the above figures do not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up that 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.

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

In addition, while Pension Credit claimants constitute the majority of those that will be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, pensioners who claim other qualifying means-tested benefits will also be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment. It is not, however, possible to include those on other qualifying means-tested benefits in these figures.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Harborough, Oadby and Wigston**Neil O'Brien:****[4803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Harborough, Oadby and Wigston constituency will be affected by the change in eligibility requirements for Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

Please note that following boundary changes to Parliamentary Constituency, data on Harborough, Oadby and Wigston constituency is not explicitly available/ published. To obtain the above figure, data on the previous Harborough constituency has been used.

It is estimated that around 20,405 people in the previous constituency of Harborough will be affected by the change in policy. This is based on Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics and 22-23 Winter Fuel Payments statistics (sources below).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of Pension Credit recipients for Harborough constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for Harborough 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 Government's Pension awareness campaigns. 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 (i.e., taking account of households where it is a couple claiming Pension Credit).

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.

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)

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Harpenden and Berkhamsted**Victoria Collins:**[\[5174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of means-testing Winter Fuel Payments on pensioner poverty in Harpenden and Berkhamsted constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

No such assessment has been made, as statistics for the total number of people living in poverty are not available at a constituency level.

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

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.

Immediate support for pensioners includes our commitment to the Triple Lock, with over 12 million pensioners set to benefit through the course of this parliament, with the full yearly rate of the new State Pensions forecast to increase by around £1700.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

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

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Huntingdon**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[3378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of pensioners in Huntingdon constituency will lose winter fuel payment.

Emma Reynolds:

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.

The estimated number of pensioners in Huntingdon constituency who will lose Winter Fuel Payments is 21,148, this equates to a proportion of 93%. 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 Huntingdon Constituency (2010 boundary) from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for Huntingdon 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.

Furthermore, the above does not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up we might see as a result of the policy change (means testing Winter fuel payments to those on Pension Credit and other means tested benefits). We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

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

Sources used:

[winter-fuel-payments-caseload-2022-to-2023.ods \(live.com\)](https://www.live.com/winter-fuel-payments-caseload-2022-to-2023.ods)

[Stat-Xplore - Table View \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/stat-xplore-table-view) (Feb-24 data)

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Impact Assessments**

Helen Grant:

[4982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish an equality impact assessment for the means-testing of Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

In making its decision on Winter Fuel Payment eligibility, the Government had regard to an equality analysis in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements. The equality analysis was published on Friday 13th September, and can be found here:

[GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Leicester East**

Shivani Raja:

[4801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Leicester East constituency will be impacted by the decision to abolish universal winter fuel payments.

Emma Reynolds:

To be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payment statistics, the Pension Credit data that has been used is based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024.

It is estimated that around 11,000 pensioners in Leicester East constituency (2010 boundary) will be impacted by the decision to amend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment. This is based on February 2024 Pension Credit statistics which are available via [DWP Stat-xplore](#) and the Winter Fuel Payment statistics for Winter 2022 to 2023 which are available via [GOV.UK](#).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of people claiming Pension Credit in Leicester East constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in Leicester East constituency. This is essentially the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients who are not claiming Pension Credit pre-policy change, as an estimate of those who will no longer receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

Please note that the above figures do not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up that 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.

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

In addition, while Pension Credit claimants constitute the majority of those that will be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, pensioners who claim other qualifying means-tested benefits will also be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment. It is not, however, possible to include those on other qualifying means-tested benefits in these figures.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[4176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of households that will be affected by the proposed change to the eligibility criteria for Winter Fuel Payments in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Emma Reynolds:

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. The Pension Credit & Winter Fuel Payments statistics aren't available for Lincolnshire. Therefore, to obtain the below figures, the Winter Fuel Payment & Pension Credit figures for the following parliamentary constituencies have been combined: Boston and Skegness, Gainsborough, Grantham and Stamford, Lincoln, Louth and Horncastle, Rutland and Melton, Sleaford and North Hykeham, and South Holland and The Deepings.

Around an estimated 15,000 and 120,000 households in South Holland and the Deepings constituency, and Lincolnshire, respectively, will be affected by the proposed change to the eligibility criteria for Winter Fuel Payments. 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 South Holland and the Deepings constituency, and Lincolnshire from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for South Holland and the Deepings constituency, and Lincolnshire. This is essentially the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients pre-policy change not claiming Pension Credit, as an estimate of those who will no longer receive Winter Fuel Payment.

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 Government's Pension Credit Awareness Campaign. We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

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)

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Low Incomes**

Dr Marie Tidball:

[4830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help mitigate the potential impact of the withdrawal of Winter Fuel Payments on low income non-Pension Credit recipient pensioners.

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.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

The State Pension is the foundation of income in retirement and will remain so protecting 12 million pensioners through the triple lock. Based on current forecasts, the full rate of the new state pension is set to increase by around £1,700 over the course of this Parliament.

We are also providing support for pensioners through our Warm Homes Plan which will support investment in insulation and low carbon heating – upgrading millions of

homes over this Parliament. Our long-term plan will protect billpayers permanently, reduce fuel poverty, and get the UK back on track to meet our climate goals.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Maidstone and Malling**

Helen Grant:

[4981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department plans to take to support people who will become ineligible for Winter Fuel Payment as a result of the planned introduction of means-testing in Maidstone and Malling constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

The State Pension is the foundation of income in retirement and will remain so protecting 12 million pensioners through the triple lock. Based on current forecasts, the full rate of the new state pension is set to increase by £1,700 over the course of this Parliament.

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

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Meriden and Solihull East**Saqib Bhatti:****[4789]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Meriden and Solihull East constituency will be impacted by planned changes to winter fuel payments.

Emma Reynolds:

Please note that following boundary changes to Parliamentary Constituencies, data on Meriden and Solihull East constituency is not explicitly available/ published. To obtain the above figure, data on the previous Solihull constituency and previous Meriden constituency have been combined. Therefore, the above figure of 39,091 is likely to be an overestimate as the new Meriden and Solihull East constituency consists of some of the areas of the previous Meriden constituency and the previous Solihull constituency, not all.

It is estimated that around 39,091 people in the previous Meriden and Solihull East constituency will be affected by the change in policy. This is based on Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics and 22-23 Winter Fuel Payments statistics (sources below).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of Pension Credit recipients the previous Meriden and Solihull East constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in the previous Meriden and Solihull East 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 policy change (means testing Winter fuel payments to those on Pension Credit and other means tested benefits). We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

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 number of pensioners eligible for Winter Fuel Payment will be higher and that the estimates provided above overstate the number of pensioners not eligible for Winter Fuel Payment following changes in eligibility.

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.

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](#)

■ Winter Fuel Payment: North West Norfolk

James Wild: **[4804]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in North West Norfolk constituency will be affected by the change in eligibility requirement for Winter Fuel Allowance.

Emma Reynolds:

To be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payment statistics, the Pension Credit data that has been used is based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024.

It is estimated that around 21,700 pensioners in North West Norfolk constituency (2010 boundary) will be impacted by the decision to amend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment. This is based on February 2024 Pension Credit statistics which are available via [DWP Stat-xplore](#) and the Winter Fuel Payment statistics for Winter 2022 to 2023 which are available via [GOV.UK](#).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of people claiming Pension Credit in North West Norfolk constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in North West Norfolk constituency. This is essentially the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients who are not claiming Pension Credit pre-policy change, as an estimate of those who will no longer receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

Please note that the above figures do not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up that 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.

The published Pension Credit figures refer to households rather than individuals, so the number of individuals receiving Pension Credit will be higher. This means that the number of pensioners eligible for Winter Fuel Payment will be higher (i.e. taking account of households where it is a couple claiming Pension Credit).

In addition, while Pension Credit claimants constitute the majority of those that will be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, pensioners who claim other qualifying means-tested benefits will also be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment. It is not, however, possible to include those on other qualifying means-tested benefits in these figures.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Romford

Andrew Rosindell: **[4607]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in the Romford constituency will be impacted by the end of universal winter fuel payments.

Emma Reynolds:

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. It is estimated that around 15,000 people in Romford constituency will be affected by the change in policy. This is based on Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics and 22-23 Winter Fuel Payments statistics (sources below).

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

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 Governments Pension Credit Awareness Campaign. We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

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

In 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.

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)

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Rural Areas**

Andrew Bowie:

[5080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment on pensioners in rural areas.

Edward Morello:

[5201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the changes to the eligibility criteria for Winter Fuel Payments on pensioners in rural communities.

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.

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.

Energy support, including customers off-grid, is provided by local authorities, the responsibility of Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the devolved governments.

The Warm Home Discount is available to eligible low-income households, who pay their electricity bill directly to a participating domestic supplier. A specific scheme is available to support eligible park homes residents, under the industry initiatives element of the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

The Home Upgrade Grant provides grants to low-income households to upgrade the energy performance of the worst quality, off gas grid homes in England by installing energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating.

This will typically include insulation measures in combination with a heat pump to make the home heat efficient and suitable for the future as we build towards net zero.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Rutland and Stamford

Alicia Kearns:

[\[4548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment in Rutland and Stamford constituency; and what estimate she has made of the number of people who will be eligible under the proposed changed eligibility requirements.

Emma Reynolds:

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. Further to the completion of the 2023 Periodic Review of Westminster constituencies, Rutland and Stamford is a newly formed constituency. Therefore, data on Rutland and Stamford constituency is not currently available. The new constituency of Rutland and Stamford includes the following areas: The County of Rutland and the parts of Harborough District, including Thurnby, from the abolished constituency of Rutland and Melton, as well as the town of Stamford and surrounding areas from Grantham and Stamford, which has been largely replaced by Grantham and Bourne. To obtain the below estimates for Rutland and Stamford constituency, data on the previous Rutland and Melton constituency and Grantham and Stamford constituency have been combined.

Before the change in eligibility requirements, an estimated 48,351 people in Rutland and Stamford constituency were eligible for and received Winter Fuel Payments, based on 22/23 Winter Fuel Payment statistics. After the change in eligibility requirements, it is estimated that around 3,365 people in Rutland and Stamford constituency will be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments, based on Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics. This is essentially the number of Pension Credit recipients in Rutland

and Stamford constituency and is used as an indicator of how many pensioners will be eligible for Winter Fuel Payment.

The above estimates are likely to be an overestimate as the new Rutland and Stamford constituency consists of some of the areas of the previous Rutland and Melton constituency and the previous Grantham and Stamford constituency, not all.

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 Government's Pension Credit Awareness Campaign. We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

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

In 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.

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)

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: South Devon**

Caroline Voaden:

[3541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people in South Devon constituency who will be affected by the decision to change eligibility requirements for the winter fuel payment.

Emma Reynolds:

To be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payment statistics, the Pension Credit data that has been used is based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024.

Due to Westminster Constituencies boundary changes, data isn't explicitly available/published for South Devon constituency. Therefore, to obtain the above figure, the statistics for Totnes constituency (now abolished and replaced by South Devon constituency) has been used. The estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of Pension Credit recipients for Totnes Constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients for Totnes constituency.

The estimated number of pensioners in South Devon constituency (2010 boundary) who will lose Winter Fuel Payments is 22,279. This is based on Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics and 22/23 Winter Fuel Payment statistics, (sources below).

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.

Furthermore, the above does not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up we might see as a result of the policy change (means testing Winter fuel payments to those on Pension Credit and other means tested benefits). We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

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

Sources used:

[winter-fuel-payments-caseload-2022-to-2023.ods \(live.com\)](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payments-caseload-2022-to-2023.ods)

[Stat-Xplore - Table View \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/stat-xplore-table-view) (Feb-24 data)

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: South West Devon**

Rebecca Smith:

[4900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of pensioners who will be affected by proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment in South West Devon constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

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. It is estimated that around 20,000 people in South West Devon constituency will be affected by the change in policy. This is based on Feb-24 Pension Credit statistics and 22-23 Winter Fuel Payments statistics (sources below).

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

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 Government's Pension Credit Awareness Campaign. We do not have data on those additional Pension Credit claims by Parliamentary constituencies or local authorities.

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

In 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.

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)

■ **Winter Fuel Payment: Sutton and Cheam**

Luke Taylor:

[5216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people that will be affected by the proposed changes to pensioners' eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment in Sutton and Cheam constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

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 Payment statistics.

It is estimated that around 14,000 pensioners in Sutton and Cheam constituency will be impacted by the decision to amend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment. This is based on February 2024 Pension Credit statistics which are available via [DWP Stat-xplore](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-stat-xplore) and the Winter Fuel Payment statistics for Winter 2022 to 2023 which are available via [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of people claiming Pension Credit in Sutton and Cheam consistency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in Sutton and Cheam constituency. This is essentially the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients who are not claiming Pension Credit pre-policy change, as an estimate of those who will no longer receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

Please note that the above figures do not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up that 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.

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

In addition, while Pension Credit claimants constitute the majority of those that will be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, pensioners who claim other qualifying means-tested benefits will also be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment. It is not, however, possible to include those on other qualifying means-tested benefits in these figures.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Tatton

Esther McVey:

[4711]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pensioners in Tatton constituency will lose entitlement to winter fuel payments as a result of the proposed changes.

Emma Reynolds:

To be comparable with the Winter Fuel Payment statistics, the Pension Credit data that has been used is based on the 2010 Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, not 2024.

It is estimated that around 18,200 pensioners in Tatton constituency (2010 boundary) will be impacted by the decision to amend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment. This is based on February 2024 Pension Credit statistics which are available via [DWP Stat-xplore](#) and the Winter Fuel Payment statistics for Winter 2022 to 2023 which are available via [GOV.UK](#).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of people claiming Pension Credit in Tatton constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in Tatton constituency. This is essentially the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients who are not claiming Pension Credit pre-policy change, as an estimate of those who will no longer receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

Please note that the above figures do not take into account any potential increase in Pension Credit take-up that 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.

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

In addition, while Pension Credit claimants constitute the majority of those that will be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, pensioners who claim other qualifying means-tested benefits will also be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment. It is not, however, possible to include those on other qualifying means-tested benefits in these figures.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: West Dorset

Edward Morello:

[5202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in West Dorset constituency are in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

According to Winter Fuel Payment Statistics, an estimated 30,232 people in West Dorset Constituency (2010 boundary) received Winter Fuel Payment in 2022-2023. The latest published Winter Fuel Payment Statistics are for the year 2022-2023 and they are published here: Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

■ Work Capability Assessment: Aldershot**Alex Baker:****[4926]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average waiting time was for a Work Capability Assessment in Aldershot constituency in the latest period for which data is available.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The information requested is not available at a constituency level. Information on Employment Support Allowance (ESA) Work Capability Assessment (WCA) clearance times for initial claims is published at a national level on [DWP Stat-Xplore](#). This can be accessed by selecting 'Guest log in' and choosing 'Clearance Times for Initial Claims' under the ESA WCA section.

We are currently unable to provide clearance times for Universal Credit (UC) WCA statistics, as these are being developed for future publication as explained in the [UC Statistics release strategy](#).

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

EDUCATION

■ Childcare

James Wild:

[\[3133\]](#)

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 9 September 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Stephen Morgan:

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

In 2023, the number of staff increased by 12,900 (4%), from 334,400 in 2022, to ~~34,300~~ **347,300** in 2023. This was before the department introduced interventions to support the growth of the workforce.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Azerbaijan: Prisoners

Chris Law:

[\[4733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for his policies of (a) arbitrary detainment of prisoners in Azerbaijan and (b) reports of human rights abuses in prisons in that country.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 17 September 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Stephen Doughty:

~~The UK government remains concerned at reports of serious allegations of severe acts of ill-treatment and torture in prisons in Azerbaijan. We continue to urge the authorities to ensure that those in detention are treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, in line with international human rights law, and that those in detention are afforded a fair trial and are provided safe conditions, in accordance with Azerbaijan's international obligations and commitments.~~

The UK government remains concerned by reports of serious allegations of severe acts of ill-treatment and torture in prisons in Azerbaijan. In line with international human rights law, we continue to urge the authorities to ensure those in detention are: i) treated with humanity and respect for the inherent

dignity of the human person, ii) afforded a fair trial and iii) provided safe conditions. Our Embassy in Baku will continue to raise this with the government of Azerbaijan.