



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 10 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 10 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	6	■ Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals	15
BUSINESS AND TRADE	6	■ Devolution: Wales	15
■ Buses: Electric Vehicles	6	■ House of Lords: Reform	16
■ Databases: Blyth	6	■ Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests	16
■ Disability: EU Law	7	■ Infected Blood Compensation Scheme	16
■ Electric Vehicles: China	8	■ Infected Blood Inquiry	17
■ Export Controls	8	■ Prime Minister: Remote Meetings	17
■ Export Controls: Israel	9	■ Prime Minister's Office: Remote Working	17
■ F-35 Aircraft: Export Controls	9	CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	18
■ Forced Labour	10	■ Allwyn Entertainment: Disclosure of Information	18
■ Foreign Investment in UK: North West	10	■ Andy Murray	18
■ Oil: Imports	11	■ Mining: Cultural Heritage	18
■ Overseas Trade: Sri Lanka	11	■ Sports: Epping Forest	19
■ Productivity: North East	11	DEFENCE	20
■ Small Businesses: Government Assistance	12	■ Armed Forces: Discharges	20
■ Trade	12	■ Armed Forces: Visas	20
■ Trade Agreements	12	■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty	21
CABINET OFFICE	14	■ Defence: Research	21
■ 10 Downing Street: Planning Permission	14	■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Pay	21
■ Cabinet Office: Departmental Responsibilities	14		
■ Civil Service: Productivity	14		

EDUCATION	22	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	34
■ Childcare	22	■ Beverage Containers: Deposit Return Schemes	34
■ Childcare: Epsom and Ewell	23	■ Beverage Containers: Litter	35
■ Children in Care: Asylum	24	■ Climate Change	35
■ Children: Carers	25	■ Fires: Merton	35
■ Engineering: Young People	25	■ Fish Products: Faroe Islands	36
■ Film: Apprentices	26	■ Forest Products: Northern Ireland	36
■ Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023	26	■ Packaging: Recycling	37
■ Schools: East Surrey	26	■ Shellfish	37
■ Schools: Kent	27	■ Water Companies	38
■ Special Educational Needs: Codes of Practice	28	■ Water Companies: Directors	38
■ Special Guardianship Orders: Carers' Benefits	28	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	38
■ Students: Fees and Charges	29	■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Mauritius	38
■ Students: Loans	29	■ British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: Money Laundering and Tax Evasion	39
■ Teachers: Pay	29	■ Cyprus	40
■ Universities: Freedom of Expression	31	■ Cyprus: Missing Persons	40
ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	31	■ Cyprus: Turkey	41
■ Carbon Capture and Storage	31	■ Cyprus: Visits Abroad	41
■ Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage: Taxation	32	■ Famagusta	42
■ Databases: Carbon Emissions and Water	32	■ Gaza: Chevening Scholarships Programme	42
■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: newcleo	33	■ Gibraltar: Spain	42
■ Nuclear Reactors: Renewable Fuels	33	■ Palestinians: Overseas Students	43
■ Small Modular Reactors	33	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	43
■ Solar Power	34	■ Autism: Diagnosis	43
		■ Brain: Tumours	44
		■ Cancer: Radiotherapy	44

■ Cauda Equina Syndrome	45	■ Visas: Lebanon	57
■ Dental Services: Contracts	45	■ Visas: Personal Income	57
■ Dental Services: Scarborough And Whitby	46	■ Visas: Seasonal Workers	58
■ Diabetes: Medical Equipment	46	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	59
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Young People	47	■ Council Tax: Single People	59
■ Health Services and Social Services	47	■ Leasehold: Reform	59
■ Lung Cancer: Screening	48	■ Local Government: Borrowing	60
■ Medicine: Education	48	JUSTICE	60
■ Members: Correspondence	49	■ Child Arrangements Orders	60
■ Mental Health Services: Low Incomes	49	■ Immigration: Appeals	61
■ NHS: Drugs	49	■ Prisoners' Release: Gender Based Violence	61
■ NHS: Pay	50	■ Prisoners' Release: Victims	62
■ Radiotherapy: Medical Equipment	50	■ Prisoners' Release: Wales	62
■ Recycling: Greater London	51	■ Sexual Offences: Victim Support Schemes	62
■ Sleeping Rough	51	LEADER OF THE HOUSE	63
■ Smoking: Health Services	52	■ UK Youth Parliament	63
■ Smoking: Hospitals	52	NORTHERN IRELAND	63
HOME OFFICE	53	■ Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland: Borders	63
■ Asylum: Havering	53	■ Northern Ireland Office: Public Appointments	64
■ Domestic Abuse: Older People	53	SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	64
■ European Arrest Warrants	53	■ Artificial Intelligence	64
■ Farms: Theft	54	■ Artificial Intelligence: Regulation	65
■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Visas	54	■ Bioengineering: Infrastructure	65
■ Moorland: Fire Prevention	55	■ CERN	66
■ Police: Termination of Employment	55	■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Digital Technology	66
■ Transgender People: Hate Crime	56		
■ Visas: Gaza	56		

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Recruitment	66	■ South Western Railway: Public Lavatories	74
■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Special Advisers	67	■ Taxis: Regulation	74
■ European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasts: Finance	67	■ Trains: Manufacturing Industries	75
■ Incubator for Artificial Intelligence	67	■ Transport: East Midlands	75
■ New Businesses: Investment	67	■ Transport: West Dorset	75
■ Research: Innovation	68	TREASURY	76
■ Spaceflight	68	■ Air Passenger Duty	76
■ Video Games	69	■ Beer: Excise Duties	76
SCOTLAND	69	■ Crown Estate Commissioners: Fees and Charges	77
■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions	69	■ Crown Estate Commissioners: Wales	77
■ Scotland Office: Civil Servants	69	■ Fuels: Excise Duties	78
■ Scotland Office: Public Appointments	69	■ Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties	78
TRANSPORT	70	■ Pensioners: Tax Rates and Bands	79
■ Airports: Carbon Emissions	70	■ Small Businesses	79
■ Bus Services: Concessions	70	WALES	80
■ Central Line: Standards	70	■ Wales Office: Public Appointments	80
■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists	71	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	80
■ Electric Scooters: Hire Services	71	■ Disability: Employment	80
■ High Speed 2 Line	72	■ Special Educational Needs	81
■ London North Eastern Railway: Subsidies	72	WORK AND PENSIONS	81
■ Railway Stations: Access	72	■ Assistance Animals	81
■ Railways: Fares	72	■ Care Leavers	81
■ Railways: Nationalisation	73	■ Child Benefit and Universal Credit: Eligibility	82
■ Railways: Spalding	73	■ Children: Maintenance	82
■ Roads: Essex	73	■ Children: Poverty	83
■ Roads: Freight	74	■ Cleaning Services: Health and Safety	84
		■ Department for Work and Pensions: Arden Strategies	84

■ Employment: Poverty	85	CABINET OFFICE	97
■ Food Poverty	85	■ Infected Blood Compensation Authority Independent Member Appointments	97
■ Housing Benefit: Supported Housing and Temporary Accommodation	86	ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	97
■ Older People: County Durham	87	■ Government response to the consultation on long-duration electricity storage	97
■ Older People: Income	87	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	99
■ Pension Credit: Take-up	88	■ Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Relocation - Development Consent Order Extension	99
■ Pensioners: Fuel Poverty	89	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	99
■ Social Security Benefits	90	■ Baby Loss Certificates Extension	99
■ Universal Credit: Children	90	HOME OFFICE	100
■ Windows: Health and Safety	90	■ Publication of Forensic Information Database Strategy Board Annual Report 2023-24	100
■ Winter Fuel Payment	91	PRIME MINISTER	101
■ Winter Fuel Payment: British Nationals Abroad	91	■ Cabinet Committees	101
■ Winter Fuel Payment: Disability	92		
WRITTEN STATEMENTS	93		
BUSINESS AND TRADE	93		
■ Delivering the Government's Plan to Make Work Pay - Introduction of the Employment Rights Bill	93		
■ Launch of the Office of Trade Sanctions Implementation	95		

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

■ Buses: Electric Vehicles

Jim Allister:

[7382]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the tariff level applied to imported electric buses on local production; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of raising that tariff.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

In setting tariffs, the Government takes into account the interests of UK consumers, producers, productivity, competitiveness, and external trade, as well as wider considerations such as strategic trade objectives.

As with all policy, the Government welcomes feedback and monitors these requests closely. Feedback can be submitted on specific tariff lines via the UKGT feedback form available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tariffs-on-goods-imported-into-the-uk>.

Jim Allister:

[7383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what trade remedy measures to promote domestic manufacturing industries are in place in respect of electric bus manufacturing in the UK.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK does not have a trade remedy measure in place against imports of electric buses.

■ Databases: Blyth

Clive Lewis:

[6322]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government has offered Blackstone tax incentives as part of the agreement to build a data centre in Blyth.

Sarah Jones:

The Government does not provide any specific tax incentives for data centres. The site chosen by Blackstone for its data centre investment in Blyth, Northumberland, is in an Investment Zone tax site within the North East Investment Zone designed to support new investment in Advanced Manufacturing and Green Industries. Guidance on eligibility for tax reliefs in Investment Zone sites is available on gov.uk. His Majesty's Revenue and Customs administers National Insurance, Stamp Duty Land Tax, Enhanced Structures and Buildings Allowance, and Enhanced Capital Allowance relief, and the relevant billing authority administers relief on business rates.

Clive Lewis: [\[6323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department made an environmental impact assessment of the data centre in Blyth before the investment by Blackstone was announced.

Sarah Jones:

Construction on Blackstone's chosen site for its £10bn data centre investment in Blyth will be subject to securing appropriate planning permission. As part of the planning process, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) are carried out by applicants where a development is considered to have significant impacts on the environment. Whether a full EIA is required is a decision for the Local Planning Authority in the first instance.

Clive Lewis: [\[6324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department made an assessment of the potential impact of increased data processing on water usage before the investment by Blackstone in a data centre in Blyth was announced.

Sarah Jones:

Construction on Blackstone's chosen site for its £10bn data centre investment in Blyth will be subject to securing appropriate planning permission. As part of the planning process, applicants may be required to carry out Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) which may include an assessment of any issues around water scarcity and pollution, if it is considered that these could be impacted by the development. Whether a full EIA is required is a decision for the Local Planning Authority in the first instance.

■ Disability: EU Law

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[6505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if his Department will bring forward legislative proposals to transpose the European Accessibility Act into UK law.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Following the UK's Exit from the European Union, the process of transposition of EU Directives has ceased. The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (REUL Act) ended the supremacy of EU law over domestic UK law, as of January 1, 2024. The European Accessibility Act (EAA) will not directly apply to the UK and, as such, there are no immediate plans within His Majesty's Government (HMG) to transpose this EU legislation. However, UK companies offering in-scope products or services in the EU will need to comply with its provisions, demonstrating that their products/services are compliant with the provisions.

■ Electric Vehicles: China

Julia Buckley: [\[5755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has plans to increase the import tariff on electric vehicles from China.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

New tariffs or quotas on goods from a particular country can be applied via trade remedies. It is for the independent Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) to investigate whether trade remedy measures are needed to protect our industries. The Secretary of State can request the TRA to initiate an investigation. For the TRA to accept any application, an evidence threshold must be met. We encourage any UK producer that believes it has been harmed by unfairly dumped or subsidised goods to contact the TRA in the first instance.

■ Export Controls

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[6996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many export licences were approved in (a) August 2024 and (b) each of the preceding 12 months.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Official Statistics for 2024 have not yet been published. Information covering January to July 2024 are planned to be released by November 2024.

The UK operates one of the most transparent export licensing systems in the world. We publish quarterly and annual statistics on all our export licensing decisions. These can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data>

We do not publish monthly licensing statistics, but we have published quarterly statistics for 2023:

REPORTING PERIOD	NUMBER ISSUED
2023	11,746
2023Q1	2,853
2023Q2	2,987
2023Q3	2,967
2023Q4	2,939

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[6997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what changes have been made to export licence approval procedures since 5 July 2024.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

No changes to export licensing procedures have been made since 5 July 2024.

All export licence applications are assessed on a case by case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. We are satisfied that these Criteria continue to provide a thorough forward-looking risk assessment process for all export licence applications.

■ Export Controls: Israel**Siân Berry:**[\[7273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether L3Harris held any of the export licences to Israel suspended on 2 September 2024

Mr Douglas Alexander:

L3Harris did not hold any of the Standard Individual Export Licence or Open Individual Export Licences that were suspended on 2 September 2024.

■ F-35 Aircraft: Export Controls**Siân Berry:**[\[7274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether L3Harris has used the provision under Section 4. part (2) of the open general export licence for exports for the Joint Strike Fighter F-35 Lightning II to export equipment where the end-user is Israel since 2 September 2024.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Usage against Open General Export Licences (OGEL) is only recorded and held on an annual basis, and therefore it is not possible to report on the number of times an OGEL has been used from part way through the year.

The Export Control Joint Unit's searchable database allows bespoke searches of published data to be conducted. This includes open licence usage broken down by specified year(s), separated by country; licence type; end user type and usage count. This database can be accessed at

<https://www.exportcontroldb.trade.gov.uk/sdb2/fox/sdb/>. Please note that we do not publish open licence usage of specific companies.

Siân Berry:[\[7275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has had discussions with (a) L3Harris on and (b) other UK-based companies using the open general export licence for exports for the Joint Strike Fighter F-35 Lightning II since 5 July 2024.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) has regular discussions with UK exporters on Open General Export Licences (OGELs) including the OGEL: exports in support of Joint Strike Fighter: F-35 Lightning II.

Exporters registered to OGELs have specific reporting obligations. More information on how ECJU works with exporters on OGELs can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/open-general-export-licences-ogels>.

■ Forced Labour

Sarah Champion:

[6252]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals equivalent to the (a) US Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act, (b) EU Corporate sustainability due diligence directive and (c) EU forced labour regulation.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Government is committed to working with international partners and businesses to ensure global supply chains are free from environmental harms, and human and labour rights abuses. No UK company should have these in their supply chains.

The Government is reviewing the detail and implementation of the EU's Forced Labour Regulation and its Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, as well the US's Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act, and will continue to engage with our European and US partners to understand how we best tackle environmental harms, modern slavery and forced labour in supply chains.

■ Foreign Investment in UK: North West

Mike Amesbury:

[7528]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to increase foreign investment in the North West.

Sarah Jones:

Growth is the government's central economic mission and we are currently developing an Industrial Strategy which aims to drive growth across the UK through investment in key sectors and regions. We are also hosting the International Investment Summit in October, to bring together global investors and regional leaders to advance opportunities for investment and growth across the country. Additional measures to improve the business environment and increase investment into the UK will be announced at the summit.

For the North West specifically, we will support delivery of the Local Growth Plans. We will continue showcasing investment opportunities across the North West to potential investors, and provide account management services for investors already in the region to help them build and scale.

Oil: Imports**Steve Darling:**[\[6745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what plans he has to (a) stop the import of oil products refined from Russian-origin crude oil and (b) require proof of origin for such products entering the UK market.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK has worked closely with international partners to constrain Russian oil revenues while maintaining energy market security. The Government does not speculate on future sanctions measures as to do so could reduce their impact. We continue to monitor the effectiveness of our sanctions.

Overseas Trade: Sri Lanka**Karl Turner:**[\[5573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to increase the volume of trade between the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Government uses a range of programmes and levers to increase the volume of trade between UK and Sri Lanka. These include the Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS), which cuts tariffs and simplifies trading rules for Sri Lankan exporters. The Government also works in Sri Lanka to promote UK trade, investment, trade policy objectives and export finance overseas. This is spearheaded by His Majesty's Trade Commissioner (HMTTC) to South Asia.

These are complemented by regular Government-to-Government engagement, including the annual UK-Sri Lanka Strategic Dialogue, one of the official mechanisms for discussion of trade-related issues and promoting areas of mutual interest.

Productivity: North East**Mary Glendon:**[\[6222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help increase labour productivity in the North East.

Gareth Thomas:

Labour productivity in the UK has stagnated over the past fourteen years. It is essential that we act decisively to change this in all nations and regions, including in the North East of England.

We are currently working closely with both the North East and Tees Valley Combined Authorities as they develop their Local Growth Plans, to identify their highest-potential sectors and growth priorities.

This will enable a focus on the North East's economic strengths, make the most of mayoral leadership and help create the best conditions for lasting change, driving up labour productivity and growth.

■ Small Businesses: Government Assistance

Gareth Bacon: [\[5662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to help support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Gareth Thomas:

Small businesses are the beating heart of our communities. The Government will boost small business growth and productivity by delivering upon the commitments within Labour's Plan for Small Business published prior to the election.

On 19th September 2024, we announced new measures to tackle the scourge of late payments and long payment terms. We are providing access to the support and finance needed to scale-up and to break into new markets. We are also transforming the apprenticeships levy into a new growth and skills levy, offering greater flexibility for learners and employers, including shorter duration apprenticeships in targeted sectors.

■ Trade

Adam Jogee: [\[6958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when his Department plans to publish a trade strategy.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

We intend to publish the Trade Strategy in the Spring.

The Trade Strategy will focus on the ways that trade is changing and how the UK can take a forward-facing approach to drive economic growth. It will be consistent with the Government's Industrial Strategy and Small Business Plan.

■ Trade Agreements

Lee Anderson: [\[6499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent progress has been made on negotiating new trade agreements.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Economic Growth is the first priority of this government. To deliver on this, one of our first steps after taking office was to announce that we were resuming Free Trade Agreement negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council, India, Israel, South Korea, Switzerland and Turkey. Having carefully reviewed our negotiation objectives we have now started talks with the first of these key partners. This is a first step towards getting businesses access to international markets, boosting jobs, and delivering growth. We are also committed to ensuring UK businesses can take full advantage of CPTPP when it enters into force in December.

Adam Jogee: [\[6956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to take steps to ensure Parliament has greater oversight of the UK's trade negotiations.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Government is committed to supporting parliamentary scrutiny of the UK's trade agreements, balancing the need for robust scrutiny with the need to ensure we can negotiate effectively in the UK's best interests.

The Department for Business and Trade is currently considering scrutiny arrangements for trade agreements, to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Adam Jogee: [\[6957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to consult with (a) civil society and (b) the representatives of workers over (i) active and (ii) prospective free trade agreement negotiations.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

Economic growth is the first mission of this government and Free Trade Agreements have an important role to play in achieving that, alongside other levers of trade policy.

The Department for Business and Trade deeply values the views of civil society and the representatives of workers. We seek their input, alongside the input of business and the public, through the public consultations that have been conducted before each negotiation begins, and in continuous engagement with ministers and officials throughout the lifecycle of a negotiation.

The input we receive feeds into our negotiating objectives, to ensure we strike agreements that deliver growth for the public.

Adam Jogee: [\[6959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to include provisions on workers' rights in the negotiation of free trade agreements.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK will continue to work internationally to strengthen workers' rights and enhance labour standards globally. The Government will protect our labour standards in new trade agreements.

The UK has chapters on labour in FTAs with Australia and New Zealand, and within CPTPP, and labour provisions as part of trade and sustainable development chapters in a range of other agreements.

CABINET OFFICE**■ 10 Downing Street: Planning Permission**

John Glen: [\[5289\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether planning applications have been submitted to Westminster City Council in relation to works on the Downing Street estate since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

No planning permissions have been applied for since 4 July 2024.

■ Cabinet Office: Departmental Responsibilities

John Glen: [\[5278\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to (a) restructure the Cabinet Office and its agencies and (b) transfer responsibilities to Departments.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Following the 4th July 2024 election, there have been two Written Ministerial Statements setting out several Machinery of Government changes, all of which impact the Cabinet Office. The Written Ministerial Statement laid on 24th July 2024 (HCWS19) announced:

- The Office for Veterans' Affairs will move from the Cabinet Office to the Ministry of Defence
- Digital functions (i.e., Government Digital Service, Central Digital and Data Office) will move from the Cabinet Office to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
- Ministerial oversight of the EU relationship (existing agreements and the future relationship) will move from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to the Cabinet Office
- Government Car Service will move from the Department for Transport (DfT) to the Cabinet Office

A later Written Ministerial Statement laid on 5th September set out:

- Responsibility for Union and devolution policy across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is moving from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Cabinet Office

Cabinet Office staff are now working on the implementation of the above Machinery of Government Changes.

■ Civil Service: Productivity

Mr Richard Holden: [\[7568\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to (a) monitor and (b) increase productivity in the civil service.

Georgia Gould:

This Government is committed to improving the productivity of the public sector to deliver high quality public services, achieve value for money and support economic growth. The Government will develop a strategic plan for a more efficient and effective civil service, including bold options to improve skills, harness digital technology and drive better outcomes for public services.

■ Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals**John Glen:****[7430]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the (a) terms of reference and (b) rules of procedure of the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations, and Medals.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (known as the HD Committee) is the policy-making body for the honours system. It was established in 1939 to coordinate the award of medals to the Armed Forces. After World War Two, its remit expanded to providing advice to The Sovereign on general honours issues.

Its terms of reference are to consider general questions relative to the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals; to review the Scales of award, both civil and military, to consider questions of new awards, and changes in the conditions governing existing awards.

Information about its role, and its membership, is published on gov.uk. The Government has no current plans to publish anything further in relation to its operation.

■ Devolution: Wales**Liz Saville Roberts:****[7504]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the (a) job description for the Envoy for the Nations and Regions and the (b) framework which describes how the Envoy for Nations and Regions will work with the (i) Welsh Government and (ii) Wales Office.

Georgia Gould:

The terms of reference for the Prime Minister's Envoy for the Nations and Regions will be published online in the normal way, setting out the purpose, scope and remit of the role, including how the Envoy will work with Cabinet Ministers and devolved counterparts to support the Government's efforts to reset relations across the UK.

■ House of Lords: Reform

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5897\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to consult on proposals to reform the House of Lords; and whether those consultations will include the removal of the Lords Spiritual from the House of Lords.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government has set out an ambitious programme of House of Lords reform. As an immediate first step, the Government has introduced the House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill, which will remove the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords. The Government believes that it is right to take the time to consider how best to implement the other manifesto commitments over the course of this Parliament.

■ Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests

John Glen:

[\[5284\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of merging that role into the proposed Ethics and Integrity Commission.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests plays a critically important role as a source of trusted, impartial advice.

The Government has committed to establishing a new independent Ethics and Integrity Commission, with its own independent Chair. We will ensure that this Commission has the powers and remit necessary to fulfil its responsibilities and will provide an update in due course.

■ Infected Blood Compensation Scheme

Sorcha Eastwood:

[\[5780\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether people with hepatitis B who have not received (a) a lump sum and (b) regular payments from a support scheme will be entitled to an award under the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

People who received contaminated blood or blood products which resulted in a chronic Hepatitis B infection will be eligible to claim compensation under the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme. The estates of those who died from an acute Hepatitis B infection during the acute period will also be eligible to claim compensation. The Infected Blood Compensation Scheme will be delivered by the UK-wide delivery body, the Infected Blood Compensation Authority, which is separate to the current support schemes.

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[5781\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether people with hepatitis B are eligible to claim through the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme for financial loss due to (a) the inability to work full time and (b) not receiving regular support scheme payments.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Anyone with an eligible Hepatitis B infection will be able to claim compensation calculated under five categories of award including a financial loss award. The financial loss award recognises the past and future financial losses suffered as a result of infection. This includes both financial loss and loss of services. Financial Loss award calculations take into account a person's average loss of earnings in the years prior to the establishment of the Compensation Scheme, as well as future loss of earnings up to healthy life expectancy and will disregard whether or not an individual received Infected Blood Support Scheme payments prior to 31 March 2025.

■ Infected Blood Inquiry**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[5782\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the representation of people with hepatitis B in the Infected Blood Inquiry.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Inquiry is independent of Government and the conduct of the Inquiry is a matter for the Chair. Since it began, the Inquiry sat to hear evidence for 290 days from 374 witnesses, including people with hepatitis B. In total, the Inquiry has received 5,570 witness statements, including 4,265 statements from people infected and affected.

■ Prime Minister: Remote Meetings**John Glen:** [\[6067\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on virtual meetings for staff working in 10 Downing Street.

Georgia Gould:

For management and staffing purposes the Prime Minister's Office is part of the Cabinet Office. As was the case under the previous administration, there is no specific policy on virtual meetings.

■ Prime Minister's Office: Remote Working**John Glen:** [\[5298\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what Prime Minister's policy is on full-time staff in 10 Downing Street working from home; and whether there is a target percentage for workplace occupancy in 10 Downing Street.

Georgia Gould:

For management and staffing purposes, the Prime Minister's Office is a business unit of the Cabinet Office. There is therefore an expectation of a minimum of 60% office attendance for full-time staff in 10 Downing Street.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Allwyn Entertainment: Disclosure of Information****Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[7399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has a role in setting Allwyn Entertainment Limited's policy on publishing data.

Stephanie Peacock:

DCMS does not have a role in setting Allwyn Entertainment Limited's policy on data publication.

The responsibility for regulation of the National Lottery operator rests solely with the Gambling Commission, as set out in the National Lottery Act 1993.

■ **Andy Murray****Gordon McKee:**[\[3884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to mark the retirement of Sir Andy Murray.

Stephanie Peacock:

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

We know how important access to facilities is as part of the legacy of our sporting heroes, so people can try the sports they see on screen. The Government has committed to continue to support grassroots facilities across the UK.

■ **Mining: Cultural Heritage****Josh Newbury:**[\[4067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to (a) safeguard and (b) promote mining heritage.

Chris Bryant:

Our mining past has shaped the lives of people, communities and landscapes across the country. It is essential we record mining heritage, and crucially share it with future generations, in order not to forget its fundamental impact on our society, country and indeed the world. My department, working with our arm's length bodies and the heritage sector, promotes and safeguards our rich mining heritage in a variety of ways.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded more than £39 million to projects focused on the history of mining across the UK since 1999. This includes investing in internationally important heritage sites such as the Mining Institute in Newcastle, restoring landscapes impacted by mining, and funding grassroot community projects to collect oral histories of those involved in mining. In Cannock Chase Staffordshire, the Heritage Fund has invested more than £120,000 in projects focused on the area's important coal mining history.

As the Government's expert advisor on the historic environment, Historic England has also advised on and instigated a range of projects to record and preserve the history of mining. For example, the former mining village of Elsecar in South Yorkshire was one of the first places in England to be awarded Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) status by Historic England. Working with the community and the local authority, Historic England looked to document the tangible and intangible aspects of this area's rich mining heritage. Between 2016 and 2018, Historic England also funded The Chase Through Time project which explored the history and landscape of Cannock Chase, including its important mining and industrial heritage.

The National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield receives funding via the Science Museum Group, an arm's length body of DCMS. The museum is a centre of mining heritage for England, preserving and promoting the history of mining heritage and the stories of the people and communities affected by mining across the country.

Through our designation and planning system we will continue to protect the mining heritage of national and international importance. This includes the Cornwall & West Devon Mining Landscape, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which spreads across 20,000 hectares in the South West. The region used to produce most of the world's copper, tin and arsenic, and the World Heritage Site looks to preserve aspects of this history for local communities and visitors.

■ Sports: Epping Forest

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[7578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support grassroots sports clubs in Epping Forest.

Stephanie Peacock:

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

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

Epping Forest has benefitted from £424,995 of investment under the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme, the Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme, and the Swimming Pool Support Fund to date.

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

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Discharges

James Cartlidge: [\[7500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding he plans to provide for the resettlement of personnel leaving the armed forces in the 2024-25 financial year.

AI Carns:

Resettlement services are offered to all personnel leaving the Armed Forces, with employment support and training delivered through the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to all Regular Service Leavers. The CTP is the official provider of Armed Forces resettlement support to all Regular Service Leavers, regardless of time served.

The new CTP Contract launched on 1 October 2024 and looks to build on the success of the previous contract in providing a 'gold standard' of resettlement support to Service Leavers as part of the wider transition support provided by the Ministry of Defence which includes through-career attainment of life skills, and access to Defence Transition Services which offers targeted support for those facing challenges in successful transition. Service personnel leaving the Regular Armed Forces are entitled to access resettlement services two years prior to their discharge date and for two years post discharge.

Resettlement services are delivered under the CTP (Defence Commercial Category B) contract with a total budget provision of £110 million over 10 years. We will not be releasing the requested annual figure as this is commercially sensitive.

■ Armed Forces: Visas

James Cartlidge: [\[7497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2024 to Question 121 on Armed Forces: Visas, when his Department first held discussions with the Home Office on ending visa fees for serving personnel.

AI Carns:

Ministry of Defence officials began engagement with the Home Office in late July 2024 to discuss this manifesto commitment.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**

James Cartlidge:

[\[7499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the agreement to cede sovereignty of the Chagos islands to Mauritius on the risk of espionage from hostile states.

Luke Pollard:

The negotiations between the UK and Mauritius on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Islands were announced in the House of Commons on 3 November 2022 by the then Foreign Secretary. Their aim was to ensure the continued effective operation of the joint UK/US military base on Diego Garcia.

We now have this historic agreement, that ends the uncertainty over the future of the base on Diego Garcia, which plays such a crucial role in regional and international security. We have full Mauritian backing for robust security arrangements, including preventing foreign armed forces from establishing themselves on the outer islands, or otherwise undermining the effective operation of the Base, meaning the base is more protected than ever from foreign malign influence in a more insecure world.

■ **Defence: Research**

James Cartlidge:

[\[7496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 September 2024 to Question 3738 on Defence: Research, whether the spending review process will cover spending on defence research and development in (a) this financial year and (b) the next four financial years.

Luke Pollard:

Spend on research and development will be covered within Departmental plans as part of the Spending Review process. The Chancellor has set out the time period to be covered by this process.

■ **Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Pay**

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[\[6050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 August 2024 to Question 3668 on Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Pay, when his Department next plans to review the pay structures of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[\[6051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 August 2024 to Question 3668 on Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Pay, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing pay rises to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary that are in line with those offered to (a) Royal Navy personnel and (b) civil servants.

Dame Caroline Dinenge: [\[6052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to tackle staff shortages in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Jayne Kirkham: [\[7191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve (a) recruitment and (b) retention at the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Al Carns:

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary are highly valued, specialist personnel. We are committed to listening to their concerns and keeping a continued dialogue to address the issues they have raised. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continues to engage with the Maritime Trade Unions (MTUs), who represent members of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA), to discuss a resolution to the on-going RFA pay dispute.

Recognising that the RFA is the largest employer of British non-military seafarers, the RFA intend to introduce a series of new recruitment and retention initiatives, including enhanced lateral entry routes from maritime industry, improved occupational health measures and a suite of options to increase working flexibility.

The MOD continues to work with both MTUs to resolve the on-going RFA pay dispute whilst mitigating potential impact of strike action to ensure that the Royal Navy continues to deliver its maritime commitments.

EDUCATION

■ Childcare

Paul Davies: [\[5525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to deliver a sustainable childcare model that enables more women to access (a) education and (b) work opportunities.

Stephen Morgan:

It is this government's ambition for all families to have access to high-quality, affordable and flexible early education and care, thereby improving the life chances for every child and the work choices for every parent.

Through the student loans company, the department offers a specific Childcare Grant (CCG) to support students with the costs of childcare whilst they are in study. The CCG offers support of up to 85% of childcare costs where both parents are students, the student is a lone parent, or the student-parent's partner is on a low income. Students are also eligible for universal 15 hours childcare, which is available to all two, three and four year olds, regardless of family circumstances and/or income.

The government has committed to continue to roll out the expanded childcare entitlements for eligible working parents of children aged from nine months. The

department is also growing the provision of wraparound before and after school provision of childcare for primary school children.

In addition to the entitlements, parents may also be eligible for childcare support through Tax-Free Childcare or Universal Credit Childcare. Parents can check what childcare support they are entitled to via the Childcare Choices website.

The government is committed to delivering a modern childcare system from the end of parental leave to the end of primary school, providing every child with a firm foundation which sets them up for life, ensuring parents are able to work the jobs and hours they choose and effectively breaking down the barriers to opportunity for every family.

■ Childcare: Epsom and Ewell

Helen Maguire:

[\[5778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help increase the (a) availability and (b) affordability of childcare in Epsom and Ewell constituency.

Stephen Morgan:

It is the department's ambition that all families have access to high quality, affordable and flexible early education and care, improving the life chances for every child and the work choices for every parent.

From September 2024, eligible working parents of children aged nine months and above can access 15 hours government funded childcare a week over 38 weeks a year. From September 2025, this will be extended so eligible working parents will be able to access 30 hours per week (over 38 weeks a year) for children from the age of 9 months to when they start school.

The government has committed to continue to roll out the expanded childcare entitlements for eligible working parents of children aged from nine months. The department is also growing the provision of wraparound before and after school provision of childcare for primary school children.

In 2024/25, the department expects to provide over £1.7 billion to support local authorities and providers to deliver the childcare expansion. In Surrey, the hourly rate for government funded childcare entitlements for 3 to 4 year olds is £6.77, which is an increase of 5.8%. For two year olds, this figure is £9.61 per hour and for under 2's, £13.04 per hour.

The government has also committed to upgrading unused space in primary schools to create much needed places in 3,000 nurseries by working in partnership with all parts of the sector and local authorities.

In addition to the entitlements, parents may also be eligible for childcare support through Tax-Free Childcare or Universal Credit. Parents can check what childcare support they are entitled to via the Childcare Choices website.

The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing, including supporting them through its childcare delivery support contract where appropriate.

The government is committed to delivering a modern childcare system from the end of parental leave to the end of primary school, providing every child with a firm foundation which sets them up for life and ensures parents are able to work the jobs and hours they choose to effectively break down the barriers to opportunity for every family.

■ Children in Care: Asylum

Neil O'Brien: [7534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of looked after children were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in each local authority in each month since January 2017.

Neil O'Brien: [7535]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of people in leaving care services were former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in each local authority in each month since January 2017.

Janet Daby:

Information on the number of looked after children, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, is submitted to the department on an annual basis and is published at local authority level in the department's statistical release, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>. Information on the numbers and proportion of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children at 31 March in the years 2017 to 2023 is attached. Figures are produced on an annual rather than monthly basis.

Information on the number of care leavers who were former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is submitted to the department on an annual basis and is routinely published at national level in the department's statistical release, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>. Information on the numbers and proportion of care leavers who were former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children at 31 March by local authority for the years 2017 to 2023 is attached.

Information on a monthly basis is not held centrally by the department.

Attachments:

1. Care leavers, Unaccompanied Asylum-seeker Status
[7534_7535_attachment_number_and_proportion_care_leavers_previous_unaccompanied_asylum_seeking_children_status_since_2017_by_local_authority.xls]
2. Children, Unaccompanied Asylum-seeker Status
[7534_7535_attachment_number_and_proportion_looked_after_children_previous_unaccompanied_asylum_seeking_children_status_since_2017_by_local_authority.xls]

■ Children: Carers

Jayne Kirkham:

[\[7675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a requirement for local authorities to have a local offer for kinship care on the lines of those that required for care leavers and disabled children.

Janet Daby:

Local authorities have been expected to publish a policy detailing their approach towards meeting the needs and supporting children living in kinship care since the Family and Friends Care guidance was published in 2011. The department will soon be releasing updated guidance, called Kinship Care statutory guidance, which will restate that requirement.

■ Engineering: Young People

Jayne Kirkham:

[\[7709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to ensure funding is made available for skills programmes that provide pre-engineering training for young people.

Janet Daby:

All young people should have access to high-quality education and training that meets their needs and provides them with opportunities to thrive.

Over £7 billion of 16-19 programme funding will be invested during academic year 2024/25, to ensure there is a place in education or training for every 16- to 18-year-old who wants one. The department calculates the basic funding for institutions using lagged student volumes and funding rates, which depend on the size of their students' study programmes or T Levels. These rates are regardless of which type of institution they study at or what they study.

The Adult Skills Fund (ASF) is worth £1.34 billion this year, and funds education and skills training for those 19 and above to help them gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning. Learners aged 19-23 can get their first full level 2 and level 3 fully funded under the ASF legal entitlements.

For the 2024/25 academic year we have introduced five new funding rates that apply to the ESFA funded ASF. Under these new funding rates, 78% of qualifications are seeing an increase in funding.

The government's reformed growth and skills levy will deliver greater flexibility for learners and employers, including through new foundation apprenticeships that will give more young people a foot in the door and will support clear pathways into work-based training and employment.

■ Film: Apprentices**Tom Hayes:** [\[5455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will bring forward legislative proposals to include employers' running costs for providing visual effects and post-production placements in the Apprenticeship Levy.

Janet Daby:

This government is transforming the Apprenticeship Levy into a new Growth and Skills Levy. The new levy will build on the apprenticeships programme to create more opportunities for learners and give employers greater flexibility to address critical skill shortages in their workforce, which will help drive economic growth.

Skills England will be responsible for identifying training that is eligible for the Growth and Skills Levy, ensuring that levy-funded training delivers value for money and meets the needs of businesses.

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.

■ Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023**Claire Coutinho:** [\[6571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with the signatories of the open letter by Academics for Academic Freedoms, published on 2 August 2024, on the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

Claire Coutinho: [\[6574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she had discussions with relevant stakeholders on the potential impact of pausing the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 on income from China for UK universities as part of discussions relating to that decision.

Janet Daby:

Departmental officials and my noble Friend, the Minister for Skills have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders on the future of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. This includes representatives of higher education providers and academics, including from the Committee for Academic Freedom, Academics for Academic Freedom and the London Universities' Council for Academic Freedom, who jointly set up the open letter.

■ Schools: East Surrey**Claire Coutinho:** [\[6576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many unfilled state-funded (a) primary and (b) secondary school places there are in East Surrey.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

The number of unfilled primary and secondary school places in Surrey can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/f7aaa7c5-c62c-4112-40d8-08dce44cbd16>.

School Capacity data is also published at school level. This can be combined with information from 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS) to identify parliamentary constituency, which can be accessed here: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>. GIAS currently reflects the changes made following the general election parliamentary constituency changes.

Schools: Kent**Helen Whately:****[5621]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to ensure sufficient school places in Kent; and what support she plans to provide to help children in (a) towns and (b) rural areas get to and from school by public transport.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government wants to ensure all children have fair access to a school place, where they can achieve and thrive.

Kent County Council is responsible for ensuring there are sufficient school places for children in Kent. The department engages with local authorities, including Kent County Council, on a regular basis to review their plans for creating additional primary and pre-16 secondary school places, and to consider alternatives where necessary. When local authorities are experiencing difficulties, the department offers support and advice.

The department provides capital funding through the basic need grant to support local authorities to provide the needed mainstream school places for year groups from reception to year 11, based on their own pupil forecasts and school capacity data. Kent will receive just over £134 million to support the provision of new school places needed between May 2022 and September 2026, paid across the five financial years from 2021/22 to 2025/26. This takes their total funding allocated between 2011 and 2026 to just over £462 million. Local authorities' allocations are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-need-allocations>.

Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities and provide access to schools and other services. This government has set out an action plan to deliver better bus services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions. As announced in the King's Speech, the government will introduce the Buses Bill to put the power over local bus services in the hands of local leaders to ensure networks can meet the needs of the communities who rely on them. The government also plans to empower local transport authorities

by reforming bus funding to give local leaders more control and flexibility over their funding so they can plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities.

Helen Whately:

[5622]

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

Stephen Morgan:

In line with research from the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies, the government does not anticipate the ending of the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy to prompt notable movement into the state sector, and any movement is expected to take place over several years. This research can be found here:

<https://ifs.org.uk/publications/tax-private-school-fees-and-state-school-spending>.

The department collects pupil forecasts and school capacity data from local authorities annually through the school capacity survey and this data shows that in May 2023, 11.7% of primary capacity and 11.5% of secondary capacity was unfilled nationally, meaning school places are available in many parts of the country. The department will monitor demand and capacity using its normal processes and continue to work with local authorities to meet any pressures.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Codes of Practice**

Helen Hayes:

[7489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 6 March 2024 to Question 16490 on Special Educational Needs: Codes of Practice, what steps her Department is taking to review the contents of SEND information reports.

Catherine McKinnell:

The requirement for all schools to publish Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information Reports was introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014. Information Reports must contain details of a school's provision for pupils with SEND and must be reviewed annually.

As part of the department's work on long-term options for improving the SEND system, we will explore the role of SEND Information Reports.

■ **Special Guardianship Orders: Carers' Benefits**

Jayne Kirkham:

[7676]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to ensure a consistent approach to calculating special guardianship allowances.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises the valuable and important role that kinship carers, including special guardians, play in caring for some of the most vulnerable children. The government is committed to working with local government to support children in care, including through kinship arrangements.

Statutory guidance issued to local authorities makes it clear that children and young people should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare. There is no limit on the level of support, including financial support, that local authorities can provide.

Financial support is paid at the discretion of the local authority and in accordance with their model for assessing support needs. All local authorities should have in place clear eligibility criteria in relation to the provision of support services.

■ Students: Fees and Charges

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to increase tuition fees for university students.

Janet Daby:

The government is determined that the higher education (HE) funding system should deliver for our economy, for universities and for students.

Funding plans for the HE sector will be set out at the relevant fiscal event, in line with the approach to public spending commitments across government.

■ Students: Loans

Rupert Lowe: [\[5469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the interest rate system for student loans; and if she will meet the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth to discuss that system.

Janet Daby:

The government is determined that the higher education (HE) funding system should deliver for our economy, for universities and for students. The department is considering the system and will continue to engage with stakeholders on this.

The department believes that every young person, regardless of their background, should have the opportunity to attend university. That is why the department is dedicated to creating a sustainable HE funding system that supports students, expands opportunities, and upholds the excellence of our world-leading universities.

■ Teachers: Pay

Mary Glendon: [\[6221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to reduce pay gaps between school teachers and further education teachers.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises the vital role that FE teachers play in developing the skills needed to drive our missions to improve opportunity and economic growth.

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

We are investing around £600 million across the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26, including extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas. We also continue to support recruitment and retention with teacher training bursaries worth up to £30,000 tax-free in certain key subject areas, and with support for industry professionals to enter the teaching workforce through our Taking Teaching Further programme.

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

Sarah Green:

[7587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funding to further education (FE) providers to support a pay increase for FE teachers commensurate with the pay increase provided to school teachers following the implementation of the recommendations of the School Teacher Review Body.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises the vital role that further education (FE) teachers and providers play in developing the skills needed to drive the government's missions to improve opportunity and economic growth.

The government does not set or recommend pay in FE. The pay and conditions of FE staff remains the responsibility of individual colleges and providers who are free to implement pay arrangements in line with their local needs.

We are investing around an additional £600 million in FE across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas. The department is also continuing to support recruitment and retention with teacher training bursaries worth up to £30,000 tax-free in certain key subject areas, and with support for industry professionals to enter the teaching workforce through the Taking Teaching Further programme.

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

■ Universities: Freedom of Expression

Claire Coutinho:

[\[6572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what is the average length of time taken for an employment tribunal for those seeking redress over a freedom of speech dispute.

Claire Coutinho:

[\[6573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the evidential basis is for the statement by her Department's spokesman quoted in the Telegraph of 24 August 2024 that the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 could expose students to harm and appalling hate speech on campuses.

Janet Daby:

The department has not collected data on individual cases of employment tribunals related to freedom of speech. Cases such as these are rare and are rightfully seen as a last resort.

The department has heard concerns from many in the sector, including minority groups, that the Act and its implementation may have unintended consequences. Many raised concerns that the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act could push providers to overlook the safety and wellbeing of minority groups over fears of sanction and costly legal action.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Capture and Storage

Clive Lewis:

[\[7484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the press notice entitled Government reignites industrial heartlands 10 days out from the International Investment Summit, published on 4 October 2024, if he will publish a list of climate scientists consulted with by his Department on the efficacy of carbon capture storage.

Sarah Jones:

CCUS will be vital to this government's commitment to create good jobs in Britain's industrial heartlands, ensuring a just transition for the industries based in the North Sea, and accelerating towards Net Zero.

The Climate Change Committee (CCC), the UK's independent advisor on climate change, has said that CCUS is a 'necessity, not an option' for the transition to net zero. The International Energy Agency and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change both conclude that carbon capture can play a key role in decarbonisation.

The Government engages with a range of stakeholders during the policy development process.

Clive Lewis:

[7488]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent public consultation his Department has undertaken on the efficacy of carbon capture, usage and storage technology.

Sarah Jones:

CCUS will be vital to this government's commitment to create good jobs in Britain's industrial heartlands, ensuring a just transition for the industries based in the North Sea, and accelerating towards Net Zero.

The Climate Change Committee (CCC), the UK's independent advisor on climate change, has said that CCUS is a 'necessity, not an option' for the transition to net zero. The International Energy Agency and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change both conclude that carbon capture can play a key role in decarbonisation.

The Government engages with a range of stakeholders during the policy development process.

■ Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage: Taxation

Clive Lewis:

[7485]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring carbon capture, usage and storage organisations in receipt of Government funding to be (a) headquartered in the UK and (b) full UK taxpayers.

Sarah Jones:

We're committed to securing the economic benefits for the UK from pioneering CCUS deployment. It is expected to add around £5 billion per year to the UK economy by 2050 and the backing of these first 2 CCUS sites sends a clear signal to investors that the UK is open for business. These new carbon capture and CCUS enabled hydrogen projects will create 4,000 new jobs and help sustain important British industries. Industry have also pledged to source 50 per cent of the supply chain from domestic companies.

■ Databases: Carbon Emissions and Water

Clive Lewis:

[7487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what plans he has to monitor the (a) carbon emissions and (b) water usage of data centres.

Kerry McCarthy:

(a) Emissions from data centres that occur in the UK - either directly at their locations or at power stations from their electricity use - are included in our published UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions totals, but cannot be attributed to specific data centres.

Data centres that are part of a quoted company, large unquoted company or large limited liability partnership are required to report on their emissions in their annual reports to comply with Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) policy.

(b) Water usage and its monitoring is overseen by the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: newcleo

Andrew Griffith:

[\[7580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions (a) he, (b) Ministers in his Department and (c) officials in his Department have had with newcleo Ltd in the last three months.

Michael Shanks:

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

Published declarations include the purpose of the meeting and the names of any additional external organisations or individuals in attendance.

■ Nuclear Reactors: Renewable Fuels

Andrew Griffith:

[\[7583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support the development of nuclear reactors which make use of re-processed fuels.

Michael Shanks:

The decision of whether or when to reprocess spent fuel is a matter for the owner of the spent fuel. Whilst industrial scale reprocessing of spent fuels in the UK has ended, the value of the UK's nuclear fuel cycle knowledge and skills base is recognised, both in managing the UK's nuclear legacy and in supporting future capabilities and research programmes. The UK Government continues to provide support through investments in research facilities and programmes.

■ Small Modular Reactors

Andrew Griffith:

[\[7581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to support the development of small modular reactors.

Michael Shanks:

Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) could play an important role in helping the UK achieve energy security and clean power while securing thousands of good, skilled jobs. The Department has provided funding of up to £210m to support the development of the Rolls Royce SMR design. The Future Nuclear Enabling Fund is currently awarding grants of up to £67m to support advanced nuclear designs through UK regulation, including SMRs.

Separately, Great British Nuclear is continuing to deliver the live SMR Technology Selection Process for UK deployment.

■ Solar Power

David Davis:

[7410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the amount of roof space in the UK that would be suitable for installing solar panels.

Michael Shanks:

As part of our mission for clean power we will unleash a UK solar rooftop revolution, alongside accelerating energy efficiency improvements of the existing housing stock. Rooftop solar on new homes and buildings will, where appropriate, play an important role in the drive for solar, delivering cleaner energy and lower bills to millions of households and businesses. Future standards next year will set our new homes and buildings on a path that moves away from relying on volatile fossil fuels and ensures they are fit for a net zero future.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Beverage Containers: Deposit Return Schemes

Sarah Dyke:

[6669]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential environmental benefits of including (a) PET plastic bottles, (b) glass bottles and (c) metal beverage containers within the proposed deposit return scheme.

Mary Creagh:

The Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers across all four nations will include single-use drinks containers from 150ml to 3 litres.

In England and Northern Ireland, materials included in DRS are polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic, steel, and aluminium drink containers. Glass will not be in scope of the scheme.

Across the UK, it is estimated that approximately 4 billion plastic and 2.5 billion metal drinks containers are not recycled every year – a significant amount being landfilled, littered or incinerated.

Once the DRS for drinks containers is introduced, the Deposit Management Organisation will be required to reach a collection rate of 90% of DRS containers in year 3 of the scheme.

Further details, including monetary analysis on the reduction of disamenity of litter, will be provided in the DRS Final Impact Assessment. This will be published when the Statutory Instrument is laid in Parliament.

■ Beverage Containers: Litter**Sarah Dyke:**[\[6670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an estimate of the number of (a) polyethylene terephthalate plastic bottles, (b) glass bottles and (c) metal beverage containers littered annually in the UK.

Mary Creagh:

Across the UK, it is estimated that approximately 4 billion plastic and 2.5 billion metal drinks containers are not recycled every year – a significant amount being littered.

Once the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers is introduced, the Deposit Management Organisation will be required to reach a collection rate of 90% of DRS containers in year 3 of the scheme.

■ Climate Change**Alex Mayer:**[\[6927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timetable is for the next reviews of the (a) National Adaptation Programme and (b) strategy for climate change adaptation reporting.

Emma Hardy:

The Climate Change Act 2008 requires the Secretary of State to produce a National Adaptation Programme in response to the Government's most recent Climate Change Risk Assessment, on a five-yearly cycle. The third National Adaptation Programme was published in July 2023. The fourth National Adaptation Programme will be published in 2028. The strategy for the fourth round of climate adaptation reporting under the Adaptation Reporting Power was published in July 2023. The fourth round of reporting is currently underway and due to close on 31st December 2024. The review of the use of power will take place in 2025, ahead of a fifth round of reporting.

■ Fires: Merton**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[6366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the Environment Agency's response to the fire at the Weir Road recycling centre on Saturday 7 September 2024.

Mary Creagh:

The Environment Agency are responsible for the regulation of the environmental permit held by Reston Waste Management at 77 Weir Road. After being notified of the fire late on Saturday 7 September by the London Fire Brigade (LFB), Environment Agency staff worked throughout the weekend with LFB to review potential impacts to air, land and water. As the incident continued, the Environment Agency provided advice to LFB and London Boroughs of Merton and Wandsworth regarding impacts to the environment and maintained input via multi-agency

meetings. Environment Agency staff attended the site on Tuesday 10th September following a large number of complaints about the smoke from the fire. Their attendance ensured that waste was being managed appropriately and no longer causing a discharge to enter the River Wandle.

Officers from the Environment Agency are in regular contact with the Cllrs in Merton and Wandsworth whose Wards were affected by the fire, along with officers from those boroughs. The cause of the fire is being investigated by the Environment Agency, alongside those partners. They will be working with the fire brigade to understand the cause of the fire, and the reasons why it took so long to extinguish. The London Borough of Merton is leading a formal multi-agency review of the incident and the Environment Agency will feed into this review. Alongside this, the Environment Agency is assessing the actions taken by Restons Waste Management, to understand if any more could have reasonably been done to prevent or mitigate the effects of the fire.

■ Fish Products: Faroe Islands

Alex Mayer: [\[6928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of mandating country-of-origin labelling for fish products originating from the Faroe Islands.

Daniel Zeichner:

A public consultation on fairer food labelling was undertaken between March and May 2024. This sought views on proposals to improve and extend current mandatory methods of production labelling and looked at country of origin for a range of products including fish. The new Government is now carefully considering all responses before deciding on next steps and will publish a response to this consultation in due course.

■ Forest Products: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister: [\[7704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4798 on Forest Products: Northern Ireland, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on preparing for EU Regulation 2023/1115.

Jim Allister: [\[7705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4798, what estimate he has made of the number of full-time equivalent staff needed for the work of the competent authority in Northern Ireland in relation to EU Regulation 2023/1115.

Jim Allister: [\[7707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4798 on Forest Products: Northern Ireland,

what estimate his Department has made of the annual costs to businesses in Northern Ireland arising from achieving compliance with EU Regulation 2023/1115.

Jim Allister:

[7708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4798 on Forest Products: Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterpart on the application of EU Regulation 2023/1115 to Northern Ireland; and if he will publish the minutes of those discussions.

Mary Creagh:

Ministers are currently considering our approach to the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) in Northern Ireland, and the Government will communicate relevant arrangements at the earliest possible opportunity.

■ Packaging: Recycling

Sarah Champion:

[6254]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the forthcoming Extended Producer Responsibility scheme on the (a) glass, (b) aluminium and (c) plastic packaging sectors.

Mary Creagh:

Under the previous Government, 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 covered glass, aluminium, plastic and other materials, but did not split the assessment by sector.

The new Government has now published two sets 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, the potential impact on specific packaging sectors is being discussed. The pEPR scheme administrator will continue to monitor the impact of implementing the pEPR scheme on the packaging market.

■ Shellfish

Jayne Kirkham:

[7677]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to increase the minimum landing size of Fal oysters from 67 to 72mm.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority have written to the Defra asking for approval of their request to increase the minimum landing size of native oysters under the Fal Fishery Order 2016. This request and the evidence for making the change is being considered by the Defra.

■ Water Companies

Clive Lewis: [\[5604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a timeline for the review of the water sector announced on 12 September 2024.

Emma Hardy:

The Government will be carrying out a review to fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good. We will provide further details in due course.

■ Water Companies: Directors

Alex Mayer: [\[6921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with Ofwat on the potential merits of (a) employees and (b) bill payers being made members of the Boards of water companies.

Emma Hardy:

On 11 July 2024, the Secretary of State announced consumers will gain new powers to hold water company bosses to account through new customer panels. For the first time in history, customers will have the power to summon board members and hold water executives to account.

The Water (Special Measures) Bill will therefore give Ofwat the power to set rules requiring water companies to have arrangements in place for involving consumers in decision-making. The rules may include a requirement for persons representing the views of consumers to be members of a board, committee or panel of a relevant undertaker.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Mauritius

Andrew Rosindell: [\[5546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Mauritian counterpart on the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary met the Mauritian Prime Minister on 23 July to discuss the continuation of negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory / Chagos Archipelago.

On 3 October the UK and Mauritius reached a political agreement on the sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) / Chagos Archipelago. This agreement secures the effective operation of the vital UK-US military base on Diego Garcia well

into the next century. Following Mauritian elections, the Government will move towards Treaty signature and ratification.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[7613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Joint Statement by the UK and Mauritius, published on 3 October 2024, what the (a) annual and (b) total projected cost is of the indexed annual payment.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[7614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Joint Statement by the UK and Mauritius, published on 3 October 2024, what the transformational infrastructure partnership covers; and how much funding he has allocated to that partnership.

Stephen Doughty:

The Agreement between the UK and Mauritius on 3 October will, for the first time in 50 years, secure the important UK-US military base on Diego Garcia. The base plays a crucial role in regional and international security. It is not normal practice for the UK to reveal the value of its payments for military bases anywhere across the globe. To do so could put at risk their future secure operation. Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise the underpinning Treaty as part of the ratification process.

Blake Stephenson: [\[7617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what annual cost to the public purse is of the agreement with Mauritius on sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Stephen Doughty:

The Agreement between the UK and Mauritius on 3 October will, for the first time in 50 years, secure the important UK-US military base on Diego Garcia. The base plays a crucial role in regional and international security. It is not normal practice for the UK to reveal the value of its payments for military bases anywhere across the globe. To do so could put at risk their future secure operation. Parliament will have opportunity to scrutinise the Agreement with Mauritius in the usual manner following its signature.

■ British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: Money Laundering and Tax Evasion

Ellie Chowns: [\[5512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2024 to Question 400 on British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: Money Laundering and Tax Evasion, which jurisdictions (a) have made and (b) need to urgently accelerate progress; and if he will publish a timeline for the provision of a publicly accessible register of company beneficial ownership.

Stephen Doughty:

The Overseas Territories have committed to implement publicly accessible registers of company beneficial ownership, and set out timelines to do so, as outlined in a statement of 18 December 2023 (HCWS150).

I have spoken with Overseas Territory leaders and made clear the need to meet these commitments and to continue efforts to maximise access. The UK Government remains committed to publicly accessible registers becoming the global norm.

At the UK-OT Illicit Finance Dialogue on 7-9 October 2024, officials discussed progress, expectations and potential UK technical assistance on transparency measures, as well as other areas of cooperation and exchange.

The FCDO works closely with the Home Office, who lead engagement with the Crown Dependencies on beneficial ownership transparency. These issues will be further discussed at the Joint Ministerial Council on 19-21 November.

■ Cyprus**Martin Vickers:**[\[5567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking as Guarantor of Cyprus's independence and territorial integrity to help reunite the island.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK remains committed to supporting the UN efforts to reach a Cyprus Settlement and we are actively engaging all parties to encourage the flexibility needed to return to talks. In addition, we support a range of confidence building measures in Cyprus to promote engagement between the communities. We also continue to contribute to peace and stability in Cyprus through our deployment of military personnel to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

■ Cyprus: Missing Persons**Martin Vickers:**[\[5568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the Cypriot authorities on both sides to reveal the locations of buried missing people.

Stephen Doughty:

We share the concerns of both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities over the missing persons following the events of 1974. We support the crucial work being undertaken by the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP) by enabling them to work from a British-owned site in the Buffer Zone at minimal cost. Their work is crucial in bringing closure for the many families affected.

■ Cyprus: Turkey

Martin Vickers:

[\[5563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Turkish counterpart on negotiations on a peaceful, comprehensive, and long-lasting solution to reunite divisions over Cyprus.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is committed to supporting UN efforts to reach a Cyprus Settlement within the existing parameters of a Bi-zonal, Bi-communal Federation with political equality. We engage all parties in support of this. I raised this with my Turkish counterpart on 12 July. His Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey most recently discussed Cyprus with Turkish counterparts on 19 September. I also met with the Turkish Ambassador to the UK on 9 October when we also discussed the Cyprus Issue.

Martin Vickers:

[\[5564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Turkish counterpart on reducing the number of Turkish troops stationed in Cyprus.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK actively supports peace and stability in Cyprus as a leading troop contributor to United Nations Peacekeeping Force In Cyprus (UNFICYP) and through our support for the UN-led process to reach a comprehensive Cyprus Settlement. We believe this remains the best route to addressing the difficult issues of the status quo. In January, as penholder, we drafted United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2723 which strongly encouraged the parties to engage and consider new military confidence building measures. We do not routinely comment on the activities of non-UK personnel.

■ Cyprus: Visits Abroad

Martin Vickers:

[\[5565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to visit Cyprus.

Stephen Doughty:

Cyprus is a key partner of the UK and our relationship has never been stronger. Our shared history, close people-to-people links and common values, including as members of the Commonwealth, lead us to co-operate across a broad range of priority areas. I spoke with Minister Kombos on 16 July and the Secretary of State for Defence visited Cyprus on 2 October. I look forward visiting Cyprus when diaries allow.

■ Famagusta**Martin Vickers:** [\[5566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Turkish counterpart on the return of Famagusta to its former inhabitants on the 50th anniversary of its capture.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK supports the numerous United Nations Security Council Resolutions covering the issue of Varosha, Famagusta, alongside the related 2021 UNSC Statement.

Property remains one of the most complex issues of the status quo in Cyprus.

Ultimately, the most effective way to resolve these issues is through the UN-led process to reach a just and lasting Cyprus Settlement. The UK regularly engages all parties to support this.

■ Gaza: Chevening Scholarships Programme**Sarah Green:** [\[6654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the number of Chevening scholarships available for students from Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Chevening programme is currently open for applications and closes on 5 November. Given the difficulty potential applicants from Gaza face and evolving situation on the ground, the FCDO will review exact numbers from Gaza for the 2025/26 academic year in spring 2025 once all applications have been received. The 2024/25 cohort includes 11 Palestinians, of which one is from Gaza. The FCDO recognises the challenging situation facing many Palestinian applicants, and as such, we have offered to defer arrival for specific cases.

■ Gibraltar: Spain**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[5545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Spanish counterpart on Gibraltar.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary met his Spanish counterpart, José Manuel Albares, in London on 16 September. They covered the full spectrum of our bilateral relationship and looked ahead to a four-way ministerial meeting in Brussels on 19 September to discuss the UK-EU treaty on Gibraltar. I joined the Foreign Secretary at that meeting, with Foreign Minister Albares, the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, Maroš Šefčovič, and the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Fabian Picardo. The talks were constructive and productive. Ministers reiterated their commitment to finalising a Treaty as soon as possible and agreed to remain in constant contact. I met my Spanish counterpart, State Secretary Fernando Sampedro, at that meeting, and again on 10 October. We continue to be in regular contact throughout the

negotiations. The Government will only agree to terms that the Government of Gibraltar is content with, and that safeguard sovereignty and the autonomy of the UK military facilities.

■ **Palestinians: Overseas Students**

Sarah Green:

[\[6655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing funding for the British Council's Higher Education Scholarships for Palestinians scheme.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Higher Education Scholarships for Palestinians (HESPAL) programme is delivered by the British Council, with funding and support from the Department for Education, UK universities and a range of other UK and international funders. The decision to increase funding lies with these organisations. The HESPAL programme demonstrates UK commitment to education for young Palestinians, helping to create the next generation of senior academics who can maintain international quality standards at Palestinian universities and develop renewed and sustainable links between Palestinian and UK universities. More information can be found here: <https://www.britishcouncil.ps/en/study-uk/scholarships/hespal>

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Autism: Diagnosis**

Andrew Cooper:

[\[7657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for children requiring an autism assessment in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is currently considering next steps to improve access to autism assessments. It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including autism assessments, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to help ICBs and the National Health Service to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and adults referred to an autism assessment service. In 2024/25 £4.3 million is available nationally to improve services for autistic children and young people, including autism assessment services.

■ Brain: Tumours

Sarah Green:

[\[7591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of designating brain tumours as a clinical priority.

Andrew Gwynne:

While the Department has not made a formal assessment, it spends £1.5 billion each year on research through its research delivery arm, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), with cancer the largest area of spend at over £121.8 million in 2022/23 reflecting its high priority. In September 2024, the NIHR announced new research funding opportunities for brain cancer research spanning both adult and paediatric populations. This includes a national NIHR Brain Tumour Research Consortium, to ensure the most promising research opportunities are made available to adult and child patients and a new funding call to generate high quality evidence in brain tumour care, support and rehabilitation.

We will get the National Health Service diagnosing cancer, including brain tumours, on time, diagnosing it earlier and treating it faster so more patients survive this horrible set of diseases, and we will improve patients' experience across the system. To do this, we will address the challenges in diagnostic waiting times, providing the number of computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging and other tests that are needed to reduce cancer waits.

■ Cancer: Radiotherapy

Tom Gordon:

[\[7594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the time taken to access radiotherapy treatment on cancer outcomes; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure patients that need radiotherapy treatment can access it as quickly as possible.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government believes that cancer patients are waiting too long for diagnosis and treatment, including radiotherapy treatment. We will get the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster. We will improve patients' experience across the system.

Lord Darzi's report has set out the scale of the challenges we face in fixing the NHS and the need to improve cancer waiting time performance and cancer survival. In particular, he has highlighted the need to improve the number of patients starting their treatment within 62 days of referral and to increase the number of patients diagnosed at an earlier stage.

Improving 62-day performance and early diagnosis are already key priorities for NHS England. Lord Darzi's report will inform our ten-year plan to reform the NHS, which include further details on how we will improve cancer diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes.

■ Cauda Equina Syndrome

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[7398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take further steps to encourage NHS Hospital Trusts to adopt the GIRFT pathway for Cauda Equina Syndrome.

Andrew Gwynne:

We are aware of the challenges faced by those living with rare diseases such as Cauda Equina Syndrome and remain committed to making improvements across the healthcare system through implementation of the UK Rare Diseases Framework. The Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) programme is a national NHS England programme designed to improve the treatment and care of patients through in-depth review of services, benchmarking, and presenting a data-driven evidence base to support change. GIRFT's work to raise awareness and support implementation of the NHS England pathway for patients with suspected Cauda Equina Syndrome is ongoing, and we have been encouraged to see signs of progress in many trusts across England since the pathway was shared in February 2023. Where trusts report barriers to implementation, for example, in the staffing of magnetic resonance imaging scanners 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, we are working to support them by sharing best practice and recommendations to help ensure the pathway can be fully adhered to. We are undertaking a programme of stakeholder engagement events at the national, regional, system and site level to promote the benefits of the pathway.

■ Dental Services: Contracts

Rachael Maskell:

[\[7463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has on the negotiations for a new NHS dentistry contract.

Stephen Kinnock:

To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to National Health Service dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

There are no perfect payment systems and careful consideration needs to be given to any potential changes to the complex dental system so that we deliver a system better for patients and the profession.

We are continuing to meet the British Dental Association and other representatives of the dental sector to discuss how we can best deliver our shared ambition to improve access for NHS dental patients.

■ Dental Services: Scarborough And Whitby

Alison Hume:

[7177]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of (a) adults and (b) children that do not have access to an NHS dentist in Scarborough and Whitby constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 October 2024]: The responsibility for commissioning primary care, including dentistry, to meet the needs of the local population has been delegated to all integrated care boards (ICBs) across England. For the Scarborough and Whitby constituency, this would be the NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB. According to the 2024 General Practice Patient Survey (GPPS), 25% of adults who tried to get a National Health Service dentist appointment in the last two years in the NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB were unsuccessful, compared to 23% in England. This data is sourced from the GP Patient Survey Dental Statistics, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/2024/07/11/gp-patient-survey-dental-statistics-january-to-march-2024-england/>

Data on the number of adults and children who do not have access to an NHS dentist is not available. However, the GPPS gives us an insight into how many people are unsuccessfully attempting to get a dentist appointment. The equivalent data for children is not available.

■ Diabetes: Medical Equipment

Dr Neil Hudson:

[6639]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help facilitate access to to Omnipod 5 insulin pumps for people with type 1 diabetes.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 9 October 2024]: Omnipod 5 is one of several insulin pumps that are available through the Insulin Pumps, Continuous Glucose Monitoring, Closed Loop Insulin Delivery Systems and Associated Products Framework hosted by NHS Supply Chain. NICE Technology Appraisal TA943 recommends Hybrid Closed Loop (HCL) systems to eligible type 1 patients. More information on the appraisal is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ta943>

HCL links a continuous glucose monitor to an insulin pump, via a computer-based algorithm, to automatically adjust the insulin dosages given and help people with diabetes keep their blood sugar levels stable. Omnipod 5 is available as part of two HCL combinations that are currently included on the NHS Supply Chain framework. NHS England has agreed cost-effective prices with industry suppliers, is promoting the NHS Supply Chain framework for integrated care boards and National Health

Service trusts to call off and is offering ICBs reimbursement funding in contributing towards the incremental costs of delivering HCL to their local population.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Young People**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[7544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the consultation response entitled creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping, published on 12 February 2024, whether he plans to implement the policies set out in that response.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill will be the biggest public health intervention in a generation, improving healthy life expectancy and reducing the number of lives lost to the biggest killers.

Alongside introducing a progressive smoking ban to ensure the next generation can never legally be sold tobacco, the Bill will also stop vapes and other consumer nicotine products from being deliberately branded and advertised to appeal to children. We are additionally considering a range of new measures to put us on track to a smoke-free United Kingdom and will set out more details soon.

■ **Health Services and Social Services**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[7542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to include policies on prevention in the proposed ten-year plan for health and social care.

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[7543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with third sector organisations on the inclusion of policies on prevention in the proposed ten-year plan for health and social care.

Karin Smyth:

As part of the Government's five long-term missions, we will launch a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the National Health Service and make it fit for the future. The plan will set out a bold agenda to deliver on the three big shifts needed: moving healthcare from hospital to the community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention.

A core part of the development of the 10-Year Health Plan, including its approach to prevention, will be an extensive engagement exercise with the public, staff, and stakeholders, including the third sector. Further details on how to get involved will be set out in the coming weeks.

■ Lung Cancer: Screening

Tom Gordon:

[\[7593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of eligible people in Yorkshire and the Humber have been screened through the national targeted lung cancer screening programme since July 2023; and what steps he is taking to increase the level of uptake for that scheme.

Andrew Gwynne:

The NHS Lung Cancer Screening Programme is available in some areas of England and offers a lung cancer screen to those who are over 55 years old but younger than 75 years old; are registered with a general practitioner; and have a history of smoking.

NHS England has advised that to the end of August 2024, 36.3% of the eligible population in the Humber and North Yorkshire Cancer Alliance has been invited to the Lung Cancer Screening programme since 2019, with 16,103 people participating between July 2023 and July 2024. Estimated uptake for May to July 2024, the most recent available three months of data, was 55.4%. This has improved significantly with the rolling average for the last 12 months being 47.8%.

A wide range of initiatives continues to be carried out to improve uptake in the NHS Lung Cancer Screening Programme. For example, at a national level this includes using social media, leaflets and posters to promote the programme and at a local level, using text messaging to remind people of their appointment. Cancer Alliances are also bringing together primary care networks, lung cancer screening teams and communication colleagues to ensure collaborative and informed working is taking place.

The NHS Lung Cancer Screening Programme will be fully rolled out to 100% of the eligible population by 2029.

■ Medicine: Education

Jayne Kirkham:

[\[7674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage people from lower-income backgrounds to study medicine, in the context of the availability of financial support for maintenance available in the fifth and sixth years of a medicine degree.

Karin Smyth:

From year five of their undergraduate course, medical students can access the NHS Bursary. This is non-repayable and comprises payment for tuition fees, income-assessed help towards living costs, and where eligible, further allowances, such as for dependents and childcare and for those living with a disability. A further grant may also be available to medical students who are struggling financially, depending on their current financial circumstances.

Students eligible for the NHS Bursary can also apply for a reduced rate loan for living costs from Student Finance England. The Government is committed to supporting people from all backgrounds to study medicine and these funding arrangements are reviewed annually.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Dan Carden:

[\[6430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the email of 18 July 2024 from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton on care supporters.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 October 2024]: I have responded to the Hon. Member's letter.

■ **Mental Health Services: Low Incomes**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[6514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to community-based mental health support for low-income children and families.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 October 2024]: There are currently approximately 65 locally funded early support hubs in England offering early access mental health interventions to thousands of children and young people aged 11 to 25 years old, including those from low-income families.

The Department is running a £8 million Shared Outcomes Fund project throughout 2024/25 to boost and evaluate the impact of 24 of these existing early support hubs, including two in London.

In addition, we will roll out Young Futures hubs in every community. This national network is expected to bring local services together, deliver support for teenagers at risk of being drawn into crime or facing mental health challenges and, where appropriate, deliver universal youth provision. They will provide open access mental health support for children and young people in every community.

We will be working closely with colleagues across the Government to design Young Futures hubs, as well as engaging widely with young people and stakeholders to shape their service offer.

■ **NHS: Drugs**

Mrs Sureena Brackenridge:

[\[5466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help tackle drug shortages.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has a responsibility to work with United Kingdom medicine license holders, to help ensure continuity of supply. We monitor and manage medicine

supply at a national level, so that stocks remain available to meet regional and local demand.

We have inherited ongoing global supply problems that continue to impact medicine availability. We know how frustrating and distressing this can be for patients, and we are working closely with industry, the National Health Service, manufacturers, and other partners in the supply chain to resolve these issues as quickly as possible, to make sure patients can access the medicines they need.

Medicine supply chains are complex, global, and highly regulated, and there are a number of reasons why supply can be disrupted, many of which are not specific to the UK and outside of the Government's control, including manufacturing difficulties, access to raw materials, sudden demand spikes or distribution issues, and regulatory issues. There are approximately 14,000 licensed medicines, and the overwhelming majority are in good supply.

While we cannot always prevent supply issues from occurring, we have a range of well-established processes and tools to manage them when they arise, and to mitigate risks to patients. These include close and regular engagement with suppliers, use of alternative strengths or forms of a medicine to allow patients to remain on the same product, expediting regulatory procedures, sourcing unlicensed imports from abroad, adding products to the restricted exports and hoarding list, use of Serious Shortage Protocols, and issuing NHS communications to provide management advice and information on the issue to healthcare professionals, including pharmacists, so they can advise and support their patients.

■ NHS: Pay

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[6583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether pay rises for (a) doctors and (b) other NHS staff will be met from existing NHS budgets.

Karin Smyth:

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement on 29 July 2024 sets out the position across the Government, which includes departments making savings to pay towards the outcomes of the pay review bodies. The process for agreeing savings is not yet complete, however the intention is for the Department of Health and Social Care and HM Treasury to meet the pay review bodies' recommendations for doctors and other National Health Service staff in 2024/25, and to resolve any funding needs in the usual way.

■ Radiotherapy: Medical Equipment

Tom Gordon:

[\[7595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that NHS providers prioritise funding for (a) upgrades and (b) replacements of radiotherapy machines.

Karin Smyth:

The Government will continue to support the provision of radiotherapy machines, however since April 2022 the responsibility for investing in new radiotherapy machines has been with local systems.

■ Recycling: Greater London**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[6367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the UK Health Security Agency's response to the recent fire at the recycling centre on Weir Road.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) provided expertise in local health protection and environmental hazards to support the response to this incident.

UKHSA engaged with other stakeholders, including the London Fire Brigade and the Environment Agency, as well as the Directors of Public Health for both the London Borough of Wandsworth and the London Borough of Merton. UKHSA assessed the impacts on air quality to inform health advice for residents, and remained involved with the incident until the fire was extinguished.

■ Sleeping Rough**Paula Barker:**[\[6611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent street discharge from hospital settings for people rough sleeping.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 9 October 2024]: The Department is committed to promoting safe and timely discharge for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness to appropriate accommodation. Every acute hospital has access to a care transfer hub to manage discharge for people with more complex needs, who need extra support.

The Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have published guidance and supporting materials for health and care staff on discharging people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/discharging-people-at-risk-of-or-experiencing-homelessness/discharging-people-at-risk-of-or-experiencing-homelessness>

This ensures that every health and care interaction with a homeless person acts as an opportunity to provide support and signposting, with the aim of ending rough sleeping. The Department of Health and Social Care continues to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the development of the Government's plans for social and affordable housing.

■ Smoking: Health Services

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[7545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing of a polluter pays levy on tobacco company to fund smoking cessation services; and if he will make it his policy to increase funding for (a) the swap-to-stop scheme, (b) tobacco control enforcement and (c) the national smoke-free pregnancy incentive scheme.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is funding a broad package of measures to tackle the harm caused by smoking, including additional funding for local authority Stop Smoking Services, more enforcement activity around illegal tobacco and vape products, as well as recently launching a national smoke-free pregnancy incentive programme.

On the issue of a polluter pays levy on the tobacco industry, the Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events in the context of public finances. The Government keeps all taxes under review during its yearly Budget process.

■ Smoking: Hospitals

Sarah Green:

[\[7590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to strengthen the enforcement of no smoking policies on NHS hospital grounds in England.

Andrew Gwynne:

Smoking has been prohibited by law in virtually all enclosed and substantially enclosed workplaces and public places, including hospital buildings, throughout the United Kingdom since July 2007. Smoke-free legislation in England forms part of the Health Act 2006 and The Children and Families Act 2014.

Enforcement powers for smoke-free places are given to local authorities, who must identify appropriate officers to enforce smoke-free regulations. The most appropriate team for this will vary by local authority but powers are most commonly assigned to teams of officers covering environmental health, health and safety or a similar area.

Smoke-free policies in National Health Service hospital grounds in England go beyond requirements by law and are developed and implemented by the local NHS trust.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Havering****Julia Lopez:**[\[7524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has commissioned the use of hotel accommodation in the London Borough of Havering for the purpose of housing asylum seekers since 29 July 2024.

Dame Angela Eagle:

No new hotels have been commissioned to accommodate asylum seekers in the London Borough of Havering in this period. The Home Office keeps its accommodation estate under constant review.

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly, and fairly. This includes our accommodation sites, as we continue to identify a range of options to end the use of hotels to accommodate destitute asylum seekers.

■ Domestic Abuse: Older People**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[5881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help prevent the coercive control of older people for financial gain.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government recognises the devastating impact that financial and economic abuse can have on victims. Whilst anyone can suffer from domestic abuse, we know that older victims, especially where dependent on others, may find it more difficult to recognise that they are experiencing coercive control and economic abuse and seek help.

The Government supports access to specialist services for all victims of domestic abuse. The Home Office funds Hourglass, a specialist organisation focused on the abuse and neglect of older people, to provide enhanced helpline support to victims and survivors of coercive control and domestic abuse in England and Wales.

Hourglass also works with other frontline organisations to ensure safer ageing, including by raising awareness of economic abuse.

■ European Arrest Warrants**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[7402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many European Arrest Warrants have been issued to the United Kingdom in the last 12 months for which information is available; and how many of these have been executed.

Dan Jarvis:

European Arrest Warrants were replaced by arrest warrants under Title VII of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). The National Crime Agency deals with

arrest warrants issued in accordance with the TCA, as the designated authority for cases which fall under Part 1 of the Extradition Act 2003.

The NCA holds the data relating to arrest warrants issued and executed, not the Home Office.

■ Farms: Theft

Mike Amesbury: [\[6437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of changes in the level of thefts of farming GPS equipment.

Mike Amesbury: [\[6438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the reasons for thefts of farming GPS equipment.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government is committed to reducing crime and disorder in rural areas, given the devastating impact rural crime can have on communities. Under our reforms, rural communities will be safeguarded, with tougher measures to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, strengthened neighbourhood policing and stronger measures to prevent farm theft and fly-tipping.

The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee will deliver thousands of additional neighbourhood police, police community support officers and Special Constables, across England and Wales, including in rural areas, to speed up response times and build public confidence.

Removeable GPS units are particularly vulnerable to theft and can massively disrupt day to day farming operations. The National Farmers Union (NFU) reports the UK cost of GPS theft increased by 137% to £4.2 million in 2023.

We are committed to implementing the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023, which aims to prevent the theft and re-sale of high-value equipment, particularly for use in an agricultural setting. The Act requires secondary legislation before it can come into effect. We are carefully considering the views of those who may be affected by the legislation and its regulations, to understand the potential implications and determine the scope of the legislation.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Visas

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[7401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visa applications under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme are awaiting a decision; and how many of these have been outstanding for more than (a) 6 and (b) 12 weeks.

Seema Malhotra:

The number of applications currently awaiting a decision under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme is published weekly and can be found at: Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

The Home Office does not publish data on the number of applications outstanding for more than 6 and 12 weeks. However, the Homes for Ukraine Scheme has a Service Level Agreement of 15 days for straightforward applications.

Additionally, the transparency data published 22 August 2024 does include a range of processing data and the latest data can be found at: Visas and citizenship data: Q2 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

■ Moorland: Fire Prevention

Paul Davies: [\[7283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help (a) monitor and (b) prevent moorland fires through patrolling.

Paul Davies: [\[7284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has issued guidance on the criteria to be used to determine when to use a helicopter to help put out moorland fires.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Fire and Rescue Services are operationally independent in England. Each fire and rescue authority is required to plan for the foreseeable risks in their area (including wildfire), through their Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) while having regard to the views of other key local responders. The Government does not issue guidance on the operational use of helicopters.

Fire and Rescue Services undertake a range of activities alongside local partners, including prevention and educational activities. Additionally, Defra encourage landowners and land managers to adopt good quality wildfire management plans, use sustainable land management practices that reduce fuel loads and restore their peatland – wetter, healthy-functioning peatlands are more resilient to the risk of wildfire.

In 24/25, the Home Office is funding a new National Resilience Wildfire Advisor to assess what additional wildfire national capabilities might be needed to increase resilience to the wildfire risk and to ensure coordination of approaches across the sector.

■ Police: Termination of Employment

Mr Richard Holden: [\[7563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers have left each police force since 4 July 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the number of police officers who leave the service in England and Wales, broken down by Police Force Area (PFA), on an annual basis in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>.

The latest information covers the period to 31 March 2024. Data from 4 July 2024 are not held centrally. The 'Leavers Open Data Table' that accompanies the main statistical release contains information on the number of police officers that left the police service, in each financial year, from the year ending March 2007 to March 2024, is available here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669a917cce1fd0da7b59294f/open-data-table-police-workforce-leavers-240724.ods>

Data for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 is due for publication in Summer 2025.

■ Transgender People: Hate Crime**Laura Kyrke-Smith:****[7362]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle hate crime against transgender people.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to tackling hate crime and is determined to root out hatred in all its forms.

We have committed to protect LGBT+ and disabled people by making all existing strands of hate crime an aggravated offence. We will set out next steps in due course.

The Government funds True Vision, an online hate crime reporting portal designed so that victims of all forms of hate crime do not have to visit a police station to report. We also fund the National Online Hate Crime Hub which supports local police forces in dealing with all types of online hate crime and provides expert advice to support forces in investigating these despicable offences.

■ Visas: Gaza**Sarah Green:****[6657]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a sponsorship visa scheme for people in Gaza.

Seema Malhotra:

The government is keeping all existing pathways under review in response to events in Gaza. Currently, Palestinians who wish to join family members in the UK can do so via the existing range of routes available.

Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules. Immediate family members of British citizens and those settled in the UK who wish to come and live in the UK can apply under one of the existing family visa routes.

There are also routes available for dependants of those who are in the UK on a work or student route.

Individuals with protection status or settlement on a protection route may sponsor their partner or child (under 18), to join or stay with them in the UK, providing they formed part of the pre-flight family unit before the sponsor fled their country to seek protection.

When the visa application has been received consideration will be given to compelling, compassionate and exceptional circumstances.

■ **Visas: Lebanon**

Carla Denyer:

[7627]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to (a) create a Lebanese family scheme visa to enable immediate family members of British nationals to come to the UK and (b) waive (i) family visa income thresholds, (ii) English Language requirements and (iii) fees for such applications.

Seema Malhotra:

We are monitoring the situation in Lebanon closely and keeping all existing visa pathways under review.

Lebanese nationals who wish to come to the UK should do so via the existing range of routes available.

Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules.

Those who cannot meet all the eligibility requirements may still be granted permission where there are exceptional circumstances which mean refusal would result in unjustifiably harsh consequences for the applicant or their family.

More information on all routes available for a person to apply to work, study or settle/join family in the UK can be found here: [Visas and immigration - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

■ **Visas: Personal Income**

Liz Jarvis:

[5426]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions has she had with the Migration Advisory Committee on the review of the minimum income requirement.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Secretary wrote to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to commission a review of the financial requirements in the Family Immigration Rules and the MAC have accepted the commission. The letter to the MAC and their reply can be found here: [Response letter from Professor Brian Bell to the Home Secretary, 10 September 2024 \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

■ **Visas: Seasonal Workers**

John McDonnell: [5249]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to help support people who have incurred costs to seek compensation following the revocation of Ethoro's seasonal worker scheme operator licence.

John McDonnell: [5250]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether all workers already in the UK on the Seasonal Worker visa whose visas were sponsored by Ethero have been placed with a different Scheme Operator.

John McDonnell: [5251]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of the due diligence carried out for the grant of a sponsor licence to Ethero.

Seema Malhotra:

Provisions have been put in place to make certain that there is no detriment to individuals who were sponsored by Ethero. However, it is not within the remit of the Home Office to support workers in pursuing compensation claims.

The Home Office has also ensured that there is continuity of work with alternative sponsors for those who were originally attached to Ethero's sponsor licence.

Organisations seeking to become scheme operators pass through a multifaceted selection process. This includes assessment and endorsement by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as well as holding licencing from the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority. They must also successfully apply for a sponsor licence from the Home Office.

We will continually work to ensure strong due diligence and safeguards in the sponsor licensing process.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Council Tax: Single People**

Clive Lewis: [\[6316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has undertaken an impact assessment on the effect of removing the Council Tax discount for single people.

Jim McMahon:

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

Clive Lewis: [\[6317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many households qualifying for the Council Tax Discount for single people are (a) living in poverty, (b) have a dependent under the age of 18 and (c) are pensioners.

Jim McMahon:

The Government does not collect data on the individual characteristics of residents of households receiving the single person discount.

■ Leasehold: Reform

Tom Hayes: [\[7129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to bring forward the Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill.

Alex Easton: [\[7185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to bring forward the Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill; what recent estimate she has made of when the provisions of the Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill will be implemented; and what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help support leaseholders with short leases to obtain mortgages.

Anna Dixon: [\[7198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to abolish leasehold marriage value.

Rebecca Smith: [\[7247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish a timetable for the coming into force of provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

As outlined in the King's Speech, the Government will act quickly to provide homeowners with greater rights, powers, and protections over their homes by

implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024. This includes a new valuation scheme that leaseholders must follow to calculate how much they should pay to enfranchise and includes measures such as removing the requirement to pay marriage value, capping the treatment of ground rents at 0.1% of the freehold value in the calculation, and prescribing rates for the calculation. A small number of provisions came into force on 24 July, two months after Royal Assent, relating to rentcharge arrears, building safety legal costs and the work of professional insolvency practitioners.

The Government will further reform the leasehold system by enacting remaining Law Commission recommendations relating to enfranchisement and the Right to Manage, tackle unregulated and unaffordable ground rents, and removing the disproportionate and draconian threat of forfeiture. We will also reinvigorate commonhold through a comprehensive new legal framework and ban the sale of new leasehold flats so commonhold becomes the default tenure.

The Government has made clear it intends to publish draft legislation on leasehold and commonhold reform in this session so that it may be subject to broad consultation and additional parliamentary scrutiny.

■ Local Government: Borrowing

Helen Morgan:

[R] [\[5711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allowing Councils to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board at discounted rates in order to build homes for social rent.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities already have access to a preferential rate from the Public Works Loans Board to support housebuilding in the Housing Revenue Account. The preferential rate of gilts +0.4% is available until June 2025. The Government is committed to supporting councils to build their capacity and invest in new social rented homes.

JUSTICE

■ Child Arrangements Orders

Mary Glendon:

[\[6225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of ensuring parity of access to public funds for (a) domestic and (b) overseas applicants for child arrangement orders.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Court and tribunal fees do not vary depending on whether the applicant resides in England and Wales or overseas. The Help with Fees remission scheme is available for those who are less able to reasonably afford a court or tribunal fee. Providing that

the application is made in English or Welsh, and the applicants' income is in pound sterling, eligibility for a full or partial fee remission is not affected by whether the applicant resides in England and Wales or overseas. The only exception relates to proceedings taking place in the Immigration & Asylum chamber of the First-tier Tribunal, for which only in-country applicants can apply for Help with Fees.

Similarly, access to legal aid is determined by the jurisdiction of the court (i.e. whether the relevant proceedings are before a court in England and Wales), rather than where an applicant is residing. In private family proceedings, legal aid is available for matters such as child arrangement orders, financial remedy proceedings and divorce if you are a victim of domestic abuse or at risk of being abused. Legal aid is also available for child arrangements orders sought as protection measures for children. Funding is subject to providing the required evidence and passing the means and merits tests.

■ Immigration: Appeals

Neil O'Brien:

[\[7538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will publish decisions of the First-tier Tribunal Immigration and Asylum Chamber on the same basis that decisions of the Upper Tribunal are currently published.

Heidi Alexander:

The decision whether to publish a judgment is a judicial one.

Currently, judgments of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal are not routinely published. However, members of the public and the media can apply to the tribunal for a copy of the judgment in a specific case.

■ Prisoners' Release: Gender Based Violence

Nadia Whittome:

[\[6650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that specialist violence against women and girls services are aware of the early release of prisoners with known histories of those offences.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The decision that this Government has taken to release some prisoners early is a difficult but necessary one.

We want women and girls to feel safe, and ministers and officials are meeting regularly with the specialist women and girls' sector to ensure they have the information they need to support victims and survivors throughout early release of prisoners. On 22 August, Minister Timpson and I chaired a roundtable meeting with over thirty groups representing victims and survivors to provide detail on the release process and support available for them. I have also been working closely with the sector and the Victims' and Domestic Abuse Commissioners to ensure information reaches those working directly with victims and survivors every day.

Ensuring victims and survivors are safe and supported is my priority, and I will continue to engage closely with the victims' sector throughout this process and beyond.

■ Prisoners' Release: Victims

Lee Anderson: [\[6478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans her Department has to inform victims of the early release of prisoners.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Victims and survivors 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 who perpetrated crime(s) against them, including when these offenders are due to be released from custody. In this way, the victims and survivors who have opted into the Schemes are given the opportunity to make representations as to the licence conditions which they would like to be in place on an offender's release, such as an exclusion zone

■ Prisoners' Release: Wales

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[6345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were released from each prison in Wales under the Early Release Scheme on 10 September 2024

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[6346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners with a home address in Wales were released under the Early Release Scheme on 10 September 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data on SDS40 releases forms a subset of data intended for future publication. The number of prison places projected to be saved by SDS40 releases are set out in the Impact Assessment (between 4,600 and 5,900 prison places for the male estate)

■ Sexual Offences: Victim Support Schemes

Jess Brown-Fuller: [\[7347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans she has for the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund beyond March 2025; and whether she has had recent discussions with the Minister for Women and Equalities on that fund.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government is committed to ensuring that all victims of rape and sexual abuse have the information and support they need. On 1 October 2024, I wrote to recipients of the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund to confirm that HM Treasury have announced departmental budgets for financial year 2025/26 will be set out through a Budget on 30 October 2024. I understand the need to prioritise confirmation of their budgets as early as possible. My office is in the process of arranging a meeting with

the Minister for Women and Equalities and I look forward to meeting with her in due course.

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[7352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund will be extended beyond March 2025.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government is committed to ensuring that all victims and survivors of rape and sexual abuse have the information and support they need. On 1 October 2024, I wrote to recipients of the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund to confirm that HM Treasury have announced departmental budgets for financial year 2025/26 will be set out through a Budget on 30 October 2024. I understand the need to prioritise confirmation of their budgets as early as possible.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ UK Youth Parliament

Adam Jodge: [\[6980\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, whether she plans to bring forward a motion to allow the UK Youth Parliament to debate in the House of Commons Chamber.

Lucy Powell:

The use of the Chamber by the UK Youth Parliament requires the agreement of the House of Commons. I would be happy to bring forward a motion to facilitate this in due course.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland: Borders

Sir John Hayes: [\[5856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many times Ministers in his Department have visited the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland since 5 July 2024.

Hilary Benn:

Northern Ireland Office Ministers have enjoyed visiting and engaging with communities, businesses, and organisations in many areas in Northern Ireland. This has included visiting the following areas close to the Border with the Republic of Ireland.

I visited Trinity Church in Clogh, Roslea Co Fermanagh where my great, great grandfather Dr. Thomas Graydon is remembered on a family gravestone; and I attended the Centre of Cross Border Studies Conference in Co Louth.

I have visited various businesses and organisations in Derry/Londonderry on 2 separate occasions.

Minister Anderson has visited communities in Newry and on two separate occasions has also visited organisations in Derry/Londonderry.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[\[6136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what (a) direct ministerial and (b) other public appointments to his Department and associated bodies have (i) been (A) removed from their posts and (B) asked to resign and (ii) made since 4 July 2024.

Hilary Benn:

Since becoming Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 5 July, no direct ministerial or other public appointees have been asked to resign or been removed from office.

I have confirmed the following direct ministerial appointments: Anna Jerzewska, Alistair Hamilton and Aidan Reilly as members of the new Windsor Framework Independent Monitoring Panel and Baroness Foster as Chair of Intertrade UK.

I have also made the following public appointments that were regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments: Nazia Latif as Commissioner to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and Mairead Holder as Commissioner to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Artificial Intelligence

Andrew Griffith:

[\[5699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions on the availability of consumer Artificial Intelligence tools with representatives of (a) Apple, (b) Google and (c) Microsoft.

Feryal Clark:

Across DSIT and the wider Government, we continue to regularly engage with key stakeholders, including Apple, Google, and Microsoft. We recognise the availability of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools is fundamental to encouraging adoption and to kickstart an era of economic growth.

The AI Opportunities Action Plan will set out ways to improve people's lives by enhancing services, developing new products and boosting the responsible adoption of AI across all parts of the economy.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Regulation

Andrew Griffith: [\[5697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the potential introduction of expanded AI regulation since 25 July 2024.

Feryal Clark:

Following the King's Speech announcement to establish legislation to place requirements on those working to develop the most powerful AI models, we continue to develop our proposed approach. This includes engaging with key partners, such as the US, who are a key science and technology partner, to discuss our respective approaches.

Andrew Griffith: [\[5698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with his EU counterparts on EU Regulation 2024/1689 since 25 July 2024.

Feryal Clark:

Following the King's Speech announcement to establish legislation to place requirements on those working to develop the most powerful AI models, we continue to develop our proposed approach. This includes engaging with key partners, such as the EU, who are a key science and technology partner, to discuss our respective approaches.

■ Bioengineering: Infrastructure

Andrew Griffith: [\[5709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding his Department plans to provide for infrastructure projects in the engineering biology sector in the next three financial years.

Feryal Clark:

The National Vision for Engineering Biology, published in December 2023, recognises the importance of access to infrastructure for enabling growth and unlocking innovation for engineering biology applications. UKRI invested £100 million in Engineering Biology Missions this year, including to six Engineering Biology Hubs.

DSIT is working with other departments and arm's length bodies such as UKRI to explore a range of options to increase access to infrastructure for engineering biology.

■ CERN**Andrew Griffith:** [\[5707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to continue implementation of the five goals of the UK Strategy for Engagement with CERN.

Feryal Clark:

The UK is a founding member of CERN, and we are committed to our membership of this globally unique organisation. The government wants to ensure that the UK are maximising the benefits of CERN membership captured in the CERN Strategy. The UK will continue to work closely with CERN now and in the future to drive research excellence, foster talent & skills and inspire the science community, while working to increase returns to UK industry and strengthening our relationships with all our fellow CERN Member States.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Digital Technology**Andrew Griffith:** [\[7585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the selection process was for members of his Department's Digital Government panel.

Feryal Clark:

The Digital Centre Design Advisory Panel has been established to advise, test ideas and constructively challenge our thinking as we develop the new digital centre of government.

DSIT selected individuals who bring a diverse set of views and experience from across the UK tech sector, academics, digital government, regional growth and international voices, including co-chairs Martha Lane Fox and Paul Willmott.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Recruitment**Andrew Griffith:** [\[5819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 2 August 2024 to Question 1988, whether he made an assessment of the potential merits of holding an open competition for the appointment of the Director General for Digital Centre Design.

Feryal Clark:

Consideration was given to running an open recruitment competition for this role, however due to the temporary nature of the role and the need to progress work on the future design of the government Digital Centre at pace, initial use of an exception was favoured.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Special Advisers**Andrew Griffith:** [\[5705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many special advisers have been appointed by his Department since 4 July 2024.

Feryal Clark:

Three special advisers have been appointed by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology since 4 July 2024.

■ European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasts: Finance**Andrew Griffith:** [\[5708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to provide funding for the development of a new headquarters for the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts at the University of Reading to be completed by autumn 2026.

Feryal Clark:

The Government remains committed to funding the construction of a new headquarters for the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) at the University of Reading, as set out in the 2021 UK offer to ECMWF. Construction of the new headquarters is expected to conclude in 2026. Once operational, the new headquarters will help maintain the UK's reputation as a world-leader in weather and climate science, retain highly skilled jobs in the UK, and form a focal point for collaboration on international science.

■ Incubator for Artificial Intelligence**Alex Burghart:** [\[5641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the answer of 3 September 2024 to Question 1967 on Incubator for Artificial Intelligence, by when he plans to have the agreed full-time headcount of 70 staff employed.

Feryal Clark:

i.AI is building to a full complement of 70FTE. Recruitment was paused due to the pre-election period and will resume shortly.

■ New Businesses: Investment**Andrew Griffith:** [\[5702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he is taking steps to support investment in (a) start-ups and (b) university spin-outs.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is taking steps to increase the availability of capital in the UK and help businesses access finance, including for start-ups and spinouts. For example, our creation of a National Wealth Fund will increase access to domestic capital for

businesses, and our ten-year extension of the Enterprise Investment Scheme and the Venture Capital Trust initiatives maintains investment incentives.

To support startups, Innovate UK offers businesses loans, grants and investor partnerships at the start-up/R&D stage through to scale up and growth. To support spinouts, the Government is implementing the recommendations of the Independent Review of University Spin-outs published last year.

■ Research: Innovation

Andrew Griffith: **[7584]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on the 10th Research and Innovation Framework Programme.

Feryal Clark:

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology published a Position Paper (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-position-on-eus-research-and-innovation-framework-programme>) outlining the Government's views on FP10 on 26 September 2024.

As set out in the paper, the Government recognises the importance of collaboration with European counterparts on research and innovation. To that end, the Secretary of State wrote to the European Research Commissioner to confirm the paper's publication and our desire to engage with the EU on the development of FP10. In addition, Minister Vallance has met with the Commissioner and spoken with Manuel Heitor (chair of the expert group for Horizon Europe and FP10). The DSIT CSA was also in Brussels earlier this week discussing FP10 with counterparts. The Government is keen to continue working with the EU, Member States and third countries to ensure FP10 can best address pressing global problems and directly improve people's lives.

■ Spaceflight

Andrew Griffith: **[5823]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps to support extravehicular activity on UK private space flight missions.

Chris Bryant:

There are currently no plans to provide government support for extravehicular activities on private spaceflight missions.

The UK Space Agency has been working with Axiom Space to explore the potential for a UK-led, commercially funded mission to the International Space Station to carry out science and technology demonstrations. Any extravehicular activities during the mission would be focused on functional maintenance and would be carried out by professional astronauts.

■ Video Games

Sojan Joseph:

[\[7669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Online Safety Act 2023 for gaming services.

Feryal Clark:

The Online Safety Act has been designed to be technology neutral and applies to all services which support user-to-user interactions online, including game services.

Where gaming services fall in scope, they will need to take appropriate measures to protect their users against illegal harms and harms to children.

SCOTLAND

■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[7564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on its purchase of new zero-emission buses from non-UK manufacturers.

Ian Murray:

None. This is a devolved matter and, as such, a decision for the Scottish Government.

I have recently met UK bus manufacturers to understand how the UK Government can support the transport sector.

■ Scotland Office: Civil Servants

John Glen:

[\[6137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many people, other than special advisers, have been appointed to civil service posts in his Department without open competition since 4 July 2024; what their (a) job titles and (b) salary bands are; and on what basis each was appointed.

Ian Murray:

The Scotland Office does not employ staff directly. All staff that join do so on an assignment, loan or secondment from other Government bodies, principally the Scottish Government and the Ministry of Justice, who remain the employers and will hold records on civil servants who have been appointed to civil service posts without competition.

■ Scotland Office: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[\[6138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what (a) direct ministerial and (b) other public appointments to his Department and associated bodies have (i) been (A) removed from their posts and (B) asked to resign and (ii) made since 4 July 2024.

Ian Murray:

Since 4 July 2024, a new member of the Boundary Commission for Scotland has been appointed. No direct ministerial or other public appointments to the Scotland Office have been removed from their posts or have been asked to resign in the same period.

TRANSPORT**■ Airports: Carbon Emissions**

Victoria Collins: [\[900487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of airport expansion on the Government's ability to meet net zero targets.

Mike Kane:

This government does not oppose airport expansion as long as it provides economic growth and is compatible with strict environmental standards. We are considering our wider approach to decarbonising aviation and remain committed to achieving net zero target. We have made early progress on sustainable aviation fuel and we will deliver on airspace modernisation.

■ Bus Services: Concessions

Sarah Green: [\[6658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, If she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme eligibility criteria to allow people to apply for a free bus pass at 60 years old.

Simon Lightwood:

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provides free off-peak bus travel to those with eligible disabilities and those of state pension age, currently sixty-six.

Local authorities in England have the power to go beyond their statutory obligations under the ENCTS and offer additional discretionary concessions, such as providing a concessionary bus pass from the age of 60.

■ Central Line: Standards

Dr Neil Hudson: [\[7579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has had discussions with the Mayor of London and Transport for London on improvements to the quality of service on the central line.

Simon Lightwood:

Transport in London is devolved and is the responsibility of the Mayor of London and TfL. Government has regular discussions with TfL on a range of issues, however, it is for them to assess the quality of their services and make decisions on investment.

■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists

Sarah Green:

[\[7589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the use of third party apps to assist in booking practical driving tests on waiting times for people not using those apps.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) main priority is to reduce car practical driving test waiting times, whilst upholding road safety standards.

Measures in place to reduce waiting times for customers at driving test centres, include the recruitment of driving examiners, conducting tests outside of regular hours, including at weekends and on public holidays, and buying back annual leave from driving examiners.

As of 7 October 2024, there were 571,047 car practical driving tests booked, and 89,349 driving tests available within the 24-week booking window.

A survey by DVSA suggests that only 10% of learner drivers use third parties to book their tests. Most either book appointments themselves or through their approved driving instructor (ADI).

To ensure fairness for everyone wanting to book a practical driving test, The DVSA continues to work hard to combat the unscrupulous practice of reselling tests. Such apps or bots are not approved by DVSA. They make it harder for candidates to get a test and can also result in people paying more for a test. DVSA will continue to take steps to block cancellation services from accessing the booking system, which is having a positive impact.

DVSA operates an online booking service (OBS) for instructors and trainers so that they can book and manage driving and riding tests for their pupils. DVSA has made changes to the OBS by stopping automatic online registrations to use the service, ensuring each company that registers employs an ADI and removing access for any companies not linked to driving instructors.

In January 2023, DVSA changed the terms and conditions for using the booking service to help prevent anyone from selling tests at profit. Since then, DVSA has issued 313 warnings, 766 suspensions, and closed 705 businesses for misuse of its booking service.

Following these changes, there has been a significant drop in traffic to these services because DVSA is successfully identifying and blocking apps or bots.

■ Electric Scooters: Hire Services

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[7400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to her Department's guidance entitled E-scooter trials: guidance for local authorities and rental operators, updated on 17 January 2024, how many applications for changes to trials her Department has received

from local authorities; and how many such applications have been (a) granted and (b) not granted.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department received 13 applications from local authorities, requesting geographic and fleet size changes to their e-scooter trials. All 13 applications were approved as of 8 October 2024.

■ **High Speed 2 Line**

Ann Davies:

[\[7650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of the development of phase 1 of HS2.

Lilian Greenwood:

As reported in the [last HS2 report to Parliament](#) published in November 2023, HS2 Ltd indicated that its projected cost to deliver Phase 1 would significantly exceed the current Funding Envelope of £44.6 billion (2019 prices). Following the significant scope changes and deferrals made under the previous government, the Department is working with HS2 Ltd to review the Estimate at Completion (EAC) for HS2 Phase 1 and will report to Parliament in due course.

■ **London North Eastern Railway: Subsidies**

Martin Vickers:

[\[5561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what is the forecast subsidy to support London and North Eastern Railway in (a) 2024 and (b) 2025.

Simon Lightwood:

LNER's subsidy forecasts for 2024/25 and 2025/26 are commercially sensitive. Details of LNER's accounts from previous years can be found in the published statutory accounts.

■ **Railway Stations: Access**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[6442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when her Department plans to announce stations that have been selected for Access for All Control Period 7 funding.

Lilian Greenwood:

We are carefully considering the best approach to the Access for All programme. This Government is committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognises the social and economic benefits this brings to communities.

■ **Railways: Fares**

Andrew Cooper:

[\[5459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to address differences in ticket prices between regulated and un-regulated rail lines.

Simon Lightwood:

Under the current system, each train operating company offers a range of fares, some of which are regulated by Government. Train operating companies have flexibility in how they set the prices of unregulated fares; however, in practice, many closely follow the change in regulated fares.

This Government acknowledges that the current fares system is overcomplicated and can be confusing to passengers. We have therefore committed to reviewing it with a view to simplifying it.

Railways: Nationalisation**Luke Taylor:**[\[900490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate she has made of the timeframe within which the renationalisation of rail franchises will result in improvements to rail services.

Simon Lightwood:

Public ownership will end the failed franchising system, allowing operators to serve the interests of passengers, not shareholders. The failures of the past three decades cannot be fixed overnight, and bringing train operations into public ownership is only one part of this government's extensive plans to improve the railways for passengers and taxpayers.

Railways: Spalding**Sir John Hayes:**[\[5260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential economic benefits of introducing a Sunday service for trains serving Spalding railway station.

Simon Lightwood:

There are no plans for such an assessment, but local transport authorities are free to put together a business case for consideration by the rail industry should they so wish.

Roads: Essex**Priti Patel:**[\[900477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to announce new investment for highways in Essex.

Lilian Greenwood:

On 30 July 2024, the Secretary of State announced that she was commissioning a review of the Department's capital spend portfolio.

This review will support the development of our long-term strategy for transport, developing a modern and integrated network with people at its heart, ensuring that transport infrastructure can be delivered efficiently and on time.

Major investment decisions are a matter for the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Roads: Freight

Sojan Joseph: [\[900488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the impact of the EU Entry/Exit System on road haulage.

Lilian Greenwood:

Department for Transport Ministers and officials regularly meet colleagues from the Home Office, the Cabinet Office and FCDO to discuss the impacts of the EU Entry/Exit System on travel between the UK and the Schengen Area, including the impacts on freight. We are intensifying these discussions with our ministerial colleagues across government as we approach the implementation date.

■ South Western Railway: Public Lavatories

Clive Jones: [\[5482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of train toilet provision on the Waterloo-Reading line.

Simon Lightwood:

Department officials work closely with South Western Railway to ensure that adequate toilet facilities are provided to passengers on trains and at stations wherever possible, and I will ensure that officials raise this matter with South Western Railway. I am pleased to say that South Western Railway will be introducing brand new Class 701 trains with fully accessible toilets, and will continue to roll these out, including on the Waterloo to Reading line as soon as possible.

■ Taxis: Regulation

Rachael Maskell: [\[7466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to end cross-border hiring practices by licensed taxis.

Rachael Maskell: [\[7467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to introduce (a) enhanced and (b) consistent standards for taxi licensing across all local authorities.

Rachael Maskell: [\[7468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to ban price surging in the taxi trade.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government keeps all policies under review and is aware of stakeholder concerns about the current legislative and regulatory framework for taxis and private hire vehicles. To increase consistency in standards, the Department for Transport issues guidance to all licensing authorities in England. The Government is

considering how to improve the current regulatory position even further, whilst still enabling the sector to deliver safe and accessible services that meet a wide range of passenger needs.

■ **Trains: Manufacturing Industries**

Martin Vickers:

[\[5557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential role of newly approved open access services in supporting British train (a) manufacturing, (b) assembly and (c) supply chains.

Simon Lightwood:

Privately owned and run open access operators can play a significant role in supporting UK train manufacturers, assemblers and their UK supply chains and are an important source of potential orders, both for new and cascaded rolling stock. It remains a matter for each operator to decide when and how to source its own rolling stock.

■ **Transport: East Midlands**

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[900489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans her Department has to increase transport connectivity between the East Midlands and London.

Lilian Greenwood:

This government is undertaking an internal review of the department's capital spend portfolio which will support the development of our new long-term strategy for transport infrastructure. We are working at pace to improve transport provision across the country including transport infrastructure between the East Midlands and London. Any decisions about aspirations for transport improvements will be subject to broader discussions and fiscal decisions made at the Budget on the 30 October 2024 in spring 2025.

■ **Transport: West Dorset**

Edward Morello:

[\[5483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to increase funding for transport projects in West Dorset constituency.

Simon Lightwood:

This Government is working at pace to improve transport provision across the country. That is why an internal review of the department's capital spend portfolio has been commissioned which will support decision making on current and future transport investment. The department will continue to engage with Dorset County Council on their aspirations for transport improvements in the region.

TREASURY■ **Air Passenger Duty**

Helen Whately: [\[6356\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of adjustments to domestic aviation duty.

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[6641\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will re-band aviation duty.

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[6642\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will increase domestic aviation duty.

James Murray:

Air Passenger Duty (APD) exists to ensure that aviation makes a fair contribution to the public finances and applies to UK-departing flights.

Reforms to APD took effect in April 2023. These included the introduction of the new domestic band for domestic flights, initially set at half the rate for short-haul international flights (except for larger private jets). The domestic band applies to all flights between airports in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and for 2024/25 is set at £7 for economy passengers.

These reforms also introduced a new ultra long-haul band covering flights that are greater than 5,500 miles from London. This ensures that those who fly furthest, and have the greatest impact on emissions, incur the greatest duty.

The Government keeps all tax policy under review. The Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy in the round at fiscal events in the context of public finances and any changes will be announced at Budget.

■ **Beer: Excise Duties**

Sarah Green: [\[6656\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make it her policy to reduce beer duty in line with cider.

James Murray:

Alcohol duties collectively raise over £12bn a year, helping to fund vital public services and addressing the harms caused to society and public health by excessive or irresponsible drinking.

Under the recent alcohol duty reforms, there remains a small number of disparities for products between 3.5 per cent and 8.5 per cent ABV, owing to concerns about the impact on the cider industry at the time of the reforms.

The Government is closely monitoring the impact of the recent reforms and rates that took effect on 1 August 2023, and the Chancellor has confirmed that she will set out

plans for tax – as well as spending and borrowing – in the usual way at the Budget on 30 October.

■ Crown Estate Commissioners: Fees and Charges

Ben Lake: [\[7523\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring the Crown Estate to publish the fees it receives from local authorities in (a) Wales (b) England and (c) Northern Ireland to access its land.

James Murray:

The Crown Estate receives payment on its assets from local authorities through regulating leases. The terms of those leases are determined based on several factors, including the nature and value of the asset, the specific terms and conditions of the lease, and the intended use of the land.

Each lease agreement is tailored to reflect these variables, ensuring that the terms are fair and appropriate for both The Crown Estate and the local authority involved.

Publishing details of those fees would risk prejudicing the commercial interests of both The Crown Estate and the local authorities involved.

■ Crown Estate Commissioners: Wales

Ben Lake: [\[7521\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much have each local authority in Wales paid to the Crown Estate to access Crown Estate land in each year of the last five years.

James Murray:

The Crown Estate operates as an independent and unified commercial entity, engaging in a variety of business activities across Wales, England and Northern Ireland.

To achieve efficiency in its operations, The Crown Estate runs many of its functions at a whole enterprise level. Reflective of its whole enterprise approach, The Crown Estate runs a single set of accounts across its functions, which are not disaggregated according to administrative areas or local authorities. Extracting the relevant information from the existing accounts into a bespoke format for each local authority in response to this question would exceed the disproportionate cost threshold for Written Parliamentary Questions.

Ben Lake: [\[7522\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fees the Crown Estate charges for leasing land to local authorities in Wales.

James Murray:

The Crown Estate receives payment on its assets from local authorities through regulating leases. The terms of those leases are determined based on several

factors, including the nature and value of the asset, the specific terms and conditions of the lease, and the intended use of the land.

Each lease agreement is tailored to reflect these variables, ensuring that the terms are fair and appropriate for both The Crown Estate and the local authority involved.

■ Fuels: Excise Duties

Helen Whately: [\[6363\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has received recent representations on the potential merits of increasing fuel duty.

James Murray:

Revenue from motoring taxes and associated VAT ensures that the Government can continue to fund the vital public services and infrastructure that people and families across the UK expect.

Following the spending audit, the Chancellor has been clear that difficult decisions lie ahead on spending, welfare and tax to fix the foundations of our economy and address the £22 billion hole the government has inherited. Decisions on how to do that will be taken at the Budget in the round; the Chancellor makes decisions on tax policy at fiscal events.

The Government continuously reviews the tax system to ensure that it raises revenue in a way that supports growth. This involves considering representations from a range of stakeholders on various taxes and tax issues, including motoring taxes.

■ Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

Helen Whately: [\[6354\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has undertaken literature reviews on the subject of vehicle excise duty.

Helen Whately: [\[6360\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will increase the standard rate of vehicle excise duty.

Helen Whately: [\[6361\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will increase any of the banded rates of vehicle excise duty.

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[6643\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has received representations on an increase to the standard rate of vehicle excise duty in the next fiscal year.

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[6644\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will adjust the method of assessment for vehicle excise duty rates in the next fiscal year.

James Murray:

Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) is a tax on car ownership. The tax system encourages the uptake of cars with low carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions to help meet the UK's legally binding climate change targets. Cars first registered between 1 March 2001 and 31 March 2017 pay VED annually according to CO₂ emissions. From 1 April 2017, a reformed VED system was introduced for new cars. Under the reformed VED system, zero emission models currently pay nothing on first registration, whilst the most polluting pay over £2,600. In subsequent years, most cars move to a standard rate, currently set at an annual rate of £190. However from April 2025, electric cars will begin to pay VED in the same way as petrol and diesel vehicles, whilst an incentive is maintained for electric cars at the point of purchase.

Revenue from motoring taxes helps ensure we can continue to fund the vital public services and infrastructure that people and families across the UK expect. The Government annually reviews the rates and thresholds of taxes and reliefs to ensure that they are appropriate and reflect the current state of the economy. As with all taxes, the Government welcomes representations from the public on how the tax system can be improved.

Following the spending audit, the Chancellor has been clear that difficult decisions lie ahead on spending, welfare and tax to fix the foundations of our economy and address the £22 billion hole the government has inherited. Decisions on how to do that will be taken at the Budget in the round.

■ Pensioners: Tax Rates and Bands**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[6585\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of pensioner households have at least one (a) higher rate and (b) additional rate taxpayer.

James Murray:

The number of individuals over the state pension age paying higher and additional rate Income Tax in 2021 to 2022 is estimated as 455,000 and 39,300 respectively.

These estimates account for the whole of the UK and are based on the 2021 to 2022 Survey of Personal Incomes, which is the latest outturn year available. HMRC does not hold household level data.

■ Small Businesses**Gareth Bacon:**[\[5664\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to help increase (a) investment and (b) listings for small and medium-sized businesses.

Gareth Bacon:[\[5665\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to incentivise companies to remain listed in London.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government is committed to reinvigorating our capital markets to ensure they deliver for investors and firms to support global and UK growth.

The UK is Europe's leading hub for investment, and the Government is taking forward reforms to build on these strong foundations by boosting the competitiveness of UK markets and optimising the capital raising process for large and small companies.

This includes a once in a generation reform to our listings rulebook which will revolutionise our markets, directly align us with leading international counterparts and providing greater flexibility to firms and founders raising capital on UK markets.

The Chancellor has also announced a landmark review into pension fund investments which will explicitly consider the role of pension funds in capital and financial markets to boost returns and UK growth.

WALES**■ Wales Office: Public Appointments****John Glen:**[\[6142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what (a) direct ministerial and (b) other public appointments to her Department and associated bodies have (i) been (A) removed from their posts and (B) asked to resign and (ii) made since 4 July 2024.

Jo Stevens:

Since 4 July 2024, I have not removed or made a direct ministerial or public appointment at the Wales Office or an associated body or asked a ministerial or public appointment to resign.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Disability: Employment****Sir Ashley Fox:**[\[900452\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Our Get Britain Working plan will support more disabled people and people with health conditions to enter work and stay in it. We will devolve power to local areas to join up work, health and skills support for local people.

■ Special Educational Needs

Claire Young:

[\[900457\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps is she taking with Cabinet colleagues to help ensure the adequacy of support for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Bridget Phillipson:

We want all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision to receive the support they need. This government will listen to and work with families and the sector to deliver reform, improving inclusivity in mainstream schools, and ensuring special schools help those with the most complex needs.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Assistance Animals

Catherine Atkinson:

[\[5768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to tackle illegal access refusals.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No one deserves to be held back or treated unfairly because of their disability. We are determined to tackle barriers and work with disabled people to ensure they have equal access to every opportunity.

The Equality Act 2010 protects everyone against discrimination and ensures disabled people have the right to be treated equally. Further, The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to refuse entry to a disabled person with an assistance dog (with very few exceptions). Access refusals are nearly always against the law.

Where individuals are concerned they have been a victim of discrimination, the Equality Advisory and Support Service is there to provide information and advice and it is important that both the government and businesses address the issue to ensure that assistance dog users feel welcome in society.

■ Care Leavers

Dan Carden:

[\[6429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Education to ensure that care leavers have adequate financial support, in the context of the cost of living.

Sir Stephen Timms:

There are already a number of easements in place within the benefit system to support particular groups – including care leavers. To support the additional challenges care leavers face, care leavers benefit from an exemption to the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) until the age of 25.

■ Child Benefit and Universal Credit: Eligibility**Mohammad Yasin:**[\[6412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of using the same eligibility criteria for Universal Credit and Child Benefit for claimants in non-advanced education; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of that approach on families supporting students whose education may be extended due to having additional needs.

Sir Stephen Timms:

There are no current plans to make such an assessment.

■ Children: Maintenance**Dave Doogan:**[\[7539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring the Child Maintenance Service to calculate a paying parent's liability using their household income rather than their individual income.

Dave Doogan:[\[7541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Child Maintenance Service has made of the potential merits of ensuring that both parents are equally liable for childcare costs.

Andrew Western:

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) operates on the principle that both parents have financial responsibility for their child, including contributing to their food and clothing, as well as contributing towards the associated costs of running the home that the child lives in. The calculation represents an amount of money that is broadly commensurate with the amount that a paying parent would spend on the child if they were still living with them.

The CMS will assess how much the paying parent should pay the receiving parent, which in most cases is based on a percentage of the paying parent's gross annual income, before tax and national insurance but after pension contributions. This can also include income from certain assets, savings and investment such as dividends or property income. Income from other members of the household is not considered as they have no financial responsibility for the qualifying child.

The income of the receiving parent is not taken into consideration as they are already contributing as the child's primary caregiver and their income should not remove the responsibility of a paying parent to support their child.

■ Children: Poverty

Victoria Collins:

[\[7075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of children who will be (a) affected by the two-child limit, (b) living in poverty and (c) both affected by the two-child limit and living in poverty in each of the next 12 months.

Victoria Collins:

[\[7076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce child poverty in families affected by the two-child limit in Universal Credit claims.

Alison McGovern:

Tackling child poverty is at the heart of this Government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and improve the life chances of every child.

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

The 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.

As of April 2024, the number of children (third or subsequent children born on or after 6 April 2017) affected by the policy to provide support for a maximum of 2 children was 470,000.

	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY THE POLICY	TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY THE POLICY	NUMBER OF THIRD OR SUBSEQUENT CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY THE POLICY	NUMBER OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY THE POLICY (THIRD OR SUBSEQUENT CHILDREN BORN ON OR AFTER 6 APRIL 2017)
GB Total	380,000	1,300,000	580,000	470,000

■ Cleaning Services: Health and Safety

Dr Andrew Murrison:

[5554]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Health and Safety Executive hold information on the number of electrocutions caused by the use of water-fed poles in window cleaning.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) places duties on employers, the self-employed and people in control of work premises (the Responsible Person) to report work-related fatalities, certain injuries, occupational diseases and specified dangerous occurrences (near misses). Reports are made via a dedicated RIDDOR submission form.

An electrocution that occurred during window cleaning being carried out as a 'work activity' (as opposed to by the homeowner) would be reportable under RIDDOR as a work-related fatality.

The Health and Safety Executive collects information on deaths from contact with electricity in the category of 'building and industrial cleaning activities'. However, it does not collect specific information relating to electrocutions caused by the use of water-fed poles in window cleaning.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Arden Strategies

Kit Malthouse:

[5599]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what (a) meetings and (b) communications via electronic messaging (i) he and (ii) his special advisers have had with representatives of Arden Strategies.

Andrew Western:

Details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations and individuals are published quarterly in arrears on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Special Advisers are required to comply with the Special Adviser Code of Conduct at all times and are required to make declarations on meetings with senior media figures in line with published transparency guidance.

Where a Special Adviser accompanies their Minister to an official meeting with a senior media figure, the Special Adviser's attendance does not need to be separately recorded as the Minister will be the main attendee.

Where an 'informal' lobbying approach is granted time or resource by Government, it should result in a diarised engagement and therefore be recorded.

■ Employment: Poverty**Andrew Cooper:****[7059]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate her Department has made of the number of people in employment who are living in poverty in Mid Cheshire constituency.

Alison McGovern:

Statistics for the total number of people in employment living in relative and absolute poverty are not available at a constituency level.

Statistics on the total number of people in employment living in relative and absolute poverty both before and after housing costs at regional level are published annually in the Households Below Average Income statistics [Households below average income \(HBAI\) statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income).

■ Food Poverty**Mr Connor Rand:****[5724]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if the child poverty taskforce will examine food insecurity.

Alison McGovern:

We are committed to tackling poverty and reducing mass dependence on emergency food parcels.

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.

We have already spoken to food poverty experts at a roundtable hosted by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on 30th July, to understand the priorities in this area.

Alongside the Child Poverty Taskforce, our initial steps to support families and children include free breakfast clubs in every primary school, so children don't go hungry, protecting renters from arbitrary eviction and banning exploitative zero hours contracts. Good work will be the foundation of our approach and the New Deal for Working People will ensure the minimum wage is a genuine living wage, and reformed employment support will mean that many more people will benefit from the dignity and purpose of employment.

■ Housing Benefit: Supported Housing and Temporary Accommodation**Julia Buckley:****[5480]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the eligibility criteria for housing support on incentives to seek employment for people in (a) temporary and (b) supported accommodation.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department acknowledges the challenge presented by the interaction between Universal Credit and Housing Benefit for those working and living in supported housing as the two systems were never intended to run alongside one another.

The income taper in Housing Benefit ensures people in work are better off than someone wholly reliant on benefits. In addition to any financial advantage, there are important non-financial benefits of working. These benefits include learning new skills, improved confidence, and independence as well as a positive effect on an individual's mental and physical health.

The Department will continue to work to build our understanding of this topic and to evaluate future policy options.

It remains the department's priority to ensure that those who can work are supported to enter the labour market and to sustain employment.

Julia Buckley:**[5481]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of tapering the reduction of housing support when people living in (a) temporary and (b) supported accommodation move off income-related benefits and into work.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The income taper in Housing Benefit ensures people in work are better off than someone wholly reliant on benefits. In addition to any financial advantage, there are important non-financial benefits of working. These benefits include learning new skills, improved confidence and independence as well as a positive effect on an individual's mental and physical health.

For those not on Universal Credit, housing support is tapered when their income exceeds the applicable amount. On Universal Credit, for those claimants in Supported Housing or Temporary Accommodation their housing support is not tapered as they are passported to full Housing Benefit. This ensures parity with Universal Credit and avoids them being tapered on both Universal Credit and Housing Benefit which could disincentivise work.

The Department acknowledges the challenge presented by the interaction between Universal Credit and Housing Benefit for those working and living in supported housing and temporary accommodation. This issue is a complex one, officials are working to explore this issue further.

It remains the department's priority to ensure that those who can work are supported to enter the labour market and to sustain employment.

■ Older People: County Durham

Mary Kelly Foy:

[5362]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will have discussions with local authorities on ensuring that older people living in poverty in County Durham receive financial support for which they are eligible.

Emma Reynolds:

The State Pension is the foundation of income in retirement. 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.

Pension Credit provides financial support to pensioners on a low income. We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive a Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

The Secretary of State and Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all Local Authorities in late August, asking them to redouble their efforts to reach those pensioners who could benefit from Pension Credit. We will be working closely with charities and Local Authorities to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and apply.

■ Older People: Income

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[6370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of pensioners who have an annual income that is (i) lower and (ii) higher than (a) £23,795.20, (b) £12,570, (c) £50,271, (d) £125,140, (e) £60,000, (f) £70,000 and (g) £24,000.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 October 2024]: These estimates are provided at a pensioner unit level. The estimated number of pensioner units with the gross annual incomes specified are stated in the following text. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 100,000 and then displayed in millions. Individual figures have been rounded independently, so figures may not sum due to rounding.

(a) (i) lower than £23,795.20 – 4.1m, (ii) higher than £23,795.20 – 4.6m

(b) (i) lower than £12,570 – 1.0m, (ii) higher than £12,570 – 7.7m

(c) (i) lower than £50,271 – 7.4m, (ii) higher than £50,271 – 1.2m

(d) (i) lower than £125,140 – 8.5m, (ii) higher than £125,140 – 0.2m

(e) (i) lower than £60,000 – 7.9m, (ii) higher than £60,000 – 0.8m

(f) (i) lower than £70,000 – 8.2m, (ii) higher than £70,000 – 0.5m

(g) (i) lower than £24,000 – 4.2m, (ii) higher than £24,000 – 4.5m

These estimates are based on Pensioners' Incomes data derived from the Family Resources Survey and cover private householders in the United Kingdom and the financial year 2022/23.

A pensioner unit can be a single pensioner over State Pension age, a pensioner couple where one member is over State Pension age, or a pensioner couple where both members are over State Pension age.

■ Pension Credit: Take-up

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[6287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department takes to identify (a) people and (b) households eligible for Pension Credit who have not applied for it.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 October 2024]: Building on last year's 'Invitation to Claim' trial, the Department will be directly contacting approximately 120,000 pensioner households who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and who may also be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit. We can identify and target these households using DWP's Housing Benefit data.

In order to maximise the take-up of Pension Credit, we have been running an extensive national campaign since September on a range of channels, including print and broadcast media to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim. The campaign targets potential pension-age customers, as well as friends and family who can encourage and support them to apply.

We continue to engage with a range of external partners who can help promote Pension Credit through their own channels and networks.

We are also asking local authorities to support our Pension Credit campaign - the Secretary of State and the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all local authorities in August. Many already undertake their own initiatives to identify eligible households and promote take-up; and over 160 local authorities have responded positively to our 'call for action'

Like all means-tested benefits, a person's eligibility for Pension Credit and the amount they may get depends on their specific financial and personal household circumstances, information which DWP does not have. That's why it is not currently possible to accurately identify people who may be entitled to Pension Credit just from DWP data.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[6288]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to communicate with (a) people and (b) households eligible for Pension Credit who have not yet applied for it to encourage Pension Credit take up.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 October 2024]: In order to maximise the take-up of Pension Credit, we have been running an extensive national campaign since September on a range of channels, including print and broadcast media to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim. The campaign targets potential pension-age customers, as well as friends and family who can encourage and support them to apply.

We continue to engage with a range of external partners who can help promote Pension Credit through their own channels and networks.

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

We are also asking local authorities to support our Pension Credit campaign - the Secretary of State and the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all local authorities in August. Many already undertake their own initiatives to identify eligible households and promote take-up; and over 160 local authorities have responded positively to our 'call for action'.

■ Pensioners: Fuel Poverty

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[5515]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an estimate of how many pensioners not receiving Pension Credit are spending more than 10% of their income on energy bills.

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). These statistics show that up to 880,000 families eligible for Pension Credit did not claim the benefit in financial year ending 2022. However, we do not hold information on the spending patterns of pensioners who are not receiving Pension Credit.

■ Social Security Benefits

Nadia Whittome: [\[6649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing benefits for those (a) in supported accommodation and (b) subject to higher service charge payments.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Supported housing provides a vital service for the most vulnerable people in society, helping them live as independently as possible in the community. The benefits system recognises the extra costs and service charges associated with supported housing.

Housing Benefit is paid to those on a low income living in supported accommodation if they meet criteria set out in legislation. Housing Benefit can cover all or part of the rent and any eligible service charges and in the majority of cases full rent is paid.

The Secretary of State is required to undertake an annual uprating review of benefits and state pensions every year. The review will commence at the usual time this Autumn.

■ Universal Credit: Children

Anna Dixon: [\[7197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if the Taskforce on Child Poverty will make an assessment on the potential impact of ending the two-child benefit limit for families in Shipley constituency..

Alison McGovern:

Tackling child poverty is at the heart of this Government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and improve the life chances of every child.

The Child Poverty Taskforce has started work and will explore all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty. The Child Poverty Strategy will be published in the Spring and is UK-wide.

In September, the Taskforce heard from local leaders about the challenges faced in their communities, and how it can best work with Mayors, local authorities and other bodies to develop innovative solutions to tackle child poverty. This marked the first of a series of thematic sessions with key organisations, charities and experts on specific topics that will help to shape the strategy.

■ Windows: Health and Safety

Dr Andrew Murrison: [\[5271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what guidance the Health and Safety Executive issues on the safe usage of water-fed poles for window cleaning.

Sir Stephen Timms:

To help businesses comply with the law, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides general guidance on health and safety as well as targeted guidance for higher-risk industries and activities. HSE does not seek to provide guidance for all industries and activities as it is often the case that others are more knowledgeable or better placed to provide such guidance.

HSE produces generic guidance for the cleaning industry covering a range of topics such as manual handling, control of hazardous substances, and slips and trips, all of which have relevance to window cleaners. HSE does not however issue specific guidance on the safe usage of water-fed poles.

The window cleaning industry, in collaboration with HSE, has published two pieces of guidance for the safe use of water-fed poles: 'Safety in window cleaning using Waterfed Pole Systems' and 'Window cleaning with water-fed poles'. Both are free to download from the website of the Federation of Window Cleaners (www.windowcleaning.org.uk).

■ Winter Fuel Payment**Dr Luke Evans:****[5386]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the impact assessment for the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment regulations.

Emma Reynolds:

The Regulations came into force on the 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: [Responses to Freedom of Information requests on Equality Impact Assessments produced for targeting Winter Fuel Payment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/responses-to-freedom-of-information-requests-on-equality-impact-assessments-produced-for-targeting-winter-fuel-payment)

■ Winter Fuel Payment: British Nationals Abroad**Daisy Cooper:****[6532]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the cost to the public purse of winter fuel payments to overseas residents was in 2023/24.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 October 2024]: Annual statistics on the number of Winter Fuel Payments made to individuals and households are publicly available via GOV.UK. The latest statistics cover winter 2023 to 2024.

The winter 2023 to 2024 Winter Fuel Payment expenditure for residents in eligible European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Switzerland was £17.6 million.

Source: [Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2023 to 2024 -GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2023-to-2024).

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Disability

Stephen Gethins:

[6297]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changing eligibility requirements for the winter fuel payment on people with disabilities.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 9 October 2024]: This Government is committed to pensioners. Everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement.

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

Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households that need it most, that is those 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.

An equality analysis was produced as part of Ministerial decision making in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty. This was published on 13 September and can be found [here](#). By convention, such analyses are not published alongside secondary legislation. However, in view of the close public interest in this issue Ministers decided, exceptionally, to publish in this case.

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

Receipt of disability benefits 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.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ **Delivering the Government's Plan to Make Work Pay - Introduction of the Employment Rights Bill**

Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds): [\[HCWS117\]](#)

The Plan to Make Work Pay sets out a significant and ambitious agenda to ensure workplace rights are fit for a modern economy, empower working people, and contribute to economic growth. Today, the Government is fulfilling the Manifesto commitment to bring forward legislation within 100 days of entering office by introducing the Employment Rights Bill.

Upgrading the UK labour market so it is fit for our modern economy is a key step to kickstarting economic growth, alongside other planks of our modern supply side approach, including planning reform, kickstarting a skills revolution, a modern industrial strategy and a plan to tackle inactivity. The Bill will support the Government's mission to increase productivity and create the right conditions for long-term sustainable, inclusive, and secure economic growth by giving the British public the work, wages, prosperity, security, dignity, and the living standards that everyone in Britain needs and deserves. This is a comprehensive Bill which, once implemented, will represent the biggest upgrade in employment rights for a generation. It will raise the minimum floor of employment rights, raise living standards across the country and provide better support for those businesses who are engaged in good practices.

Benefits of the Employment Rights Bill

This is a pro-worker, pro-business plan. The Government will tackle head-on the issues within the UK labour market that are holding Britain back. The Plan to Make Work Pay sets out a vision for modern and fair employment protections that will set the country up for the future.

Supporting families

Many businesses already provide good, family-friendly conditions for their workers because they know that doing so improves productivity, morale, and retention. This Bill will increase the baseline set of rights for employees with parental or other caring responsibilities, enabling more working parents to get on at work, and achieve a better work life balance – whether that's raising children, improving their own wellbeing, or looking after a loved one with a long-term health condition. Businesses will gain too where this boosts increased workforce participation, helping employers fill vacancies. Measures will increase the likelihood of a request for flexible working arrangements to be granted, introduce day one entitlement to paternity leave and unpaid parental leave, and introduce a statutory entitlement to Bereavement Leave.

Despite existing protections, we know it isn't always a level playing field, and too many women are being held back at work. By expanding Gender Pay Gap reporting

requirements, requiring large employers to produce action plans on how to address their gender pay gaps and support employees through the menopause, and strengthening rights for pregnant workers and new mothers, this Bill will put gender equality front and centre of our employment legislation. These measures will support women's employment participation and tackle the gender pay gap.

Improving rights and addressing one-sided flexibility

Too many workers experience low paid, insecure and poor-quality work. This Government believes that all workers should be able to enjoy fair rights, benefits and security in the workplace, no matter who they work for. The Government intends to support businesses so they are no longer undercut by those with low standards. By introducing day one protection from Unfair Dismissal (while allowing employers to operate probation periods), increasing protection from sexual harassment in the workplace, ending unscrupulous fire and rehire and fire and replace practices, strengthening rights and requirements for collective redundancy consultation, and banning exploitative zero hours contracts, we will raise the bar for workers and provide a baseline of security in work. The Plan to Make Work Pay sets out a vision for better, modernised, and fairer employment protections that will set the country up for the future.

Improving take home pay and conditions at work

We have already made progress in championing fair pay by changing the Low Pay Commission's remit to take into account the cost of living for the first time. The Bill will go further, introducing powers to create a Fair Pay Agreement in the adult social care sector, and reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body. We will also be reinstating and strengthening the two-tier code for public sector contracts, helping ensure that employees working on outsourced contracts will be offered terms and conditions no less favourable to those transferred from the public sector. We will strengthen Statutory Sick Pay, removing the Lower Earnings Limit to make it available to all employees, and removing the waiting period so that SSP is paid from the first day of sickness absence.

A better enforcement system

Whilst the vast majority of employers champion the spirit of good business and workers' rights, some fall short. By bringing together the various agencies and enforcement bodies that enforce employment rights into the new Fair Work Agency, we will ensure that where employers are not doing what is right, a simplified and strengthened enforcement system will protect workers and ensure justice in the workplace.

Voice at work

This Government believes that workers should have a voice at work, and trade unions are essential for tackling insecurity, inequality, and low pay. That is why this Bill will focus on strengthening the rights of trade union representatives and bring archaic and prohibitive trade union legislation into the 21st century. We are bringing forward multiple measures to protect workers from dismissal and blacklisting for trade union activity, ensure workers understand their right to join a trade union, to simplify the statutory recognition process, and to bring in a new right of access for union officials to meet,

represent, recruit, and organise members in workplaces. As previously announced, we will repeal the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 and the Trade Union Act 2016.

The Plan to Make Work Pay was developed through close engagement with business and trade unions, and we are committed to continuing with this approach through full and comprehensive consultation on the implementation of the plan.

Next Steps to Make Work Pay

The Government is committed to implementing its Plan to Make Work Pay in full. Not all of the commitments within Make Work Pay require primary legislation to implement; in many areas the Government has existing powers to deliver on commitments through secondary legislation and non-legislative means. In addition, the Government has been clear that some parts of the plan will take longer to review and implement. In order to provide Parliament, workers and business clarity on how Government intends on delivering on the plan, it is today publishing the **Next Steps to Make Work Pay** paper. This sets direction and gives businesses and workers confidence in our long-term programme of work. Work is already underway to prepare consultations on several aspects of the plan.

As is typical with employment legislation, further detail on many of the policies in the Bill will be provided through regulations after Royal Assent. We expect to begin consulting on these reforms in 2025, seeking significant input from all stakeholders, and anticipate this meaning that the majority of reforms will take effect no earlier than 2026. Reforms of unfair dismissal will take effect no sooner than Autumn 2026. We will continue working with partners right up to implementation. Advice and support will be available to businesses to support this.

The Government will continue to work hand in hand on these changes with business, trade unions and civil society in a spirit of partnership to get Britain moving again.

■ **Launch of the Office of Trade Sanctions Implementation**

Secretary of State for Business and Trade, and President of the Board of Trade (Jonathan Reynolds):

[\[HCWS121\]](#)

Today (10th October 2024), the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) launches the Office of Trade Sanctions Implementation (OTSI). OTSI is a new unit, equipped with enhanced powers, to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of trade sanctions

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the UK imposed sanctions against Russia on an unprecedented scale. These sanctions have deprived Russia of more than \$400bn since February 2022. By one estimate, that's equivalent to four more years of funding for the invasion. The creation of OTSI will help ensure that the UK's trade sanctions regimes have maximum impact.

The Trade, Aircraft and Shipping Sanctions (Civil Enforcement) Regulations 2024, which come into force on 10th October 2024, grant OTSI new civil enforcement powers, which complement HMRC's existing powers to enforce trade sanctions. While HMRC continues

to be responsible for enforcement in relation to goods and technology that cross the UK border, OTSI will lead on the enforcement of:

- the provision or procurement of sanctioned services;
- moving, making available, or acquiring sanctioned goods outside the UK (where a UK person is involved);
- transferring, making available or acquiring sanctioned technology outside the UK (where a UK person is involved);
- providing ancillary services to the movement, making available or acquisition of sanctioned goods outside the UK (where a UK person is involved); and
- providing ancillary services to the transfer, making available or acquisition of sanctioned technology outside the UK (where a UK person is involved).

The Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation in HM Treasury remains responsible for enforcement of the oil price cap, alongside its implementation of financial sanctions.

With this new enforcement toolkit, OTSI can impose Civil Monetary Penalties and has powers to request, share, and publish information about sanctions breaches. There are also new reporting obligations for financial services, money services businesses and legal service providers. These will help OTSI to detect and investigate suspected breaches.

A key part of ensuring UK sanctions are effective is improving compliance. As well as tackling breaches when they occur, OTSI is being established to help UK businesses comply with their obligations under UK trade sanctions, through engagement with industry and by providing information and guidance. OTSI will also deliver the sanctions licensing function for standalone services, including professional and business services.

The Department for Transport (DfT) will lead on civil enforcement in relation to aircraft and shipping sanctions. The Trade, Aircraft and Shipping Sanctions (Civil Enforcement) Regulations 2024 also confer powers on the Secretary of State for Transport to request and share information, impose a civil monetary penalty, and to publish information about a breach of aircraft or shipping sanctions where a penalty has, or could have been, imposed. The legislation also places obligations on certain persons to report known or suspected breaches to DfT.

The UK's sanctions framework was severely tested by the unprecedented scale and scope of the sanctions we have imposed on Russia since 2022. This step change in how we use sanctions revealed areas which required further strengthening, including the need for civil enforcement powers for certain trade sanctions breaches. This government is committed to maximising the effectiveness of UK sanctions, including through significantly strengthening our sanctions enforcement tools. Launching OTSI and equipping it, and DfT, with an enhanced enforcement toolkit demonstrates that commitment.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Infected Blood Compensation Authority Independent Member Appointments**

Paymaster General and the Minister of State for the Cabinet Office (Nick Thomas-Symonds): [\[HCWS116\]](#)

I should like to inform the House that I have appointed three interim Non-Executive Board Members to the Infected Blood Compensation Authority under Part 3 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024:

- Russell Frith, appointed as an Interim Audit and Risk Board Member, effective from 1st October 2024 until 1 October 2025;
- Deborah Harris-Ugbomah, appointed as an Interim Commercial Board Member, effective from 1st October 2024 until 1 October 2025; and
- Paula Sussex, appointed as an Interim Digital and Data Board Member, effective from 1st October 2024 until 1 October 2025.

Sir Robert Francis KC, the interim Chair of the Infected Blood Compensation Authority, has also appointed three interim Non-Executive Board Members:

- Sir Robert Behrens, appointed as an Interim Community Engagement Board Member, effective from 1st October 2024 until 1 October 2025;
- Helen Parker, appointed as an Interim Community Engagement Board Member, effective from 1st October 2024 until 1 October 2025; and
- Gillian Fairfield, appointed as an Interim Medical Board Member, effective from 1st October 2024 until 1 October 2025.

These short term appointments will support the Infected Blood Compensation Authority to deliver compensation to people who are infected and affected in a timely manner. An open and fair recruitment process will commence in 2025 to fill these posts substantively.

The Government is absolutely committed to acting on the findings of the Infected Blood Inquiry and today's announcement is progress towards that collective aim. I will continue to update the House as we progress work to deliver long overdue compensation to people infected and affected as a result of the Infected Blood Scandal.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Government response to the consultation on long-duration electricity storage**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Energy) (Michael Shanks): [\[HCWS119\]](#)

This government is committed to making Britain a clean energy superpower. I am announcing a further important step enabling this mission: a decision to introduce a cap and floor regime to support investment in the next generation of Long Duration Electricity Storage (LDES) assets.

Our national mission to achieve clean power by 2030 and accelerate to net zero will require the capability to store energy when it is abundant and used when supply is scarce. LDES technologies, which include Pumped Storage Hydropower (PSH) as well as new, innovative solutions like Liquid Air Energy Storage (LAES), are designed to store large quantities of excess electricity, such as that generated by solar and wind during periods of high output, and then supply it back to the grid over periods of several hours or days when it is most needed.

Low carbon long-duration flexibility technologies such as LDES will be pivotal in meeting and maintaining our clean power needs and electricity demand grows. LDES will also diversify our technology mix, giving us greater resilience. And by using renewable energy that can be stored, LDES can help the UK move towards energy independence. Analysis commissioned by government found that in central scenario 20GW of LDES resulted in electricity system savings of £24bn by 2050. This represents a saving to consumers of 3.5% of the total system costs.

However, despite the clear benefits of LDES and the potential for significant expansion, it has been almost forty years since any meaningful new sites were commissioned. This is partly due to uncertainty faced by investors in committing to these complex, long-term projects that have high upfront costs despite having low operating costs. In January 2024, under the previous government, a consultation was published exploring the introduction of an LDES cap and floor investment mechanism. Today I am announcing the publication of the government response to this consultation, in which we set out our decision to introduce a cap and floor investment mechanism.

A cap and floor mechanism is an established way to provide investor confidence and enable investment decisions to be made by project developers. It does this by providing revenue protection (via the revenue floor which is set at a low level) whilst offering benefits to consumers in return by regulating revenue (via the revenue cap). A similar approach has been used successfully to deliver several critical electricity interconnector projects – cables that allow us to trade electricity with overseas markets – without a revenue floor ever being triggered. We are also announcing that Ofgem has also agreed to expand its role in regulating LDES assets, by becoming the investment framework delivery body for LDES, building on their existing role and expertise in already delivering the cap and floor mechanism for electricity interconnection projects.

I would like to thank stakeholders who have taken the time to respond to the previous consultation. My officials will continue working at pace alongside Ofgem to facilitate Ofgem implementing the investment framework as soon as possible. Following this response, we expect the publication of a technical decision document this winter, along with documents by Ofgem as the LDES regulator and investment framework delivery body. We intend for Ofgem to be able to open the investment support scheme to applications from LDES developers in 2025.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Relocation - Development Consent Order Extension****Secretary of State (Steve Reed):**[\[HCWS122\]](#)

This statement concerns the application made under the Planning Act 2008 for the proposed development by Anglian Water for the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Relocation Project.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within three months of receipt of the examining authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline. The Secretary of State received the examining authority's report on the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Relocation Development Consent Order application on 12 July 2024 and the current deadline is 12 October 2024.

The deadline for the decision is to be extended to 12 January 2025 to allow additional time for Defra officials to conduct further consultation on emerging planning policy and analysis of responses to the consultation.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant development consent.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Baby Loss Certificates Extension****Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care) (Karin Smyth):**[\[HCWS123\]](#)

My Hon Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Patient Safety, Women's Health and Mental Health (Baroness Merron) has made the following statement:

I wish to inform the house that an extension to the Baby Loss Certificate Service has been launched.

The Baby Loss Certificate Service is a voluntary scheme to enable parents who have experienced a pre-24 weeks baby or pregnancy loss to record and receive a certificate to provide recognition of their loss if they wish to do so.

Until this extension, this service was only open to parents who experienced a loss since 1 September 2018. We are removing this eligibility restriction so that the service is now available for all historic losses, with no backdate, as well as future losses.

The Baby Loss Certificate Service is not a compulsory certificate, it will remain the choice of all parents how they wish to manage the difficult time around a loss. Its introduction was a recommendation from the [Independent Pregnancy Loss Review](#) published in July 2023, which examined the impact on families of not being able to formally register a baby

or pregnancy loss before 24 weeks gestation. So far, over 50,000 certificates have been issued.

Following this announcement, eligibility will now be:

- Either parent (i.e., mothers, fathers, surrogates) who have experienced a pregnancy loss through miscarriage, ectopic/molar pregnancy or termination for medical reasons at less than 24 weeks gestation (i.e. up to 23 weeks plus 6 days gestation), or pre-28 week baby loss (i.e. up to 27 weeks plus 6 days gestation) for losses prior to October 1992.
- Parents resident in England.
- Parents who have experienced a historic pregnancy loss or experience a future pregnancy loss.
- Parents aged 16 years and over.

Ensuring this important service is available for all losses, regardless of how long ago the loss was or when it may occur in the future, demonstrates this Government's commitment to delivering personalised and compassionate care for women, and support for parents who have suffered a baby loss.

HOME OFFICE

■ Publication of Forensic Information Database Strategy Board Annual Report 2023-24

The Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Dame Diana Johnson):

[\[HCWS120\]](#)

I am pleased to announce that I am, today, publishing the Annual Report of the Forensic Information Database Strategy Board for 2023-24. This report covers the National DNA Database and the National Fingerprints Database.

The Strategy Board Chair, DCC Ben Snuggs, has presented the Annual Report to the Home Secretary (under section 63AB(7)). Publication of the Report is a statutory requirement under section 63AB(8) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 as inserted by section 24 of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The report highlights the continued, fundamental importance of fingerprints and DNA in solving crimes and the key part these biometrics play in bringing offenders to justice, keeping the public safe and preventing harm to potential future victims. I am grateful to the Strategy Board for their commitment to fulfilling their statutory functions.

The report has been laid before the House and copies will be available from the Vote Office. It will also be available on Gov.UK.

PRIME MINISTER**■ Cabinet Committees****Prime Minister (Sir Keir Starmer):****[\[HCWS118\]](#)**

Today I am publishing a Cabinet Committee list. I have placed a copy of the new list in the Libraries of both Houses.