



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 14 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:51 P.M., 14 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Civil Servants

John Glen:

[\[6139\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, how many people, other than special advisers, have been appointed to civil service posts in her 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.

Sarah Sackman:

No appointments to civil service posts in the Attorney General's Office, excluding special advisers, have been made without open competition since 4 July 2024.

■ Attorney General: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7035\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Sarah Sackman:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles to its ministerial cadre/officials, as under previous administrations.

The Attorney General's Office is currently allocated two vehicles including allocated and shared vehicles.

For security reasons specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

The average cost to a department for a single DPC (Department Pool Car) in 2024/25 financial years is £108K per annum.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7036\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, what her Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Sarah Sackman:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles.

The arrangements relating to the using of vehicles in the Government Car Service is set out in the Civil Service Management Code.

There has been no change in this policy since the general election.

■ Crown Prosecution Service

Kim Leadbeater:

[6660]

To ask the Solicitor General, what steps she is taking to ensure transparency in Crown Prosecution Service decisions.

Sarah Sackman:

The Code for Crown Prosecutors makes clear that, when making decisions, prosecutors must be fair and objective and act in the interests of justice. To maintain transparency around its legal decision-making, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has integrated several processes into its working practices to ensure that victims are informed about decisions and the support available to them.

Since January 2020, the CPS has published quarterly bulletins of data tables and summaries of main trends as part of the CPS's commitment to transparency on prosecution performance, which contain performance data on overall prosecution figures, police referrals, and charging rates in a range of offence types. These can be found here: [CPS quarterly data summaries | The Crown Prosecution Service](#).

Transparency is important in particular for victims. Under the Victim Communication and Liaison scheme, in certain circumstances the CPS communicates directly with victims to explain its legal decision-making for charging. It also provides enhanced services to bereaved families of victims, including meetings to explain its legal decisions. To improve this offer, the CPS is testing direct communication of its charging decisions in a small number of regional areas, using victims' preferred method of contact.

Victims may also seek a review of certain CPS decisions not to start a prosecution or to stop a prosecution, under the Victims' Right to Review scheme.

The CPS also engages with communities impacted by hate crime and Violence Against Women and Girls through convening Local Scrutiny Involvement Panels. These panels enable the CPS to explain its role in the criminal justice system and how prosecutors make charging decisions.

Shaun Davies:

[6693]

To ask the Solicitor General, how many cases are awaiting charging decisions by the Crown Prosecution Service for (a) summary only, (b) either way and (c) indictable only offences.

Sarah Sackman:

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

The overall number of cases which were awaiting a charging decision or administrative triage (completed on files sent by the police to the CPS for a charging decision) as of 25 March 2024 was 13,697. This data is provided in line with the last quarterly data release in March 2024. The next quarterly release is due on 17 October 2024 which will be available on the CPS website at [CPS quarterly data summaries | The Crown Prosecution Service](#).

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

This count is of the number of cases, not suspects. A single case may cover one suspect or several. No data is available in the report showing whether the alleged offences are summary, either-way or indictable only. To obtain this information would require a manual review at disproportionate cost.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Audit: Standards

Sarah Green:

[\[7877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of adopting the International Standard on Auditing for Audits of Financial Statements of Less Complex Entities.

Justin Madders:

It is for the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) to decide whether the International Standard on Auditing for Audits of Financial Statements of Less Complex Entities (ISA for LCE) provides proper and proportionate scrutiny of financial statements. The Government expects to see the FRC act in line with the requirements placed on it to consider the proportionality of its decisions and its impacts on economic growth. These requirements will continue to apply to the new Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority (ARGA) once it is created.

Sarah Green:

[\[7878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of planned increases to audit exemption thresholds on rates of tax evasion.

Justin Madders:

The proposal to increase the monetary thresholds for company size are based on findings from a call for evidence on non-financial reporting, which the Department for Business and Trade undertook last year. Most respondents supported amending the qualifying criteria that determine company size, particularly raising the monetary thresholds.

Under the proposals around 14,000 companies will be reclassified from medium-sized to small and therefore may be eligible for the small company audit exemption.

Many of these companies are owned and operated by family members, who are well-versed in the company's operations. The benefits of audit are more limited for such businesses.

■ Business: Regulation

James Wild: [\[6564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an estimate of the total annual cost of regulation to UK businesses.

Justin Madders:

In 2023, the previous government repealed the Business Impact Target (BIT) through the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act. The BIT was the principal mechanism through which government made an estimate of the total annual cost of regulation to UK businesses. In place of that, the reformed Better Regulation Framework encourages an earlier and more thorough assessment of impacts of individual regulatory proposals. This government will use the framework to ensure that new regulations achieve their objectives, with the minimum cost to business and support economic growth. We will set out further proposals for regulatory reform in due course.

James Wild: [\[6565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to reduce the cost of regulation for businesses.

Justin Madders:

It is essential that we identify areas where the costs of regulations may be unnecessarily high and burdensome for businesses. Best practice analysis of regulatory interventions and reforms, as well as monitoring and evaluating the success of interventions will help us understand these issues further. The Department for Business and Trade is in the process of developing an ambitious regulatory reform agenda to ensure that any future regulation or regulatory reform will work for businesses and consumers, and aids economic growth. Our proposals will be set out in due course.

■ Carers: Leave

Ian Lavery: [\[6241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing the same rights to leave for kinship carers as are in place for adoption leave.

Justin Madders:

The Government greatly values kinship carers who come forward to care for children who cannot live with their parents. The Government has committed in the Plan to Make Work Pay to review the system of parental leave to ensure that it better supports working families. We will set out more information in due course.

■ Companies House

Caroline Voaden: [\[7137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring Companies House to carry out checks on the validity of companies addresses when they first register.

Justin Madders:

The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 introduced greater powers to remove false and misappropriated company addresses from the register and more stringent requirements around what constitutes an appropriate address.

It will also introduce compulsory identify verification for company officers. The automated nature of these processes means that they can manage a large amount of data at speed. Verifying an address and a company's link to it, however, would rely on different evidence, requiring much more manual processing. Given Companies House registers over 800,000 companies per year, the vast majority of which are entirely legitimate, the resource demands are likely to be disproportionate and such checks are not currently part of government plans.

■ Construction: Industry

Clive Jones: [\[7088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support the construction industry in (a) Berkshire and (b) the UK.

Sarah Jones:

Our priorities to support growth and investment in the construction sector across the UK include: maximising economic benefits of HMG investment in construction and infrastructure; helping industry become more productive and sustainable, encouraging adoption of new technologies, decarbonisation and greater investment in its workforce; working to improve the business environment including payment practices; and supporting trade and investment in construction products and services.

The Government is working with the construction industry to build capacity and capability to deliver its infrastructure and built environment commitments. The introduction of Skills England will be crucial to providing high quality training for construction workers.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Canada

Andrew Rosindell: [\[5918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has met with the Agent General of (a) Ontario, (b) Quebec, and (c) Saskatchewan since taking his position.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Secretary of State for Business and Trade has not met with the Agent General of Ontario, Quebec or Saskatchewan since taking his position. Canada is a valued partner for the UK and provincial level engagement is an important part of our

bilateral relationship. Our trade relationship – worth £25.8bn in the year to quarter one 2024 – is underpinned by regular engagement, including at the provincial level.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[7006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Justin Madders:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles to its ministerial cadre/officials, as under previous administrations.

The Department for Business and Trade is currently allocated three vehicles including allocated and shared vehicles.

For security reasons specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

The average cost to a Department for a single DPC (Department Pool Car) in 2024/25 financial year is £108K per annum. This includes the cost of a car and driver time.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[7007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Justin Madders:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles.

The arrangements relating to the using of vehicles in the Government Car Service is set out in the Civil Service Management Code.

There has been no change in this policy since the general election.

■ Disclosure of Information

Gareth Snell:

[6379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the (a) Whistleblowing Framework and (b) protections provided to whistleblowers.

Justin Madders:

The whistleblowing framework provides routes for workers to make disclosures about wrongdoing or someone covering up wrongdoing. Workers who blow the whistle are entitled to protection from detriment or dismissal, and have a route to redress where this happens.

In the Plan to Make Work Pay, the Government committed to strengthen protections for whistleblowers, including by updating protection for women who report sexual harassment at work.

Through the Employment Rights Bill [introduced on 10 October], we will make it clear that disclosures about sexual harassment can qualify for whistleblowing protections.

Financial Services: Liechtenstein**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[5919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has met with his counterpart in Liechtenstein to discuss the exchange of financial services.

Gareth Thomas:

Officials at the Department for Business and Trade meet regularly with their counterparts in Liechtenstein to discuss how to increase trade under the UK-EEA/EFTA Free Trade Agreement, including at the annual Services, Investment and Digital sub-committee. The Secretary of State for Business and Trade has not yet met with his counterpart in Liechtenstein to discuss financial services.

Foreign Investment in UK**Mary Glendon:**[\[6234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to increase foreign direct investment in the (a) UK and (b) North East.

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 East specifically, we will support delivery of the North East Mayoral Combined Authority's Local Growth Plan. We will continue showcasing investment opportunities across the North East to potential investors, and provide account management services for investors already in the region to help them build and scale.

■ Foster Care

Anna Dixon:

[\[7201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the New Deal For Working People, what plans he has to change the employment status of foster carers.

Justin Madders:

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

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

■ Fraud: Consumers

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[7505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to (a) reduce and (b) prevent fraud against consumers.

Justin Madders:

DBT supports broader government efforts to tackle fraud through its funding of Citizens Advice and National Trading Standards to advise on and enforce consumer law, including fraud.

DBT is also implementing the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act, which strengthens consumer law enforcement powers and introduces significant new monetary penalties to better deter wrongdoers.

Through the Consumer Protection Partnership, Citizens Advice run an annual Scams Awareness campaign to give consumers the skills to identify scams, share their experiences and gain the confidence to report scams. The next campaign, focusing on financial scams launches on 21 October.

■ Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[7518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the paragraph 52 of the Second Special Report of the Environmental Audit Committee of Session 2019 on Toxic Chemicals in Everyday Life: Government Response to the Committee's Twentieth Report of Session 2017-19, HC160, published on 30 October 2019, what recent progress his Department has made on developing revised regulations to replace the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988; and if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the consultation conducted by the Office for Product Safety and Standards entitled, Smarter Regulation: Fire safety of domestic upholstered furniture on proposals for a new approach to the fire safety of domestic upholstered furniture, which closed on 24 October 2023.

Justin Madders:

Following the formation of the Government in July, the Department for Business and Trade is considering next steps for this important issue, including reviewing the evidence gathered from the 2023 consultation, *Smarter Regulation: Fire safety of domestic upholstered furniture*. The recommendations of the Environmental Audit Committee following the inquiry *Toxic Chemicals in Everyday Life* formed part of the evidence base informing the consultation proposals. The Government will engage with consumer organisations, businesses, and other interested groups and provide updates in due course.

■ Furniture: Fire Prevention

Kim Leadbeater: [\[6661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his Department's policy is on future furniture and furnishings fire safety regulations.

Justin Madders:

The Government is committed to ensuring that only safe products are made available on the UK market, including products that fall under the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988.

Following the formation of the Government in July, the Department for Business and Trade is considering next steps for this important issue, including reviewing the evidence gathered from the 2023 consultation, *Smarter Regulation: Fire safety of domestic upholstered furniture*. The Government will engage with consumer organisations, businesses, and other interested groups and provide updates in due course.

■ Groceries Code Adjudicator

Sir John Hayes: [\[5865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will update the powers of the Groceries Code Adjudicator to increase the maximum fine levy amount.

Justin Madders:

The Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) can impose a financial penalty on a large retailer if, following an investigation, it has been found to have breached the Groceries Supply Code of Practice. The permitted maximum fine is 1% of the retailer's annual UK turnover, giving the Adjudicator significant scope to impose an appropriate fine in the event of non-compliance. The Government will undertake the fourth statutory review of the GCA's effectiveness next year which may also consider whether to change the permitted maximum financial penalty the Adjudicator can impose following an investigation.

■ Postage Stamps: Prices

David Mundell:

[5937]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of Royal Mail's proposed stamp price increases on magazine publishers.

Justin Madders:

The Government does not have a role in Royal Mail's commercial decisions, including the prices of stamps and other services.

In setting its prices, Royal Mail must observe the regulatory framework set by Ofcom which imposes price controls, 'safeguard caps', on certain second-class products to ensure a basic universal service is available to all at affordable prices.

Information on Ofcom's decisions regarding retail price caps on Royal Mail's universal postal services to apply from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027 is available on its website: www.ofcom.org.uk/post/deliveries-and-charges/consultation-review-of-second-class-safeguard-caps-2024.

Kate Osborne:

[6554]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of Royal Mail's proposed stamp price increases on magazine publishers.

Justin Madders:

The Government does not have a role in Royal Mail's commercial decisions, including the prices of stamps and other services.

In setting its prices, Royal Mail must observe the regulatory framework set by Ofcom which imposes price controls, 'safeguard caps', on certain second-class products to ensure a basic universal service is available to all at affordable prices.

Information on Ofcom's decisions regarding retail price caps on Royal Mail's universal postal services to apply from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027 is available on its website: www.ofcom.org.uk/post/deliveries-and-charges/consultation-review-of-second-class-safeguard-caps-2024.

■ Royal Mail: Postal Services

David Mundell:

[5936]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will take steps ensure that second-class Saturday deliveries remain part of the universal service obligation for Royal Mail.

Justin Madders:

Ofcom, as the independent regulator of postal services, is responsible for ensuring the provision of a financially sustainable and efficient universal postal service that meets users' needs.

Ofcom's statement of 5 September set out potential reforms to the universal service obligation and its plans to carry out further in-depth research among postal users. Ofcom expects to publish any proposals for public consultation in early 2025, which will provide an opportunity for interested parties (including magazine publishers) to contribute their views. More information is available on Ofcom's website:

www.ofcom.org.uk/post/royal-mail/securing-the-future-of-the-universal-postal-service.

Kate Osborne: [6553]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will ensure that second-class Saturday deliveries remain part of the Universal Service Obligation for Royal Mail.

Justin Madders:

Ofcom, as the independent regulator of postal services, is responsible for ensuring the provision of a financially sustainable and efficient universal postal service that meets users' needs.

Ofcom's statement of 5 September set out potential reforms to the universal service obligation and its plans to carry out further in-depth research among postal users. Ofcom expects to publish any proposals for public consultation in early 2025, which will provide an opportunity for interested parties (including magazine publishers) to contribute their views. More information is available on Ofcom's website:

www.ofcom.org.uk/post/royal-mail/securing-the-future-of-the-universal-postal-service.

■ Royal Mail: Universal Service Obligation

David Mundell: [5938]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of changes to Royal Mail's universal service obligation on magazine publishers.

Justin Madders:

Ofcom, as the independent regulator of postal services, is responsible for ensuring the provision of a financially sustainable and efficient universal postal service that meets users' needs.

Ofcom's statement of 5 September set out potential reforms to the universal service obligation and its plans to carry out further in-depth research among postal users. Ofcom expects to publish any proposals for public consultation in early 2025, which will provide an opportunity for interested parties (including magazine publishers) to contribute their views. More information is available on Ofcom's website:

www.ofcom.org.uk/post/royal-mail/securing-the-future-of-the-universal-postal-service.

Kate Osborne: [6555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of changes to Royal Mail's universal service obligation on magazine publishers.

Justin Madders:

Ofcom, as the independent regulator of postal services, is responsible for ensuring the provision of a financially sustainable and efficient universal postal service that meets users' needs.

Ofcom's statement of 5 September set out potential reforms to the universal service obligation and its plans to carry out further in-depth research among postal users. Ofcom expects to publish any proposals for public consultation in early 2025, which will provide an opportunity for interested parties (including magazine publishers) to contribute their views. More information is available on Ofcom's website:

www.ofcom.org.uk/post/royal-mail/securing-the-future-of-the-universal-postal-service.

Small Businesses**David Baines:****[6857]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to help support the growth of small businesses.

Gareth Thomas:

Small businesses are the beating heart of our high streets, our communities, and essential to our economic success. The Government will boost small business growth and productivity by delivering upon the commitments within Labour's nine-point Plan for Small Business published prior to the election.

As a first step, we announced on 19th September 2024 new measures to help small businesses and the self-employed tackle the scourge of late payments and long payment terms.

We are also creating opportunities for small businesses to access the finance they need to scale up and to break into new markets through exporting.

Small Businesses: Somerset**Dan Norris:****[5850]**

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

Gareth Thomas:

Small businesses are the beating heart of our high streets, our communities, and essential to our economic success. This Government will hardwire the voice of small business into everything we do.

Businesses in North East Somerset and Hanham can access support through the West of England Growth Hub, which provides businesses of all sizes and sectors with advice and support throughout the business journey.

The Government provides further support for small businesses through Business Support Service, Help to Grow, the UK Export Academy, International Trade Advisors, the Export Support Service, and the British Business Bank.

■ Trade Agreements: Algeria**Sir Gavin Williamson:**[\[6201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to sign a free trade agreement with Algeria.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

In 2023, the UK and Algeria established a Trade Taskforce, a forum for the two countries to discuss how we can strengthen our trade and investment relationship on a regular basis, which may include formal trade agreements. The Taskforce had its inaugural meeting earlier this year, and there was a strong willingness to drive trade between the two countries. There are, presently, no plans for the UK to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement with Algeria.

■ Trade Agreements: Disease Control**Dr Ben Spencer:**[\[7853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many trade agreements require the use of biosecurity (a) facilities and (b) services provided by the Animal and Plant Health Agency in New Haw; and if he will make an estimate of the contribution of these trade agreements to the UK's gross domestic product.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The UK has over 70 trade agreements in place. APHA facilities and services managing the risks posed by animal diseases to human and animal health are crucial to underpinning the biosecurity of imports and exports under all of them.

Published impact assessments for the UK's trade agreements can be found on Gov.uk.

■ Unfair Dismissal**Jim Shannon:**[\[7772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what plans he has to increase employee protection from unfair dismissal.

Justin Madders:

The Government introduced the Employment Rights Bill in the House on 10 October 2024.

The Bill will make basic protection against unfair dismissal a day one right for all employees, ending the current arbitrary system that leaves employees waiting up to two years to access this right.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Baroness Thatcher: Anniversaries****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[5928\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the birth of Margaret Thatcher.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

In line with established precedent, the Government does not formally commemorate the anniversaries of the births of former Prime Ministers.

■ **Cabinet Office: Official Cars****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[6999\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles.

The arrangements relating to the using of vehicles in the Government Car Service is set out in the Civil Service Management Code.

There has been no change in this policy since the general election.

■ **Cabinet Office: Political Impartiality****John Glen:**[\[6149\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what political restrictions apply to Deputy Directors in his Department.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Management Code requires that civil servants in “the politically restricted” category i.e. members of the Senior Civil Service, must not take part in national political activities, must seek permission to take part in local political activities and must comply with any conditions laid down by their department or agency.

Cabinet Office policy aligns to the position as set out in The Civil Service Management Code, and provides additional supporting guidance for staff/managers. There has been no change to this internal policy from when the Rt Hon Member was Minister for the Cabinet Office.

■ Civil Servants

Mr Peter Bedford:

[7343]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what was the full-time equivalent headcount of the civil service in each year between 2010 and 2024.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 4 October 2024 is attached.

Attachments:

1. [Letter from the National Statistician](#) [PQ7343 (1).pdf]

■ Civil Servants and Members

John Glen:

[6086]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance is provided to (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) No.10 political advisers on (i) avoiding conflicts of interest and (ii) the Nolan principles in respect of potential (A) family members and (B) partners who (1) work in the Civil Service or (2) are members of either House.

Georgia Gould:

In line with the Declaration of Interests Policy for special advisers, interests must be declared to their Permanent Secretary in the appointing department for consideration. Steps are then taken to ensure no conflict of interest or mitigate any potential conflict to the satisfaction of the relevant Permanent Secretary. Special advisers' declarations are expected to cover interests of their close family which might be thought to give rise to a conflict.

As set out in the Ministerial Code, there is an established process in place for the declaration and management of ministers' private interests, which ensures that steps are taken to avoid or mitigate any actual or perceived conflicts of interest. Ministers' declarations are expected to cover interests of their spouse or partner and close family which might be thought to give rise to a conflict.

■ Civil Servants: Official Gifts

Lee Anderson:

[6497]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department takes to ensure the acceptance of gifts and hospitality by civil servants comply with Civil Service guidance.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Code states that Civil Servants must not accept gifts or hospitality from anyone which might reasonably be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity. As under the previous government, the Department holds a comprehensive policy and guidance on accepting and giving gifts and hospitality. All

Civil Servants are required to declare gifts and hospitality both given and received via a central register and obtain approvals.

The Gifts and Hospitality process is subject to audit in order to provide confidence that the department is fulfilling its obligation.

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment

John Glen: [6089]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether former (a) Labour Party, (b) Labour Parliamentary and (c) Labour Together staff who have joined the Civil Service under recruitment principles exceptions since 4 July 2024 are permitted to attend Labour Party Conference.

Georgia Gould:

Guidance on attendance at Party Conference for civil servants can be found on gov.uk at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-servants-and-party-conferences-guidance/annual-party-conferences-2024>

John Glen: [6090]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the letter from the First Civil Service Commissioner of 30 August 2024 to Heads of Department on the review of appointments made by exception at delegated grades, when he expects the Commission to complete that review; and if he will publish the data gathered from departments as part of that review.

Georgia Gould:

The timing and publication of the review are matters for the Civil Service Commission, which is operationally independent of the Cabinet Office.

John Glen: [6101]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance the (a) Civil Service Commission, (b) Cabinet Office Ethics and Propriety Team and (c) Cabinet Secretary has given to (i) Ministers and (ii) Permanent Secretaries and Accounting Officers on (1) the involvement of Ministers in Civil Service recruitment and (2) declaring political donations as a Ministerial interest and avoiding related conflicts of interest since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Recruitment Principles set out the parameters for ministerial involvement in Civil Service appointments. These have not changed since the Rt Hon member was a minister in the department.

In August 2024, the First Civil Service Commissioner and the Cabinet Secretary wrote to all ministers setting out this process under the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles - <https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/letter-from-cabinet-secretary-and-first-civil-service-commissioner-to-new-ministers/> .

There is an established process in place for the declaration and management of ministers' private interests.

John Glen: [\[6102\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on the public advertisement of Civil Service appointments (a) at and (b) below SCS level.

Georgia Gould:

1. In May 2022 the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster wrote to cabinet ministers outlining all Senior Civil Service (SCS) jobs must be advertised externally to the public unless an exemption is approved. This continues to be the policy.
1. As under the previous Government, for appointments below SCS level, departments have the authority to determine how they recruit in line with the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles.

■ Civil Service: Standards

John Glen: [\[6072\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the standard of briefing provided to the Prime Minister from the Civil Service; and what steps (a) he and (b) the Cabinet Secretary takes to ensure briefings meet Ministers' (i) requirements and (ii) preferences.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Code requires all civil servants to provide objective information and advice to ministers, and to present the options and facts accurately. The Government will continue to ensure that briefing to Ministers is of a high standard and meets the requirements and preferences of Ministers.

■ Departmental Coordination

John Glen: [\[6082\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, where the Director Generals in charge of the five Mission Delivery Boards will be based; and to whom they will report.

Ellie Reeves:

The lead Secretary of State for each mission chairs the relevant Mission Board, which brings together ministers from across government to drive progress on missions.

Five Directors General (DG) have been selected as Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) for each of the missions. The DG SROs are based in the Department of the lead Secretary of State; their reporting arrangements are the responsibility of the relevant department.

John Glen: [\[7447\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many times each Mission Board has met since 4 July 2024.

Ellie Reeves:

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

■ Deputy Prime Minister: Departmental Responsibilities**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[6394\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Deputy Prime Minister's remit includes responsibility for ethics and integrity in government.

Georgia Gould:

Each minister is responsible for their personal conduct, including upholding the highest standards of propriety and integrity.

Policy responsibility for propriety and ethics in government is held by the Cabinet Office.

■ Devolution: Local Government**Adam Jogee:**[\[6970\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Prime Minister plans to hold the first meeting of the Council of Nations and Regions.

Georgia Gould:

The first meeting of the Council of Nations and Regions took place on Friday 11 September, convening regional Mayors from across England and the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.

This first Council focused on investment and growth, ahead of the International Investment Summit. It was a key step in forging new partnerships across all levels of government, to ensure that all parts of the UK can secure, and benefit from, long term investment. This investment will increase economic growth and raise standards of living across the UK.

■ Employment: Equality**Anna Dixon:**[\[7223\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to enforce equal pay rights in the (a) public and (b) private sector.

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government is committed to ending pay discrimination at work. The plan to Make Work Pay includes clear action to strengthen the right to equal pay. We will put in place measures to ensure that outsourcing of services can no longer be used by employers to avoid paying equal pay, and improve enforcement by establishing an Equal Pay Regulatory and Enforcement Unit. As set out in the King's Speech in July, the upcoming Equality (Race & Disability) Bill will also extend the right to make equal

pay claims to ethnic minority people and disabled people. These steps will apply across both the public and private sectors.

■ Ethics and Integrity Commission

John Glen: [\[6087\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the ethics and integrity commission will have a role in (a) the appointments of (i) unpaid advisers, (ii) special advisers and (iii) civil servants and (b) advising the (A) Prime Minister and (B) other Ministers on the the probity of the political donations they receive.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the right honourable member to the answer given to PQ 1251 on 31 July 2024.

■ Forest Products: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister: [\[8087\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee has had recent discussions on the application of EU Regulation 2023/1115 in Northern Ireland.

Jim Allister: [\[8088\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee's Specialised Committees have had recent discussions on the application of EU Regulation 2023/1115 in Northern Ireland.

Jim Allister: [\[8089\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether (a) the Joint Consultative Working Group has had discussions on the application of EU Regulation 2023/1115 in Northern Ireland and (b) the group's meeting minutes are published.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The UK and EU regularly engage on the Windsor Framework and shared priorities, including the issue of deforestation. As was confirmed in the response to question UIN4798 on 16th September, Ministers are currently considering our approach to those matters, noting also that the EU Commission has proposed to delay the implementation deadlines by 12 months to 30 December 2025. Whilst official level engagement between the UK and EU is confidential, both the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee and its Specialised Committees publish details of their meetings and decisions.

■ Government Departments: Cybercrime

Jim Shannon: [\[7777\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to prevent cyber attacks; and what data his Department holds on the number of cyber attacks against Government infrastructure in the last 12 months.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

I refer the honourable member to my answer from 2 September, (2302) and would add that the UK Government does not comment upon operational security matters.

■ Government Departments: Directors**John Glen:**[\[6088\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to paragraph 56 of the report of the Seventh Report of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee entitled The Role of Non-Executive Directors in Government, Session 2022-23, HC 318, what Government policy is on the replacement of departmental non-executive directors when new Ministers are appointed.

Georgia Gould:

The Corporate Governance Code for Central Government Departments makes clear that Secretaries of State are responsible for appointing non-executive board members. When new Ministers are appointed, they may wish to review the balance of skills and experience the Board requires; the Code recommends that such reviews take place at least annually. There has been no change to the Code since when the Rt Hon member was a Minister in the department.

■ Government Departments: Interpreters**Chris Hinchliff:**[\[7163\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will ensure that Departments only use (a) regulated, (b) registered and (c) qualified interpreters.

Georgia Gould:

Government departments can access interpreters through the Crown Commercial Service's RM6141 Language Services agreement, which offers innovative language solutions tailored to meet the core needs of the public sector.

To secure a place on the RM6141 Language Services framework, all suppliers must be prepared to provide proof of their interpreters' qualifications upon request. The specific level of qualification required will depend on the services being procured. Additionally, when purchasing through this agreement, buyers may request the following information:

- list of qualifications including supporting evidence
- list of security clearances held including supporting evidence
- list of previous experience and supporting evidence
- evidence of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

■ Industrial Disputes: Risk Assessment

John Glen: [\[8131\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024 to Question 4661 on Strike Ballots, whether his Department plans to review the industrial action sections of the National Risk Register.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The UK is facing an ever-changing and growing set of risks. All risks in the National Risk Register are kept under review to ensure that they are the most appropriate scenarios to inform emergency preparedness and resilience activity and to reflect the risk landscape.

■ Infected Blood Compensation Scheme

Andy McDonald: [\[6271\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the Infected Blood Compensation Authority begins (a) assessing claims and (b) making payments before the end of 2024.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Cabinet Office is supporting the Infected Blood Compensation Authority with its aim to design a compensation service that is simple to use, easy to access and securely pays out money as quickly as possible. The Infected Blood Compensation Authority is established in law and work is progressing to put the operational systems in place with the expectation of beginning payments by the end of this year. I will continue to update the House on this matter.

Andy McDonald: [\[6272\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the Infected Blood Compensation Authority can make effective determinations on compensation where medical records of applicants are unavailable.

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[6906\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how the Infected Blood Compensation Authority will determine the date of infection for individuals where no definitive medical records are available; and what criteria will be used to make these determinations.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Given the historic nature of the infected blood scandal, the Government recognises that not all medical records will still be available. The Scheme has been designed to minimise as far as possible the burden on those applying, and as set out in the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme Regulations 2024, eligibility for the Scheme will be determined based on the balance of probabilities. The Infected Blood Compensation Authority will provide assistance to those who believe their medical records have been lost or destroyed.

Sorcha Eastwood:

[6905]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department plans to support the provision of (a) legal advice and (b) advocacy services to potential claimants under the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Infected Blood Compensation Authority will aim to ensure that appropriate advice and support is available to assist people with managing their compensation awards, accessing financial services, and accessing benefits advice where relevant. Sir Robert Francis KC recommended in his report that legal support is available to people who want to claim compensation. The Government accepted this recommendation and is working with IBCA to develop a package of support services.

Sorcha Eastwood:

[6907]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how the infected blood compensation scheme will account for the additional financial burdens experienced by (a) carers and (b) bereaved partners.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Compensation paid through the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme will be calculated in line with tariffs and based on the severity of infection and negative impacts suffered by victims - both infected and affected - in different aspects of their lives. All eligible affected persons will be able to claim in their own right under the Injury Impact and Social Impact categories of award. The care award is not available for affected persons to claim in their own right, as the care awards will be paid to infected persons. However, this can be paid directly to affected persons at the request of an infected person or their estate representative. Where the infected person has very sadly died, the financial loss awards will be paid to affected dependents, which may include bereaved partners.

Sorcha Eastwood:

[6908]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the infected blood compensation scheme will deliver compensation in the event of an infected person's death to (a) their surviving partner and (b) their estate.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Where a person who would have been eligible to apply to the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme as an infected person has died, the personal representatives of the deceased person's estate may apply for compensation on behalf of their estate. People who are affected, such as bereaved partners, can claim compensation in their own right in addition to any claims on behalf of the estate.

Sorcha Eastwood:

[6909]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the option for individual assessment of claims will be made to victims of the infected blood scandal.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Government expects the majority of claims will be made via the tariff-based Core Route. In some exceptional cases however, the level of compensation awarded through the Core Route may not be sufficiently reflective of the financial loss and care costs that a person has experienced as a result of infected blood. This may be the case where, for example, the person had particularly high earnings prior to their infection and therefore suffered greater financial loss, or where they have suffered a particular associated health condition that has necessitated increased levels of care. Where an applicant can demonstrate that their defined circumstances necessitate a higher compensation payment for care and financial loss, they will be able to apply for additional compensation awards through the Supplementary Route.

Population: Advisory Bodies**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[5660\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a cross-government independent advisory body to consider the (a) short and long term effects of population growth in the UK.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

There are no current plans to create an independent advisory body on the effects of population growth. The effects of population growth and other demographic shifts are already considered as part of wider work in government.

Post Codes**Jim Dickson:**[\[7666\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Postcode Address File is critical national infrastructure under the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The National Security and Investment (NSI) Act 2021 does not define "critical national infrastructure".

Prime Minister: Carbon Emissions**John Glen:**[\[6062\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister is taking steps to reduce his carbon footprint during official duties.

Georgia Gould:

Ministerial travel is undertaken using efficient and cost-effective travel arrangements. Security considerations are also taken into account. It has been the practice that official Prime Ministerial flights are carbon offset where that is possible.

■ Prime Minister: Correspondence

John Glen: [6071]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Prime Minister will respond to the correspondence of 7 June 2024 from the FDA to him and the former Prime Minister on opposition costings.

Georgia Gould:

A response has been issued.

■ Prime Minister: Political Office and Special Advisers

John Glen: [6073]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps have been taken to ensure that (a) No.10 special advisers and (b) staff of the No.10 Political Office have access to Government IT equipment with the appropriate level of security.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

Everyone who works with government has a duty of confidentiality and a responsibility to safeguard any government information or data that they access or share, and all government departments are required to meet a range of mandatory security standards. As was the case under previous administrations, political staff are first required to hold the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS). This check verifies an individual's identity, nationality, immigration status, employment history and criminal record. They are then required to undergo more advanced security vetting upon entry.

■ Prime Minister: Public Appointments

John Glen: [6080]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions (a) No.10 special advisers and (b) the No.10 Appointments Team have had with Lord Alli on recommending individuals for public appointments.

John Glen: [6084]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which of the public appointments for which the Prime Minister is responsible are due to be (a) renewed and (b) filled in the next 12 months; what the (i) remit, (ii) salary, (iii) political restrictions, (iv) eligibility requirement and (v) timetable for each appointment is; and what records the No. 10 appointments team keeps in respect of those appointments.

Georgia Gould:

As was the case under previous administrations, public appointments follow the Governance Code on Public Appointments, as set out by the Cabinet Office. Further details can be found at the following link: Governance Code on Public Appointments - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

John Glen: [\[6085\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) envoys, (b) czars, (c) champions and (d) unpaid advisers have been appointed since 4 July 2024; which people in such roles appointed by the last Administration have been dismissed; and what positions and roles established by the last Administration have been discontinued.

Georgia Gould:

Information on the direct ministerial appointments made, or retained, across government by individual departments is not held centrally by the Cabinet Office.

■ Prime Minister: Special Advisers

John Glen: [\[6056\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance her Department issues to special advisers on briefing the media.

Georgia Gould:

The Code of Conduct for Special Advisers is set by the Prime Minister and special advisers are expected to work in line with the Code at all times.

■ Prime Minister: Staff

John Glen: [\[6083\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many staff are seconded to 10 Downing Street from outside Government; what roles those people perform; from which outside body each has been seconded; and what the length of each secondment is.

Georgia Gould:

For management and staffing purposes the Prime Minister's Office is part of the Cabinet Office.

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given by then Cabinet Office Minister Jeremy Quin on 15 June 2023, Official Report PQ 188973

■ Prime Minister: Working Hours

John Glen: [\[6068\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, on how many Fridays the Prime Minister has worked after 6.00pm since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Prime Minister works all the hours required to deliver for the country.

■ Prime Minister's Chief of Staff

John Glen: [\[6070\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of employing the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff as a civil servant.

Georgia Gould:

The Prime Minister has approved the appointment of his Chief of Staff as a special adviser. This has been the case in successive administrations.

■ Prime Minister's Chief of Staff: Civil Servants and Special Advisers**John Glen:**[\[6078\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) civil servants and (b) special advisers are report directly to the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given on Civil Servants supporting the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, Official Report PQ 5307

■ Public Appointments and Recruitment**John Glen:**[\[6091\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the oral answer of the Leader of the House of Lords of 4 September 2024, Official Report, House of Lords, col. 1157, what the Government's policy is on publicly announcing (a) direct ministerial appointments and (b) the appointments of (i) Directors and (ii) Director Generals in the Civil Service.

Georgia Gould:

Direct ministerial appointments are publicly announced at the time of, or soon after, the point at which the appointment itself is made, except on rare occasions for very sensitive roles.

There is no central policy or guidance around publicly announcing the appointment of Directors and Directors General. It is up to individual government departments to decide whether to make an official announcement.

■ Public Appointments: Parental Leave**Jess Asato:**[\[6933\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on (a) maternity and (b) paternity leave for public appointments.

Georgia Gould:

There is a wide variety of public appointments which are made by Ministers. Typically they consist of non-executive positions of a public body, or a member of an advisory committee. A person appointed to such a position is an office holder. Office holders tend not to be employees.

By operation of law, statutory maternity and paternity leave is only available to employees, who are employed under an employment contract and meet the necessary eligibility criteria.

A particular Office holder may be eligible for a form of discretionary leave, but this would be a matter for the relevant appointing authority to determine.

Public Bodies: Disclosure of Information**Gareth Snell:** [\[6380\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government plans to take to help protect whistleblowers from retaliation in the context of the proposed duty of candour for public bodies.

Georgia Gould:

The Prime Minister announced at party conference that the duty of candour Bill will be introduced to Parliament before the next anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster in April 2025. The details of this Bill will be announced first to this House. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) serves to protect workers from suffering any detriment as a result of making a protected disclosure.

Public Sector: Procurement**Alex Burghart:** [\[6417\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 37 of his Department's publication entitled Transforming public procurement, what progress has been made on readying the Central Digital Platform.

Georgia Gould:

The Central Digital Platform is an online system that will be established by the Procurement Act 2023 to improve transparency and efficiency in public procurement.

The Central Digital Platform is currently being developed and will be operational and ready for use when the new procurement regime comes into force on 24 February 2025. Cabinet Office is working with e-procurement systems providers and contracting authorities to ensure their readiness.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Arts****Clive Jones:** [\[7090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support the screen and creative industries in (a) Berkshire and (b) the UK.

Chris Bryant:

Our creative industries showcase the best of our creativity and culture to the world and drive both regional and national growth. They employ over 2 million people, are worth over £124 billion to the UK economy and have seen GVA growth twice that of the national rate. We will ensure that the sector can continue to drive growth, boost opportunities and help people to fulfil their creative potential across the UK, including in Berkshire. Our support includes:

- almost doubling studio capacity through funding for the British Film Commission of £6million over four years, which includes support for Shinfield and Bray studios in Berkshire;
- expanding the global reach of independent content through the £28 million UK Global Screen Fund;
- the screen sector tax relief (for film, high-end TV, animation, children's TV, and video games) which has supported over £9.5 million of production for over 1000 projects; and
- £13.4 million funding between 2022 and 2025 for the UK Games Fund to support independent video games studios and graduate talent.

We're also supporting the next generation of indie films with the introduction of the Independent Film Tax Credit, which will allow eligible films to apply for tax reliefs of 53% on qualifying expenditure up to £15 million, creating jobs and growth.

Opportunities to drive growth exist across the whole of the UK and in places such as Berkshire, which has benefited from the £56 million Creative Industries Clusters programme. This funded the StoryFutures Cluster bringing together creative businesses and universities to provide a research platform to develop cutting edge technologies. We will be launching the next wave of the Clusters programme next year.

Finally, the British Film Institute has committed £34.2 million National Lottery funding over 2023-2026 for education and skills programmes. This includes £8.1 million to develop skills clusters, one of which has been set up in Berkshire, led by Resource Productions, the University of Reading, and Shinfield Studios.

■ Arts: Closures

Ms Polly Billington:

[8306]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an estimate of how many creative industry businesses have closed (a) in Thanet District, (b) in Kent and (c) nationally since 2010.

Chris Bryant:

The Office for National Statistics suggests that between 2014 and 2022, the number of creative industry businesses that closed were:

- 305 in Thanet
- 6,605 in Kent
- 245,850 in England.

Between 2010 and 2018 there were 344,105 creative industry business closures across the UK.

Ms Polly Billington: [8307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an estimate of how many (a) museums and galleries, (b) theatres and opera houses and c) cinemas have closed since 2010.

Ms Polly Billington: [8308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an estimate of how many (a) museums and galleries, (b) theatres and opera houses and (c) cinemas have closed in Thanet District since 2010.

Ms Polly Billington: [8309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an estimate of how many (a) museums and galleries, (b) theatres and opera houses and (c) cinemas have closed in Kent since 2010.

Chris Bryant:

DCMS does not hold information on the number of closures of (a) museums and galleries, (b) theatres and opera houses and (c) cinemas since 2010. However, [DCMS sector economic estimates](#) have business demographics data, which gives insights into the numbers of cultural businesses and the Office for National Statistics has [data on business births and deaths](#).

■ **BBC: Standards****Dr Luke Evans:** [6550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with the BBC board on their work to maintain professional standards within the BBC.

Stephanie Peacock:

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent, but the Secretary of State has sought assurance that the BBC has robust processes in place regarding non-editorial complaints so that it acts at pace and is transparent with the public at the earliest opportunity to ensure trust is maintained.

■ **British Museum: Restitution****Andrew Rosindell:** [5929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with the Director of the British Museum on the long-term ownership of historic artefacts originating from other countries.

Chris Bryant:

No.

■ Cricket: Women

Navendu Mishra:

[\[6579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will take steps to increase participation of (a) girls and (b) women in cricket.

Stephanie Peacock:

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

Sport England's This Girl Can campaign has also inspired millions of women and girls to get active in a way that suits them including through cricket. In addition, Sport England funded the Dream Big Desi Women programme, run together with the ECB, which encouraged 2,000 South Asian women to take up coaching in cricket, with 84% saying they were very likely to take part again in 2023.

■ Cultural Heritage: Coal Fired Power Stations

James Naish:

[R] [\[6733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will support the preservation of a coal-fired power station cooling tower.

Chris Bryant:

The power station at Ratcliffe-on-Soar was previously assessed for protection as a Listed Building in 2017 but deemed not to possess the requisite special architectural or historic interest. A new listing application is currently being assessed by Historic England, which administers the listing process on the Secretary of State's behalf. The application will be determined by DCMS in line with the Secretary of State's Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Civil Servants

John Glen:

[\[6122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many people have been appointed to civil service positions without open competition in her Department since 4 July 2024; what their (a) job titles and (b) salary bands are; and on what basis each was appointed.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 requires that selection to the Civil Service must be on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition. There may be instances where a role may meet the requirements for use of a Civil Service Commission exception. As part of this, the Civil Service Commission requires that departments provide a quarterly return on their use of Exceptions at SCS2 and above. This information can be found on the CSC website.

The information requested could lead to individuals being identified therefore we are not able to provide job titles and salary bands (due to the potentially low numbers of people in each).

The information about the overall number of people who have been appointed to civil service posts in their Department without open competition will take a disproportionate amount of activity to analyse and provide.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government Car Service offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles to its ministerial cadre/officials, as under previous administrations.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is currently allocated 1 vehicle including allocated and shared vehicles.

For security reasons specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

The average cost to a Department for a single Department Pool Car in 2024/25 financial year is £108K per annum.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what her Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government Car Service offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles.

The arrangements relating to the using of vehicles in the Government Car Service is set out in the Civil Service Management Code.

There has been no change in this policy since the general election.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[\[6123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 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.

Stephanie Peacock:

DCMS does not routinely record and collect the reasons for appointees leaving their positions and the reasons why an appointee leaves their role cannot be shared due to GDPR regulations.

Appointments are routinely published and can be found on gov.uk.

Film: Trade Competitiveness**Tom Hayes:**[\[7124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department is taking steps to support the visual effects industry in the context of the competitive international market.

Chris Bryant:

The government is committed to supporting the UK's visual effects (VFX) industry, ensuring that they remain competitive and with international reach.

The government will continue to ensure tax incentives are modern, agile, competitive and attractive.

We will also continue to focus on maintaining a strong and globally competitive film and tv industry by supporting investment in infrastructure; fostering innovation; working with industry on skills development; and promoting independent content.

The government will continue to engage with sector organisations such as the UK Screen Alliance to support and champion our award winning VFX talent and make the UK an attractive and competitive place to do business.

Football: Colne Valley**Paul Davies:**[\[7289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department is taking steps to (a) help build new grassroots football facilities and (b) renovate existing pitches for grassroots football in Colne Valley constituency.

Stephanie Peacock:

High-quality, inclusive facilities help clubs to get more people active and by backing these clubs, the Government will support more people to get onto the pitch wherever they live.

Colne Valley constituency has benefitted from £40,798 of DCMS investment across five sites under the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities programme to date.

The Government will invest £123 million throughout 2024/25 to build and upgrade pitches and facilities UK wide. Funding from the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme is invested in England through Sport England and our delivery partner, the Football Foundation.

The Football Foundation plans their investment pipeline based on Local Football Facility Plans (LFFPs). These plans have been developed in partnership with local

authorities and are in the process of being refreshed to reflect the current landscape. The existing LFFP for Colne Valley, Kirklees can be found by visiting the Football Foundation's [website](#).

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

■ Football: Ethnic Groups

Paul Davies: [\[7290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps with relevant football bodies to help increase British Asian representation in football (a) on and (b) off the pitch.

Stephanie Peacock:

We welcome the football industry's ongoing commitment to provide fair opportunities for all. Since the publication of the independent Fan-Led Review in November 2021, the football leagues and the sport's national governing body, the Football Association (FA), have introduced enhanced equality requirements for football clubs. It is ultimately for the FA to decide on the specific aims and appropriate initiatives to increase diversity and inclusion in the sport.

The Code for Sports Governance sets out the standards all sporting organisations must meet in return for public funding from either UK Sport or Sport England. Sports organisations at Tier 3 of the Code, which includes the FA, are required to agree a diversity and inclusion action plan (DIAP) with Sport England and/or UK Sport, which will be published and updated annually.

The Government acknowledges that there is still more progress to be made and will continue to work with the leagues, the FA, and other organisations on this.

■ Football: Sportsgrounds

Paul Davies: [\[7291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with the Football Association on increasing funding for drainage works on grass pitches.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to helping all sports adapt to the impacts of climate change and works closely with the Football Association to improve the drainage facilities for grassroots football pitches. The Football Foundation, funded by the Government, the FA, and the Premier League, provides grants to help grassroots facilities improve pitch drainage and respond to the impacts of heavy rainfall.

■ **Gambling: Mobile Phones**

John Slinger:

[\[6915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of gambling companies' use of mobile phone apps on the addictive nature of their products for users.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government recognises the impact harmful gambling can have on individuals and their families and, as stated in its manifesto, is committed to strengthening the protections for those at risk and working with industry on how to ensure responsible gambling.

The Gambling Commission's new survey, the Gambling Survey for Great Britain, helps to show the wider picture of gambling activity across Great Britain, including the ways people gamble. We will consider the best available evidence from a wide range of sources, to inform decisions on how best to fulfil the manifesto commitment to reduce gambling-related harm.

■ **Holiday Accommodation: Regulation**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[6551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the potential impact of proposals for the regulation of short-term lets on the tourism industry.

Chris Bryant:

Short-term lets are integral to our visitor economy and we know they bring a range of benefits to the UK on a national and local scale. We believe that communities in tourism hot spots need to be able to benefit from a thriving tourism sector, but they also must be able to access genuinely affordable housing to rent or buy in their local area. DCMS and MHCLG continue to discuss their respective policies to ensure a joined up approach that looks at the short-term lets sector as a whole. DCMS will be examining the impact of the registration scheme for short-term lets on the sector through an impact assessment and will update in due course.

■ **Internet: Northern Ireland**

Claire Hanna:

[\[6604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of developing a unique IP address for Northern Ireland residents to prevent geo blocking of Irish sports coverage from Ireland.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government recognises the importance of residents of Northern Ireland being able to access coverage of important sporting and other cultural events that are relevant to communities across the island of Ireland.

While decisions on the coverage of sporting events are for rights holders and broadcasters to make independent of their respective Governments, we would encourage sports rights holders and relevant broadcasters to have in place suitable arrangements to ensure Northern Ireland residents can continue to access sports coverage from Ireland.

Given the cross-border nature of the concerns raised, I have also asked my officials to discuss these issues with their counterparts in the Irish Government.

■ Local Press

Dr Luke Evans: [\[6549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support local journalism.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Culture Secretary has announced our intention to develop a local media strategy, in recognition of the importance of this vital sector and with a view to helping ensure it can continue to tell the stories that matter in communities. We are working across Government as we develop this strategy and see how we can improve local communities' access to news.

■ Loneliness: Men

Paul Davies: [\[7296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to tackle loneliness in men aged (a) 18 to 30, (b) 30 to 60 and (c) over 60.

Paul Davies: [\[7297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department plans to take to work with (a) community organisations and (b) mental health services to support the creation of networks for men experiencing loneliness.

Stephanie Peacock:

Chronic loneliness (feeling lonely often or always) can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender or background, although some groups, such as young people aged 16-25, are known to be at a higher risk. The government's current work to tackle loneliness supports organisations working with a diverse range of groups at risk of chronic loneliness to take action. This includes delivering the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund, a grant fund designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England.

We also support a range of organisations through the Tackling Loneliness Hub, an online platform for professionals working to reduce loneliness, and provide advice on loneliness through the [Better Health: Every Mind Matters campaign's advice pages](#).

The government is committed to continuing to tackle loneliness and to support people to connect with others. We will continue to engage with a wide range of

organisations, including community organisations and health providers, as part of this work.

■ Music: Finance

Kate Osborne: [\[6556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a voluntary grassroots contribution on arena and festival tickets to support the grassroots music sector.

Kate Osborne: [\[6557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of putting the agent of change on a statutory footing to support grassroots music venues.

Kate Osborne: [\[6558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will institute a fan-led review of the music industry.

Chris Bryant:

The Government will respond to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's report on grassroots music venues in the coming weeks, including its recommendations on a ticket levy, the agent of change principle, and a fan-led review of live and electronic music. To support fans, we will launch a consultation on new protections for ticket resales in the autumn alongside a call for evidence on price transparency.

We are encouraged to see the music industry exploring a voluntary levy to sustain the flow of talented musicians throughout the music ecosystem, from grassroots to the main stage. The Secretary of State and I [*Minister Bryant*] look forward to meeting Mark Davyd, CEO of Music Venue Trust later this month to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the grassroots music sector, where the recommendations set out in the Select Committee's report will be discussed.

■ Music: Tickets

Claire Hazelgrove: [\[7251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help ensure (a) fair access to tickets for music artists and (b) that tickets are not sold for higher prices on secondary sites.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is clear that fans should be kept at the heart of live events, and we are concerned to see vastly inflated prices excluding many fans from having the opportunity to enjoy their favourite musicians.

We have committed to introducing new protections for consumers on ticket resales, and we will launch a consultation in the autumn to seek views on potential options.

Alongside the consultation we will publish a call for evidence on price transparency for live events tickets which will include dynamic pricing.

We recognise that this is a complex area, and will work with artists, industry and fans to create a fairer system that ends the scourge of touts, rip-off resales and ensures tickets are available at fair prices.

■ **Television Licences: Non-payment**

Sir John Hayes: [\[5868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make it her policy to decriminalise non-payment of the television licence fee.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Culture Secretary believes it is important that the television licence fee has a fair enforcement regime that does not disproportionately impact vulnerable people.

As part of the next Charter Review, the government will engage with the BBC and others to consider how to ensure the BBC thrives well into the next decade and beyond. This will include discussions on a range of important issues, including future funding models for the BBC, and their enforcement.

DEFENCE

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

David Taylor: [\[900607\]](#)

What steps he is taking to support people and organisations wishing to donate and deliver vehicles to Ukraine.

Luke Pollard:

We welcome support for Ukraine from across civil society. In coordination with the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Business and Trade (DBT) cohere donation offers from industry and assists companies in achieving this goal. DBT regularly meets with defence and security trade associations to discuss requirements, based on Ukraine's specific requests for equipment.

■ **Armed Forces: Electronic Warfare**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how a direct entry for cyber military recruits will (a) operate and (b) differentiate to the regular entry route to the Army.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which (a) branch and (b) unit of the armed forces will direct entry cyber military recruits fall under.

Luke Pollard:

The Direct Entry Cyber Pathway is still being set up; part of the development work is to establish which Branch and Units of the Armed Forces direct entry recruits will fall under. The intent is that entrants, once trained, will operate in a range of units across Defence.

How this pathway will differ to the current entry route to the British Army, as well as the other Services, will be determined as the scheme progresses.

We hope to announce further details in due course.

■ Armed Forces: Families**Alison Hume:**[\[900601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve service life for serving personnel and their families.

Al Carns:

I recognise the urgent need to transform the way we support our people and their families. The men and women of our Armed Forces and those who support them are at the heart of our Defence planning. Since July this Government has delivered the largest pay rise for the Armed Forces in over 20 years and have committed to strengthening the Armed Forces Covenant by bringing it into law.

■ Armed Forces: Housing**Helen Morgan:**[\[1829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will make military service family accommodation subject to the decent homes standard.

Helen Morgan:[\[1830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to improve the quality of accommodation for (a) service people and (b) their families.

Helen Morgan:[\[8260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department plans to respond to Questions 1829 and 1830 on Armed Forces: Housing tabled by the Hon. Member for North Shropshire on 25 July 2024 for answer on 30 July 2024.

Luke Pollard:

This Government is committed to setting new minimum standards for military housing. We are assessing options to drive up standards and deliver the homes our Service families deserve. As a first step, we are establishing an Armed Forces Commissioner as an independent champion for our service personnel to raise issues which impact on service life, including housing.

This Government continues to invest to improve the quality of UK Service Family Accommodation (SFA). In 2024-25, £180 million is allocated to improve insulation in c600 homes, implement c1,000 long-term damp and mould remediations and

refurbish 200 long-term empty homes. 1,700 minor damp and mould improvement packages are planned, and 30 more homes will receive upgraded heating solutions.

A Single Living Accommodation (SLA) Expert Group, including Defence Infrastructure Organisation and Top-Level Budget representatives is continuing to address Defence Minimum Standard measures to improve the quality of SLA.

The Department is looking at the recommendations of the Kerslake Review which reported before the General Election.

■ Armed Forces: Private Education

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to monitor the potential impact of removing the VAT exemption on independent school fees on service families in receipt of the Continuity of Education Allowance.

Al Carns:

The Secretary of State has noted the contents of the HM Treasury Technical Note (Applying VAT to Private School Fees and Removing the Business Rates Charitable Rates Relief for Private Schools), which was recently the subject of public consultation. The Ministry of Defence is contributing to government-wide work to monitor closely the impact of these policy changes on affected military and diplomatic families, with the upcoming Spending Review being the right time to consider any changes to this scheme.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési: [\[7840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many children are educated with financial assistance from the Continuity of Education Allowance.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési: [\[7842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel receive the Continuity of Education Allowance.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési: [\[7843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual cost to the public purse is of the Continuity of Education Allowance.

Al Carns:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) recognises the unique circumstances faced by our serving personnel and that frequent mobility can disrupt children's education. The Continuity of Education Allowance helps by providing the children of serving personnel with a stable education that would not otherwise be available in the state-maintained day school sector, due to their family's mobility.

For Academic Year 2023-24, the MOD paid £88.6 million for Continuity of Education Allowance to support the education of 4,005 children for 2,666 Service personnel.

■ Armed Forces: Rehabilitation

Lillian Jones:

[\[900608\]](#)

If he will review his Department's policy on the rehabilitation of armed forces (a) personnel and (b) applicants graded as medically unfit.

AI Carns:

The UK is a world leader in military rehabilitation and provides a comprehensive tiered rehabilitation service for Armed Forces personnel extending from the more minor to the most severe injuries.

The medical entry standards for Armed Forces applicants were updated in August 2024 following an intensive period of review of undertaken by clinical experts, Defence personnel and the recruiting agencies.

■ AUKUS: Canada

Andrew Bowie:

[\[5346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the requirement to secure critical minerals supply chains for the development of the AUKUS agreement.

Andrew Bowie:

[\[5347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of inviting Canada to join Pillar II of the AUKUS agreement.

Andrew Bowie:

[\[5348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with (a) the United States and (b) Australia on the potential merits of expanding Pillar II of the AUKUS agreement to include Canada.

Luke Pollard:

In recognition of the enduring partnership the UK holds with Canada, alongside Canada's close bilateral defence partnerships with each member of AUKUS, the Prime Minister, President Biden and Prime Minister Albanese, announced on 17 September that we were consulting with Canada, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea to identify possibilities for collaboration on advanced capabilities under AUKUS Pillar II. This collaboration on a project by project basis was discussed again at the AUKUS Defence Ministers Meeting in London on 26 September.

Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom continue to work together as members of the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP), a collaboration of 14 countries and the European Union, to catalyse public and private investment in responsible critical minerals supply chains globally.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Sir Julian Lewis: [\[7711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of ceding sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius on the security of the Diego Garcia strategic base; whether he consulted Lord Robertson of Port Ellen in his capacity as Head of the Strategic Defence Review before this decision was taken; and whether the Government negotiated enforceable guarantees to prevent the use of other Chagos Islands to (a) spy upon and (b) otherwise compromise the military utility of the Diego Garcia strategic base.

Luke Pollard:

This historic agreement protects the long-term secure operation of the UK-US base on Diego Garcia with Mauritius, 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. This deal has been welcomed by a range of key international partners, including the US and India. It is our intention to pursue ratification in 2025 by submitting the treaty and a Bill to Parliament for scrutiny.

■ Defence: International Cooperation

Warinder Juss: [\[900603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve the defence relationship with European allies.

Luke Pollard:

Resetting our relationship with European allies is a top priority for this Government. We are doing so through the negotiation of ambitious bilateral agreements, and closer working with NATO and JEF partners. Our work on a UK-German defence agreement continues at pace, to deepen co-operation on defence and security.

■ Defence: Procurement

James Cartlidge: [\[5334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which procurement programmes are affected by the Joint Declaration on Enhanced Defence Cooperation between Germany and the United Kingdom, signed on 24 July 2024.

Luke Pollard:

The Joint Declaration, which Minister Pistorius and the Defence Secretary signed in Berlin on 24 July, sets out the UK and Germany's joint commitment to improve and further enhance bilateral defence cooperation, including by strengthening our defence industries. The Declaration does not directly impact specific programmes; we are currently exploring opportunities to deepen industrial cooperation, including exploring potential new bilateral programmes.

■ France: Defence**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[5923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has met with his counterpart in France since taking up his position.

Luke Pollard:

Since taking up his position the Defence Secretary has met with his French counterpart Sebastian Lecornu. Their first meeting was on 23 July 2024 in Paris.

■ Gaza: Air Force**Imran Hussain:**[\[6280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether information from Israeli sources has been used to inform the operation of surveillance flights conducted by the RAF over Gaza since 1 December 2023.

Luke Pollard:

The unarmed UK surveillance aircraft are employed for the sole purpose of increasing our chances of locating the hostages. We are unable comment further on detailed intelligence matters for operational security reasons.

■ Global Combat Air Programme**James Cartlidge:**[\[7495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the core Global Combat Air Programme will be piloted.

Luke Pollard:

The Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) core aircraft is being designed to be crewed when it comes into service, but the programme sustains an important technological and industrial pathway to developing advanced uncrewed capabilities. That will allow the programme to maximise the benefits of autonomy and artificial intelligence in a crewed aircraft and explore options for wider uncrewed systems to augment its capabilities.

■ Intelligence Services: Detainees**Imran Hussain:**[\[6278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure compliance by personnel with the Government's Consolidated Guidance to Intelligence Officers and Service Personnel on the Detention and Interviewing of Detainees Overseas, and on the Passing and Receipt of Intelligence Relating to Detainees, published in July 2010, in the context of intelligence received from Israeli sources.

Imran Hussain:[\[6279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure compliance by personnel with the Government's Principles relating to the detention and interviewing

of detainees overseas and the passing and receipt of intelligence relating to detainees, published in July 2019, in the context of intelligence received from Israeli sources.

Luke Pollard:

The Principles relating to the detention and interviewing of detainees overseas, which replaced the Cabinet Office Consolidated Guidance, apply to and must be followed by members of the Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence employees. The Principles apply to all nations.

As part of pre-deployment procedures, Defence personnel receive theatre specific training, which includes guidance and training on The Principles for personnel who may need to apply it in their work.

If Defence personnel receive intelligence from a foreign authority that has originated from a detainee and there is a risk the detainee has been or will be subject to human rights violations, then a formal assessment of the situation is undertaken and if the concerns remain valid, Defence Ministers will consider a full range of appropriate actions.

■ **Israel: Air Force**

John McDonnell: [\[5835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Israeli Air Force operated aircraft (a) landed in and (b) took off from British owned territory from 6 February to 4 July 2024.

Luke Pollard:

For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the Ministry of Defence will neither confirm, deny, nor comment on any foreign nations' military aircraft movement or operations within UK airspace or UK overseas bases.

John McDonnell: [\[5836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Israeli Air Force operated aircraft have (a) landed and (b) taken off from British territory since 5 July 2024.

Luke Pollard:

For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the Ministry of Defence will neither confirm, deny, nor comment on any foreign nations' military aircraft movement or operations within UK airspace or UK overseas bases.

■ **Military Decorations**

Chris Hinchliff: [\[7160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to reform the military honours system to allow those serving in operations abroad to receive appropriate honours upon completion of their service.

Al Carns:

Between 2012 and 2014, Sir John Holmes conducted an independent review of the policy governing the award of military medals. Sir John's reviews were subject to

detailed discussion by the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals and the conclusions submitted for Royal approval. There are no plans for a further review on that scale at this time; however, the medallic system continues to evolve to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose as the environment within which our personnel operate changes.

■ Ministry of Defence Police

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[\[6041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made a risk assessment of the potential withdrawal of Ministry of Defence Police from (a) DM Gosport and (b) other Defence Munition sites.

AI Carns:

We take the security of our establishments very seriously and have a range of measures in place to ensure the integrity of our arrangements. These measures are kept under constant review and adjusted according to the threat. It is, however, long standing policy that we do not comment on the detail of those arrangements.

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[\[6046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the workspace for Ministry of Defence Police at (a) DM Gosport and (b) other Defence Munition sites.

AI Carns:

Defence site owners complete generic site assessments. The Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) assess the adequacy of their direct workspace, such as officer environs, and ensure equipment and vehicles are fit for officers to perform their duties safely and effectively.

The MOD takes the security of Defence people, assets and sites extremely seriously and MDP works with MOD stakeholders to manage and mitigate any risk to MOD security and to ensure that MDP deployment is optimised across Defence sites.

■ Ministry of Defence Police: Labour Turnover

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[\[6045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is making to improve retention rates in the Ministry of Defence Police.

AI Carns:

The Department has approved a new package of regional and function allowances that significantly improve the attractiveness of the overall pay offer for joining the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) and aligns to those of its counterparts in Home Office Forces. In addition, the MDP has increased the regularity of its recruitment campaigns and introduced a combination of regional and national entry routes. The MDP has also rolled out new equipment to its officers to enhance their working conditions.

■ Ministry of Defence Police: Recruitment**Dame Caroline Dinenge:** [\[6044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to recruit new officers to the Ministry of Defence Police.

AI Carns:

There are currently recruitment and retention issues affecting policing nationally. To counteract this, we target our recruitment campaigns in locations facing the most acute recruitment challenges, and we use a variety of outreach methods to promote opportunities to join the Force, including social media; events; briefings; and our recruitment website. Recruitment levels are kept under constant review and are driven by Defence requirements and operational need.

■ Ministry of Defence Police: Staff**Dame Caroline Dinenge:** [\[6043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of staff that the Ministry of Defence Police will have in the 2025-26 financial year; and whether a risk assessment was undertaken when determining this.

AI Carns:

The officer requirement for 2025-26 is dependent on a number of factors including operational need and changes in Defence priorities. We take the security of our establishments very seriously and have a range of measures in place to ensure the integrity of our arrangements. These measures are kept under constant review and adjusted according to the threat. It is, however, long standing policy that we do not comment on the detail of those arrangements.

■ Ministry of Defence: Arden Strategies**Kit Malthouse:** [\[5602\]](#)

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

AI Carns:

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

■ Ministry of Defence: Land**Ruth Jones:****[900605]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he is taking steps to prevent trail hunting on land owned or managed by his Department.

Luke Pollard:

The Department is currently reviewing its position on trail hunting that takes place on the Defence Estate. I would like to stress that no licences to trail hunt on Ministry of Defence land have been granted for the 2024-25 hunting season, whilst I work with colleagues across Government to ensure any decision is understanding of rural communities, and animal welfare.

■ Ministry of Defence: Public Appointments**John Glen:****[6134]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

Al Carns:

The Department has not removed any direct Ministerial appointees or public appointees from their posts.

No direct Ministerial appointees or public appointees have been asked to resign.

The Department has made no statutory direct Ministerial appointments.

The Department has made eight non-statutory direct Ministerial appointments.

These are as follows:

Strategic Defence Review (SDR) 2024

Lead reviewer- Lord Robertson of Port Ellen

Reviewer - Dr Fiona Hill

Reviewer - General Sir Richard Barrons

Review Team Expert - Rt Hon Sir Jeremy Quin

Review Team Expert - Edward Dinsmore

Review Team Expert - Robin Marshall

Review Team Expert - Grace Cassy

AUKUS

UK Government's AUKUS Adviser - Sir Stephen Lovegrove

The Department has made four other public appointments.

These are as follows:

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Non-Executive Director - Mark Wild
Defence Infrastructure Organisation
Non-Executive Director - Sarah Albon
Non-Executive Director - Eloise Francis
UK Hydrographic Office
Non-Executive Director - Tom Betts

■ RAF Akrotiri

John McDonnell: [\[5840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any Israeli Air Force operated planes have landed at RAF Akrotiri since 7 October 2023.

Luke Pollard:

For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the Ministry of Defence will neither confirm, deny, nor comment on any foreign nations' military aircraft movement or operations within UK airspace or UK overseas bases.

■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Strikes

James Cartlidge: [\[5336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to mitigate the potential impact of Royal Fleet Auxiliary strike action.

Al Carns:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continues to engage with the Maritime Trade Unions, who represent members of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA), to discuss a resolution to the on-going RFA pay dispute.

While the pay dispute is the immediate concern, we are committed to improving the RFA "offer" to ensure it remains competitive in the long-term. The RFA 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 MOD operates a whole force model, bringing military, civilian and contracted staff together to deliver its defence outcomes; we continue to proactively collaborate with our stakeholders and partners to sustain outputs whilst discussions with the Maritime Trade Unions remain ongoing.

■ Skynet

James Cartlidge: [\[6342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the period until the launch of the SKYNET 6A satellite has been extended.

Luke Pollard:

The launch date for SKYNET 6A satellite has been adjusted on advice from Airbus Defence and Space due to a combination of factors including a key component quality control issue.

■ South Africa: War Graves**Alex Easton:****[5763]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to help ensure the maintenance of the graves of British servicemen in Simon's Town, South Africa.

Al Carns:

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) maintain 185 graves, mostly of the fallen from the two World Wars at Dido Valley Cemetery, and (on behalf of the Ministry of Defence) 41 graves from the Anglo-Boer War at the Seaforth Cemetery in Simon's Town, South Africa.

Maintenance includes ensuring that headstones and memorials are kept clean and in good condition through repair of weather or other damage, and that the surrounding gardens are also in keeping with CWGC standards. Further detail can be found at <https://www.cwgc.org/our-work/caring-for-our-sites/>.

■ Submarines**Fred Thomas:****[900609]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure the future of the UK's submersible capabilities.

John Healey:

This Government's unwavering commitment to the triple lock to our nuclear deterrent is underpinned by major infrastructure programmes underway on the Clyde and in Devonport and the Dreadnought submarine programme in Barrow-in-Furness.

Our commitment to SSN-AUKUS and the increased use of uncrewed submersibles will also modernise the Royal Navy's subsea capabilities.

■ USA: Military Bases**John McDonnell:****[5841]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the US air force has used UK military bases (a) in Britain and (b) elsewhere for the transport of (i) military equipment and (ii) munitions to Israel since 7 October 2023.

Luke Pollard:

For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the Ministry of Defence will neither confirm, deny, nor comment on any foreign nations' military aircraft movement or operations within UK airspace or UK overseas bases.

■ Veterans: Departmental Responsibilities

Lincoln Jopp:

[\[900599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will have discussions with the Prime Minister on the potential merits of making the Minister with responsibility for veterans a member of the Cabinet.

John Healey:

It is my personal responsibility to represent veterans at Cabinet and I am proud to do it.

With the Office for Veterans Affairs now part of the MOD and the Minister for Veterans and People working across Government and with veteran groups, we are determined to bring forward a range of action to better serve our veteran community, including ensuring HM Armed Forces Veteran Cards to be used as voter identification, waiving visa fees for non-UK veterans who have served for four or more years and their dependents, and putting the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law.

■ Veterans: Emergency Services

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[6676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of utilising veterans with specific skill sets in emergency services immediately on re-entering civilian life without extensive training.

Al Carns:

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country. We are committed to making sure veterans make full use of the skills, qualifications and capabilities they gained in the military after they leave the Armed Forces. An aligned employment support offer for veterans and their families is key to achieving this, bringing together the newly refreshed Career Transition Partnership, Veterans' Sector-Based Employment Pathway and Defence Relationship Management, as well as partners across Government and civil society. For example, the NHS recognise the range of benefits that veterans and members of the Armed Forces community have to offer their organisation, as demonstrated through the dedicated 'Step into Health' recruitment pathway across NHS England.

■ Veterans: Identity Cards

Tom Hayes:

[\[5468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to increase the uptake of veteran ID cards by eligible veterans who were discharged before December 2018.

AI Carns:

I can confirm this Government is absolutely committed to expanding the use of the Veteran Card and continues to assess options to increase uptake, with around 270 applications per day being received.

As per our manifesto commitment, work is being undertaken to further expand the benefits of having a card, including making the Veteran Card an accepted form of Voter ID. I am also pleased to note that the card has recently become an accepted form of ID on British Airways domestic flights.

Extensive communications have been issued by the Ministry of Defence in relation to the application service for the HM Armed Forces Veteran Card Scheme and applications have also opened for veterans in prison as part of the rehabilitation process.

I also recognise the vast demographic of the veterans' community and therefore continue to ensure paper applications are also available for those not digitally able to apply via the online route.

Tom Hayes:[\[5472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veteran ID cards have been distributed in each local authority area to veterans who left service before December 2018.

AI Carns:

The HM Armed Forces Veteran Card Scheme has had a two-phase rollout. Phase 1 is complete; all Service leavers since December 2018 automatically receive a Veteran Card from the Ministry of Defence as part of their Service Leaver Pack.

Phase 2 extends access to the Veteran Card to those who left before December 2018. The new digital application and verification service launched at 00:01 on 28 January 2024 allowing pre-2018 veterans to apply for the card.

The current delivery contract allows for the production of 50,000 Phase 2 pre-2018 veteran cards per month and are issued within an average of 15 calendar days from date of application receipt. As of 12 September 2024, there have been a total of 143,380 Phase 2 applications received, and 133,387 cards issued. Demand is determined by the number of veterans who choose to apply and not the overall number of veterans in the UK.

The attached table shows the total number of Phase two cards distributed by postal county.

Attachments:

1. [Veterans ID cards posted by County](#) [5472 - Veteran Cards Posted by County.xlsx]

■ Veterans: Radiation Exposure**Sir John Hayes:** [\[5530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 1875 on Armed Forces: Radiation Exposure, which stakeholders he plans to consult on the commemorative medal criteria.

AI Carns:

The review of the eligibility criteria for the Nuclear Test Medal will necessarily require consultation with other Government Departments including the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and the Cabinet Office. Any proposed changes to the criteria would have to be agreed by the Cabinet Office Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (HD Committee) and approved by His Majesty The King.

I am committed to continuing to engage with the nuclear test veteran community on this and other concerns.

Sir John Hayes: [\[5531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will meet nuclear test veterans to discuss compensation.

AI Carns:

I am committed to regularly meeting with veterans to learn about their experiences and understand how the Government can provide the right support to them.

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country. I have already met with parliamentary colleagues and representatives of the nuclear test veteran community. I remain committed to continuing that engagement to thank nuclear test veterans for their service and to further understand their current concerns.

Grahame Morris: [\[5569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will return blood and diagnostics tests taken after detonation to UK nuclear test veterans.

AI Carns:

I have met with representatives of the nuclear test veteran community and am committed to continuing that engagement to consider the concerns raised, including looking into questions raised on medical records.

Nuclear test veterans can request access to their personal information held by the Ministry of Defence about their time in the military, including Service and Medical records. To do so they need to submit a Subject Access Request (SAR) under the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA).

Sir John Hayes:

[5866]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to estimate the (a) cost of and (b) number of claimants in the legal action launched by nuclear veterans in March 2024.

AI Carns:

To date, claims have been received from five individuals, identified by their solicitors as the representative claimants. The claimants' solicitors have indicated that there is a wider pool of claimants including family members that are alleged to have been affected. With only limited information currently available, it is not possible to estimate either the cost of or number of claimants.

Grahame Morris:

[6025]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to establish a public inquiry on the effects of nuclear testing between 1952 and 1967 on veterans.

AI Carns:

The Government is deeply grateful to all those who participated in the UK Nuclear testing programme. Almost 5,000 Nuclear Test Medals have now been issued to recognise the service of those who worked on the programme, along with other activity including a Government-funded oral history project.

The Defence Secretary has, as a priority, asked officials to review the eligibility criteria for the Nuclear Test Medal and this work is underway. I have met with representatives of the nuclear test veteran community and am committed to continuing that engagement to consider the concerns raised, including looking into questions raised on medical records.

EDUCATION

■ Academies Enterprise Trust

Priti Patel:

[6155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she received notice from the Academies Enterprise Trust of its proposed change of name to Lift Schools; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of this name change on public confidence in the trust.

Catherine McKinnell:

Academies Enterprise Trust informed the department of its intention to change name as part of the department's regular engagement with them and subsequently confirmed this in writing.

Academy trusts may change their name but must notify Companies House and the department once they have decided to do so.

It is for a trust to determine its name and consider how this affects its public image.

■ Apprentices: Taxation**Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[7340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the growth and skills levy is available to people of all (a) ages and (b) levels.

Janet Daby:

The department's reformed growth and skills levy will deliver greater flexibility for employers and learners and is aligned with the government's industrial strategy, both of which will create routes into good, skilled jobs in growing industries, such as in construction, digital and green skills.

This government has a driving mission to break down barriers to opportunity, which means rebalancing levy spending towards young people at the start of their careers whilst ensuring that adults at different stages of their lives can upskill and retrain. The department is developing new foundation apprenticeships in targeted sectors that will help to give more young people a foot in the door and support clear pathways into work-based training and employment.

However, in order to do this, there are tough choices that need to be taken on how levy funding should be prioritised in future. That is why, taking advice from Skills England, the department will be asking more employers to step forward and fund Level 7 apprenticeships outside of the levy.

The department is in the process of designing the growth and skills levy and will set out more detail in due course, including on Skills England's engagement plans.

■ Arts and Design: Education**Ms Polly Billington:**[\[7948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of how much funding her Department provided for (a) art, (b) craft and (c) design education in schools in the (i) 2009-10, (ii) 2010-11 and (iii) 2023-24 financial year; and if she will make an assessment of the difference in (A) real terms and (B) percentage terms between funding in the (1) 2009-10 and (2) 2010-11 financial year and that in the 2023-24 financial year.

Ms Polly Billington:[\[7949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of how much funding her Department provided for dance education in schools in the (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11 and (c) 2023-24 financial year; and if she will make an assessment of the difference in (i) real terms and (ii) percentage terms between funding in the (A) 2009-10 and (B) 2010-11 financial year and that in the 2023-24 financial year.

Ms Polly Billington:[\[7950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of how much funding her Department provided for drama education in schools in the (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11 and (c) 2023-24 financial year; and if she will make an assessment of the

difference in (i) real terms and (ii) percentage terms between funding in the (A) 2009-10 and (B) 2010-11 financial year and that in the 2023-24 financial year.

Ms Polly Billington:

[7951]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an estimate of changes to levels of funding to music education in schools (a) in real terms and (b) as a percentage since 2010; and what the level of funding in 2010 is at current values.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is clear that arts and music should be part of every child's education.

The Independent Curriculum and Assessment Review will advise on how the department delivers a broader curriculum for every child, including subjects such as art and, music and drama. The department will also support children to study a creative or vocational subject to 16 and ensure accountability measures reflect this.

Schools have autonomy over how they spend their core funding and can decide how to best allocate their resources for the benefit of their students. The department does not provide schools with additional in-year funding for art, craft and design education, or for dance, drama or music education. Schools do not report back on the funding they have allocated to different subjects.

The total funding for mainstream schools in 2023/24 through the dedicated schools grant (DSG) and mainstream schools additional grant (MSAG) was £44.3 billion. The department cannot provide comparable funding data back to 2010 due to the changes in the funding system since that time. In particular, funding for schools was only identified separately from funding for high needs or early years in 2013, and funding for central school services provided by local authorities was split out from the schools block funding in 2018/2019.

■ **Breakfast Clubs: Disadvantaged**

Damian Hinds:

[5983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the proportion of pupils in bands A-F of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index that attend schools (a) eligible for and (b) participating in the national school breakfast club programme.

Stephen Morgan:

The National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) currently supports up to 2,700 participating schools in disadvantaged areas. Around 80% of pupils living in Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) A to F areas attend a school eligible for the NSBP, with around 25% of pupils attending a school participating in the NSBP. There is no requirement for children attending a school participating in the NSBP to engage with the breakfast club.

■ Breakfast Clubs: Expenditure

Damian Hinds: [\[5979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the total amount of public funding for school breakfast clubs in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2023-24

Stephen Morgan:

There are 2,700 schools participating in the National Schools Breakfast Programme. In 2023/24, £12 million was made available to fund the National Breakfast Club Programme.

This government will now go further to ensure that every primary school age child can benefit from breakfast clubs. The department has taken decisive action by announcing in the King's Speech that, under the Children's Wellbeing Bill, every primary school in England with primary aged pupils will offer a breakfast club. Legislating for breakfast club provision will give schools the certainty they need to plan for the future.

Before the legislation comes into force, the department will work closely with the sector to make sure the right support, including funding, guidance and resources, is in place.

Damian Hinds: [\[5995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her Department's spending on breakfast club programmes was for (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools and (c) in total in 2023-24.

Stephen Morgan:

In 2023/2024, the department's spending on the National School Breakfast Programme was a total of £7,819,102. Primary school total spending was £5,242,446 and secondary school total spending was £2,166,983. This is excluding special schools.

■ Breakfast Clubs: Finance

Damian Hinds: [\[5994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her planned spending on the expansion of school breakfast clubs is contingent on the amount of revenue raised from fiscal measures targeted on people with non-domiciled status.

Stephen Morgan:

Matters of taxation are for my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Chancellor 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 spending will be subject to those events.

Damian Hinds: [\[5996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her Department's projected spending is on breakfast club programmes for secondary schools in (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26.

Stephen Morgan:

The department will be spending up to £11 million on the National School Breakfast Programme in 2024/25.

The government has already taken decisive action by announcing in the King's Speech that, under the Children's Wellbeing Bill, every state funded school with primary aged pupils will offer a free breakfast club. Legislating for breakfast club provision will give schools the certainty they need to plan for the future.

Future spending commitments, including on the Breakfast Club programme, will be set out as part of the Spending Review process. The department is working closely with schools and sector experts to develop a programme that meets the needs of children, schools and parents.

■ Breakfast Clubs: Primary Education**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[6835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding per pupil she plans to allocate to implement free breakfast clubs in primary schools.

Stephen Morgan:

The government has already taken decisive action by announcing in the King's Speech that, under the Children's Wellbeing Bill, every primary school with primary aged children will offer a free breakfast club. Legislating for breakfast club provision will give schools the certainty they need to plan for the future.

Future spending commitments will be set out as part of the Spending Review process.

Ben Obese-Jecty:[\[6844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of proposed primary school breakfast clubs will be introduced in Huntingdon constituency.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is clear on the impact that breakfast clubs can have to support children to arrive at school ready to learn, which is why it committed in its manifesto to introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school. The new breakfast club offer, once rolled out nationally, will be available to every state funded school with primary aged children.

■ Care Leavers**Dan Carden:**[\[6428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve support for care leavers.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises that care leavers have poorer outcomes than their peers across all aspects of their lives. We want all those leaving care to have stable homes,

access to health services, support to build lifelong loving relationships, and help to engage in education, employment and training. The department is committed to helping children thrive, and we want the best for every child and family. We want to build on the foundations laid by local authorities to create a care system that works for everyone.

We have already begun this vital work. My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced in his speech in September that we will bring forward legislation, when parliamentary time allows, to remove the local connection requirement for care leavers seeking access to social housing at the next available opportunity.

In the King's Speech, we committed to introduce a Children's Wellbeing Bill to take forward further legislative changes needed to improve the children's social care system, including support for care leavers.

■ Carers and Foster Care

Ian Lavery:

[\[6242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will provide the same access to (a) health and (b) therapeutic support for children in kinship care as those in formal care settings.

Janet Daby:

This government recognises the importance of health and therapeutic support services for all children, including those in kinship care. Ensuring every child receives the support they need is a key priority.

The department recently renamed the Adoption Support Fund, the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund, to increase awareness among families in kinship arrangements who are eligible for therapeutic support through the fund.

We are committed to working with local government to support children in care, including through kinship arrangements. We are considering how to most effectively transform the children's social care system to deliver better outcomes for children and families, including how best to support kinship children and families.

■ Carers and Foster Care: Finance

Ian Lavery:

[\[6239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will provide additional funding to equalise allowances between foster and kinship families.

Janet Daby:

This government recognises the valuable and important role that kinship carers play and appreciates that they often take on this role at a time in their lives when they are least expecting to raise a family.

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.

Local authorities have the powers to provide a range of services, including financial support, to support children and families. As local authorities know their carers best, they have the power to decide what financial support should be provided to carers and their children and any payments should be made in accordance with their model for assessing support needs. The government does not set a maximum or minimum allowance for local authorities to administer. While the government recognises the financial constraints on local authorities, guidance makes it clear that children and young people should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare.

The government is committed to work with local government to support children in care, including through kinship, foster care, and adoption, as well as strengthening regulation of the children's social care sector.

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

■ **Childcare: Ashfield**

Lee Anderson:

[\[6486\]](#)

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 Ashfield constituency.

Stephen Morgan:

It is the government'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 April 2024, working parents of 2 year olds have been able to access 15 hours of government-funded childcare per week (over 38 weeks a year) from the term after their child's birthday. From September 2024, this was extended to parents of children aged nine months and above and, from September 2025, working parents will be able to access 30 hours per week (over 38 weeks a year) for children from age nine months to when they start school. The department is also growing the provision of wraparound childcare, which is before and after school provision, for primary school children.

In 2024/25, we expect to provide over £1.7 billion to support local authorities and providers deliver the childcare expansion, which will rise in 2027/28 to over £4.1 billion. By the same year we expect to be providing over £8 billion every year overall on new and existing early years entitlements.

For Nottinghamshire County Council, the hourly rate for 3 to 4 year olds is £5.47, which is an increase of 5.2%. For 2 year olds, this rate is £7.63 per hour and for under 2s, £10.38 per hour.

The government has also committed to utilising unused space in primary schools to create much needed places in 3,000 nurseries, 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 Childcare. Parents can check what childcare support they are entitled to via the Childcare Choices website, which is accessible at: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>.

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

■ Childcare: Finance

Lee Anderson:

[6498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending arrangements for childcare funding such that the funding is available from the child's relevant birthday irrespective of the time of year.

Stephen Morgan:

The entitlements work on a termly basis, so children become eligible from the termly date after they reach the relevant age or after they or their parents first meet the eligibility criteria. The dates on which the terms start are 1 September, 1 January or 1 April. Therefore, depending on when a child is born or when the eligibility criteria is first met, there will be differing periods to wait until the relevant termly date.

The termly basis also allows local authorities and childcare providers to plan and ensure sufficient early years places are available for parents each term, as there are clear periods at which children are likely to enter a place.

Currently, there are no plans to amend the eligibility criteria, but this may be considered in the future.

■ Children and Families: Protection

Alistair Strathern:

[7889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the pilot of the family first for children pathfinder and family network.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to providing timely support to children and families that need help. Evidence shows that preventing problems from escalating leads to better outcomes for children and families and reduces cost pressures for local authorities and beyond.

The Families First for Children Pathfinder and Family Networks Pilot are testing whole-system children's social care reform to help families overcome challenges, thrive together and keep children safe.

The pathfinder and pilot are being independently evaluated and interim findings are expected in spring 2025. The evaluation will support the department's understanding of both by assessing implementation, delivery, impact and value for money.

■ Children in Care

Gareth Snell:

[\[6376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the (a) voices and (b) experiences of birth parents who have experienced the removal of children from their care are included in (i) policymaking and (ii) service provision in the children's social care system.

Janet Daby:

The department is committed to engaging widely with those with lived experience of children's social care, as well as all interested stakeholders, to help us drive the right change and scale up good practice in children's social care across the country.

Hearing the views of those with lived experience of children's social care and responding to their recommendations is an important part of national and local children's social care policy development and delivery. At a national level, the department has parents, including birth parents, and carers who sit on strategic advisory boards and policy reference groups covering different aspects of children's social care reform policy. We have also engaged parents and families on consultations on children's social care reform. The Supporting Families programme and the Families First for Children Pathfinder also ensure children and families' voices inform service design and delivery.

The department recognises there is more to do, and we continue to explore ways to grow and develop our ongoing engagement with those with lived experience of children's social care, including parents and families.

■ Children: Disability

Helen Morgan:

[\[7885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the change to real terms spending on services for disabled children by Shropshire Council since 2016.

Catherine McKinnell:

From the 2015/16 financial year to 2022/23, the most recent year for which information is available, the increase in net spending by Shropshire Council on provision and services for children and young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including on those children's home-to-school transport, has been 37% in real terms (67% in cash terms) and the increase in gross spending has been 32% in real terms (61% in cash terms).

The basis for this calculation uses high needs and home-to-school transport spending data provided to the department by Shropshire Council, which is broadly comparable from year-to-year, as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	GROSS SPEND	2022/23 TERMS	NET SPEND	2022/23 TERMS
2015/16	£21.2 million	£25.9 million	£19.6 million	£23.9 million
2016/17	£18.9 million	£22.5 million	£17.9 million	£21.3 million
2017/18	£24.0 million	£28.2 million	£23.2 million	£27.3 million
2018/19	£25.0 million	£28.7 million	£24.6 million	£28.3 million
2019/20	£25.0 million	£28.1 million	£24.8 million	£27.8 million
2020/21	£27.5 million	£29.3 million	£26.1 million	£27.8 million
2021/22	£28.9 million	£31.0 million	£28.0 million	£30.0 million
2022/23	£34.2 million	£34.2 million	£32.8 million	£32.8 million

To note:

- Expenditure has been calculated in 2022/23 terms using the latest GDP deflator series (published 1 October 2024).
- The following actual expenditure items from Shropshire Council's section 251 returns have been used:

High needs budget expenditure:

- 1.2.1 Top-up funding – maintained schools
- 1.2.2 Top-up funding – academies, free schools and colleges
- 1.2.3 Top-up and other funding – non-maintained and independent providers
- 1.2.4 Additional high needs targeted funding for mainstream schools and academies
- 1.2.5 Special educational needs (SEN) support service
- 1.2.6 Hospital education services
- 1.2.8 Support for inclusion
- 1.2.9 Special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) in financial difficulty
- 1.2.10 Private finance initiative/ Building Schools for the Future costs at special schools, AP/ PRUs and Post 16 institutions only
- 1.2.11 Direct payments (SEN and disability)
- 1.2.12 Carbon reduction commitment allowances (PRUs)
- 1.2.13 Therapies and other health related services
- 1.4.11 SEN transport

Additional home-to-school transport expenditure:

- 2.1.4 Home-to-school transport (pre-16): SEN transport expenditure

2.1.6 Home-to-post-16 provision: SEN transport expenditure (aged 16-18)

■ **Children: Mental Health**

Helen Morgan:

[\[6664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to tackle mental health challenges in children from low-income families during school holidays.

Stephen Morgan:

The department has invested over £200 million every year since 2022 in free holiday club places for children from low-income families through the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme with all 153 local authorities in England delivering in the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays.

The HAF programme supports disadvantaged children and their families with enriching activities, provides them with healthy food, helps them to learn new things, improves socialisation and benefits their health and wellbeing during school holidays.

The right support should be available to every young person that needs it, which is why the department will provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school.

The government will also be putting in place new Young Futures hubs, including access to mental health support workers, and will recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults.

■ **Class Sizes: Bedfordshire**

Blake Stephenson:

[\[6869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to reduce class sizes in Bedfordshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

The average class size for state-funded primary schools in Bedford is 26.8 pupils and in Central Bedfordshire it is 25.7 pupils, which is broadly in line with the national average of 26.6 pupils. The average class size for state-funded secondary schools in Bedford is 21.5 pupils and in Central Bedfordshire it is 22.6 pupils, which again is broadly in line with the national average of 22.4 pupils.

Secondary schools can decide how to organise classes based on local needs and circumstances, ensuring they are consistent with raising attainment and helping pupils to achieve and thrive. Legislation limits the size of an infant class to 30 pupils per school teacher.

It is local authorities who have responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area. The department provides capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support local authorities to provide school places. Bedford Borough Council will receive £15.1 million and Central Bedfordshire Council will receive £3.3 million in 2024/25 to support the provision of new school places needed by September 2025.

■ Climate Change: Education

Anna Sabine:

[\[7235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the level of teaching on climate (a) change, (b) mitigation and (c) adaptation in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government is aware of the critical importance of meeting the challenge of sustainability and climate change and empowering children and young people by providing them with the knowledge and skills to take positive climate action and drive solutions.

Topics relating to climate change and the environment are already included within geography, science and citizenship in the current national curriculum, with an environmental science A level also available. With regard to the future of the curriculum, the government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The Review recently launched a call for evidence, closing on 22 November, setting out a number of key questions and themes where it would particularly welcome evidence and input. The government would encourage anyone with evidence regarding climate and sustainability education to engage with the review and their call for evidence.

The Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, published by the department in April 2022, has led to a host of additional support and resources for teaching about climate change. The department is including climate change and sustainability in science teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) to help ensure young people receive high quality teaching on the scientific facts about climate change and environmental degradation. Oak National Academy has published a primary science curriculum plan, which includes an emphasis on nature, with resources including lesson plans, slide packs, worksheets, quizzes and videos now available.

To drive greater connection and protection of nature, the department is also increasing opportunities for all children and young people to spend time in nature, learn more about it and become actively involved in the improvement of their local environment.

The National Education Nature Park brings together all the land from across education settings into a vast virtual nature park. It empowers children and young people to get involved in taking practical action to improve the biodiversity of their school grounds, learn about nature's role in climate change and develop skills that will be necessary for the growing number of green jobs.

Seeing sustainability brought to life in the buildings around them will allow children and young people to enhance and contextualise their learning regarding mitigation and adaptation efforts. The Sustainability Support for Education hub provides support to all educational settings and helps them to plan and deliver action to enable them to

respond to and mitigate against the challenge of climate change and adapt to become more sustainable. This is also supported by the Climate Ambassadors programme which offers education settings in England free access to expertise from in person volunteers across industry to further advise on the development of their climate action plan.

■ Education

Ian Lavery:

[\[6243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made a recent comparative assessment of the educational needs of (a) children in kinship care and (b) other children.

Janet Daby:

Children in Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Orders have higher attainment than children in local authority care but perform worse compared to all children.

In 2022/23 the average Attainment 8 score for children who left care on a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order was 28. By comparison, the average attainment for children in care at March 31 was 18, while for the overall pupil population it was 46.

This department is determined to give every child the opportunities they deserve. We know that many children who receive care from relatives and friends need extra support, including in school. We are working to ensure their needs are met, and that they have the best possible opportunity to succeed.

In September 2024, the role of virtual school heads was expanded to include championing the education, attendance, and attainment of children in kinship care, to ensure they receive the help they need to thrive at school.

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

■ Educational Psychology

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will launch a consultation on the potential merits of schools having a named educational psychologist based in their local authority.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department values the critical role educational psychologists play in the support available to children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The deployment of educational psychology services is the responsibility of local authorities as the employers of educational psychology services.

The department is taking measures to support education settings to have improved access to educational psychology services by investing in growing the pipeline. The department is investing over £21 million to train 400 more educational psychologists from this year. This builds on the £10 million currently being invested in the training of over 200 educational psychologists who began their training in September 2023. This investment will help to make specialist expertise more widely available in mainstream settings.

■ Extended Services: Special Educational Needs

Mike Amesbury:

[6439]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of wraparound care provision for children with SEND in (a) England, (b) Cheshire West and Chester Council area and (c) Halton borough.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department knows that parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) need childcare provision that meets their needs. The department has funded the national wraparound programme to support working families and improve the availability of before and after school childcare to ensure that parents have the flexibility they need to care for their children.

The programme is being delivered through local authorities, given their existing sufficiency duty. The Childcare Act 2006 places a legal duty on local authorities to make sure that there are enough childcare places within its locality for working parents or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14, or up to 18 for disabled children. All local authorities should be able to demonstrate how they have discharged this duty and should include specific reference to how they are ensuring there is sufficient childcare to meet the needs of children with SEND, as per the statutory guidance. This should be available from the local authority.

The wraparound programme is helping local authorities discharge this duty by distributing funding on the basis of anticipated need. Local authorities across England can decide how best to use the funding to set up or expand wraparound childcare in their area to meet the needs of their local community, including children with SEND. To date, the department has paid £926,235.79 to Cheshire West and Chester Council, and £876,187.28 to the Borough of Halton.

The government is also committed to making quick progress to deliver on its commitment to offer breakfast clubs in every primary school. The department's officials are working closely with schools and sector experts to develop a programme that meets the needs of all children, including those with SEND.

On 23 September, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that up to 750 state funded schools with primary aged pupils will begin delivering free breakfast clubs from April 2025. Funding will allow these schools to run free breakfast

clubs for their pupils in the summer term (April-July 2025) as part of a test and learn phase to inform delivery of a national rollout.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs, restoring parents' trust that their child will get the support they need.

■ **Financial Services: Education**

Claire Hazelgrove:

[\[7255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure adequate levels of financial education in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

Financial education currently forms a compulsory part of the National Curriculum for mathematics (at key stages 1 to 4) and citizenship (at key stages 3 and 4). The primary mathematics curriculum includes arithmetic knowledge that supports pupils' ability to manage budgets and money, including, for example, calculations with money and percentages. In secondary mathematics, pupils are taught topics such as how to calculate compound interest, which is relevant for personal finance. In citizenship, pupils are taught the function and uses of money, how to budget and manage credit and debt, as well as concepts like insurance, savings and pensions.

High and rising school standards are at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life. The government's ambition is for a broad, rich and cutting-edge curriculum that equips children and young people with the essential knowledge and skills required to thrive as citizens, in work and throughout life. This is why the government announced a Curriculum and Assessment Review on 19 July 2024, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE.

The Curriculum and Assessment Review group has launched a call for evidence. The review group has set out a number of key questions and themes where it would particularly welcome evidence and input from the sector and stakeholders to help direct the focus of the review and engagement with the sector over the autumn term.

The views of young people, parents, teachers, lecturers, leaders and other education staff and experts are pivotal to the recommendations, so that the panel can draw on the wealth of expertise and experience across the sector. Anyone can access and respond to the call for evidence.

■ **Free School Meals**

Damian Hinds:

[\[5998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of children who will be eligible for free school meals in (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26.

Stephen Morgan:

The department monitors free school meals take up, including through the annual publication of data, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

The department does not regularly publish forecasts.

Lee Anderson:**[6490]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to expand the eligibility criteria for free school meals to include all primary school children.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is driving an agenda of change to break down the barriers to opportunity and to reduce child poverty, working across local and national government to bring about change.

Child poverty has increased by 700,000 since 2010, with over four million children now growing up in a low-income family. That is why the government is committed to delivering an ambitious strategy to reduce child poverty, tackling the root causes, and giving every child the best start at life. To support this, a new Ministerial taskforce has been set up to begin work on the Child Poverty Strategy.

The department is also committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity so that all children have the freedom to achieve and thrive in education. To support this aim, the department is committed to introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school, to set children up for the day and ensure they are ready to learn, while supporting parents and carers to work.

Disadvantaged pupils in state-funded schools, as well as 16 to 18 year old students in further education, are entitled to receive free meals on the basis of low income. 2.1 million disadvantaged pupils are registered to receive free school meals (FSM) and a further 90,000 are registered to receive further education free meals. In addition, all children in reception, year 1 and year 2 in England's state-funded schools are entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals, which benefits around 1.3 million pupils. As with all government programmes, we will keep our approach to FSM under review.

■ Free School Meals: Expenditure**Damian Hinds:****[5980]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the total amount of public funding for free school meals in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2023-24.

Stephen Morgan:

Local authorities receive their core funding for schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Since 2018/19, the DSG allocations have been calculated based on the national funding formula (NFF). The schools NFF includes a 'free school meal (FSM) factor' which is broadly intended to cover the cost of providing free meals for eligible pupils. In 2023/24, schools received £480 for each eligible primary and secondary pupil

through this factor. A total of £842 million was distributed through the FSM factor in financial year 2023/24.

In addition to the FSM factor in the NFF, the department also provides additional funding for free meals through the universal infant free school meal (UIFSM) grant. This grant enables all government funded schools to offer FSM to pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2. In the 2023/24 academic year, £626 million was allocated through the UIFSM.

The equivalent figures are not available for 2009/10. Prior to the introduction of the NFF in 2018/19, the DSG was calculated in a different way, without a separate 'FSM factor'. UIFSM was introduced in 2014.

■ **Free School Meals: South Holland and the Deepings**

Sir John Hayes:

[5863]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) primary and (b) secondary school students receive free school meals in South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

Stephen Morgan:

As of January 2024, 2,166, or 26%, of state-funded primary school pupils and 1,655, or 23%, of state-funded secondary school pupils attending schools in South Holland and the Deepings constituency were eligible for and claiming free school meals. This compares with rates of 24% of primary school pupils and 24% of secondary school pupils in the whole of England. These figures are from the school census and are published down to school level in the following official statistics: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

■ **Further Education: Staff**

John Slinger:

[7955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department provides to further education colleges to help them recruit staff from (a) industry and (b) generally to improve vocational skills development.

Janet Daby:

The department is supporting colleges in their recruitment and training of teachers, including those with industry experience.

The department is delivering Taking Teaching Further, which is a two-year programme that supports further education (FE) providers to recruit and provide early career support to those with the relevant knowledge and/or industry experience to retrain as FE teachers, with the aim to boost the quality and industry-relevance of teaching. We are supporting early career teachers with the Teacher Mentoring Programme, which aims to increase the retention rates of early career teachers by improving the package of support for new and inexperienced teachers, including mentoring and wellbeing support.

The department will be delivering payments worth up to £6,000 to eligible early career teachers in key science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and technical subjects in FE colleges, which could include those transitioning to teaching from industry.

The national FE teacher recruitment campaign, Share Your Skills, targets those with industry skills to think about a career in FE teaching. The campaign raises awareness and increases consideration by encouraging industry professionals to think about using their skills to teach in FE. Potential FE teachers can get information and support on their next steps toward a career in FE teaching from a dedicated campaign website, phone, and email service.

■ **Headteachers: Training**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to reform the national headship qualification to include a focus upon improving schools in deprived communities.

Catherine McKinnell:

The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) content framework includes evidence-based statements regarding school improvement, including around setting a strong culture, establishing and sustaining continuous improvement and sharing effective practice between schools to close the disadvantage attainment gap.

Whilst NPQH is already equipping headteachers with the evidence-based knowledge and understanding they need to drive improvement for all pupils, including those in deprived areas, the department will continue to review all national professional qualifications to ensure the qualifications are based on the latest evidence of what works for teaching and learning.

■ **Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

Helen Morgan:

[\[6663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential safeguarding dangers to children from low-income families resulting from the end of the holiday activities and food programme.

Helen Morgan:

[\[6665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the end of the holiday activities and food programme on lower-income families.

Stephen Morgan:

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

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

Damian Hinds:

[\[5997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of maintaining real-terms levels of funding for the Holiday Activities and Food programme in the (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26 financial years.

Stephen Morgan:

All 153 local authorities in England have been delivering the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays.

The future of the HAF programme beyond 31 March 2025 is subject to the next government Spending Review taking place this autumn. The outcome of the review will be communicated in due course.

■ **King Edward VI Balaam Wood Academy**

Laurence Turner:

[\[8052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will have discussions with the Standards and Testing Agency on its planned timetable for responding to the representation made by King Edwards VI Balaam Wood Academy on 10 September 2024.

Catherine McKinnell:

The Standards and Testing Agency received an allegation of maladministration from King Edwards VI Balaam Wood Academy on 10 September. It is currently carrying out an investigation in line with its standard procedures. The outcome of the investigation will be communicated to the headteacher of King Edwards VI Balaam Wood Academy once it is complete. The Standards and Testing Agency will respond as quickly as it can.

■ **LGBT+ People: Curriculum**

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[\[7365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure the school curriculum is LGBTQIA+ inclusive.

Catherine McKinnell:

Within a broad framework, set out in subject specific programmes of study, schools have flexibility to organise the content and delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils.

To prepare children for life in modern Britain, pupils need to understand the world in which they are growing up. The relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum is therefore designed to give pupils the knowledge they need to lead happy, safe and healthy lives, and to foster respect for other people and for difference.

The RSHE statutory guidance states that all pupils should receive teaching on LGBT content during their school years. Pupils should have an equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same sex relationships and this should be integrated appropriately into the relationships and sex education programme, rather than addressed separately or in only one lesson.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, covering ages 5 to 18, which is chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The Curriculum and Assessment Review will seek to deliver a curriculum that reflects the issues and diversities of our society, ensuring all children and young people are represented. The review group has recently launched a call for evidence, setting out a number of key questions and themes where it would particularly welcome evidence and input.

■ Lifelong Education

Mr Peter Bedford:

[\[7341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

Janet Daby:

At present, the department is working to ensure that our approach to lifelong learning will be as effective as possible and will enable people to gain the skills they need to support their careers.

The government recognises that lifelong learning is a core part of a sustainable higher education system, which provides opportunities for all and offers learners greater flexibility in an ever-evolving economy.

The department will make further announcements about this work shortly.

■ Non-teaching Staff: Buckinghamshire

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[\[7360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to provide additional funding for pay increases for administrative staff in schools in Buckinghamshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government recognises the vital role that support staff play in children's education and we are committed to reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body. This reform will ensure that schools can recruit and retain the staff needed to deliver high quality, inclusive education.

Most school support staff are currently employed on the pay and conditions of the National Joint Council (NJC) for local government services. The NJC is a negotiating body made up of representatives from trade unions and local government employers. The 2024/25 pay offer is currently under negotiation.

On 29 July, we announced that we are providing schools with almost £1.1 billion of additional funding in 2024/25, through the new core schools budget grant (CSBG), to

support them with their overall costs this year. This matches what we have calculated is needed to fully fund, at a national level, both the support staff pay offer and the teacher pay award in the 2024/25 financial year, after accounting for the overall available headroom in schools' existing budgets. We recognise that the picture will be different for individual schools. Schools in Buckinghamshire will receive over £8.9 million from the CSBG.

■ Private Education

Damian Hinds:

[6018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many independent schools (a) opened and (b) closed in each year from the earliest year for which data are available.

Stephen Morgan:

The government has maintained a register of independent schools since the Education Act 1944 came into force in 1945. The register shows that 3679 independent schools have opened since 1945.

Data on independent school closures is available from 1987 and shows 2674 independent schools have closed since 1987. The attached table outlines how many independent schools have opened and closed in each year. Data on school registration and closure can be found at. <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>.

Attachments:

1. [6018 table attachment](#)

[6018_attachment_number_of_independent_schools_opened_and_closed_each_year.xlsx]

■ Private Education: Staff

Damian Hinds:

[6023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of people employed in independent schools (a) as teachers and (b) in other roles.

Stephen Morgan:

Information on the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of teachers in independent schools is published in the 'Education and training statistics for the UK' statistical publication, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-and-training-statistics-for-the-uk>. As of January 2023, there were 74,532 FTE teachers in independent schools in England.

Figures for the number of independent school staff in other roles are not available.

■ Private Education: Teachers

Damian Hinds:

[6019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the proportion of independent schools that are (a) in the teachers' pension scheme and (b)

not in phased withdrawal as of (i) the most recent date for which data are available and (ii) October 2021.

Damian Hinds: [6020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the proportion of independent school teachers who are in the teachers' pension scheme as of (i) the most recent date for which data are available and (ii) October 2021.

Damian Hinds: [6021]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the revenue to the teachers' pension scheme from independent schools' employers' contributions as of (a) the most recent date for which data are available and (b) October 2021.

Damian Hinds: [6022]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the projected revenue to the teachers' pension scheme from independent schools' employers' contributions in (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26.

Catherine McKinnell:

The scheme administrator maintains a record of the number of independent schools participating in the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), as well as those that have elected for phased withdrawal. However, as participation is voluntary for this sector, the scheme administrator does not have a figure of the total number that could participate. Eligibility is only considered at the time that an independent school applies to join the TPS.

Data from September 2024 shows that there are 601 independent schools that are fully participating in the TPS and a further 247 that have opted for phased withdrawal. A bespoke report would need to be obtained from the scheme administrator for the position in October 2021.

The department does not have an estimate of the proportion of independent school teachers who are in the TPS. As not all independent schools participate in the TPS, the scheme administrator does not hold this information.

The department maintains financial records via the Annual Report and Accounts, in addition to the scheme valuation, which is scheduled to take place every four years. However, the specific data on the revenue to the teachers' pension scheme from independent schools' employers' contributions is not available as the TPS does not require it for the purposes of the administration of the scheme.

The department does not hold projected revenue figures for the TPS specifically from independent school employer contributions for 2024/25 or 2025/26.

■ Private Education: VAT

Claire Coutinho: [6575]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the potential impact of the implementation of VAT on independent school fees on (a) number of pupils

requiring SEND services in the state education sector and (b) associated costs; and whether she plans to amend the funding available for those services.

Stephen Morgan:

Projections by the Institute for Fiscal Studies indicate that the number of pupils who may switch schools as a result of these changes is likely to represent a very small proportion of overall pupil numbers in the state sector, with any displacement 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 works to support local authorities to ensure that every local area has sufficient places for children that need them and works to provide appropriate support for pupils with special educational needs.

Where pupils' places in private schools are being funded by local authorities because their needs can only be met in private school, for example in England, where attendance at a named private school is required by a child's education, health and care plan, local authorities will be able to reclaim the VAT.

The government will publish a Tax Information and Impact Note setting out the impacts of the VAT changes alongside the Finance Bill.

Marie Goldman:

[\[6751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the potential impact of introducing VAT on independent school fees on the number of children taking up sports scholarships.

Stephen Morgan:

While details of the government's assessment of the expected impacts of introducing VAT on private school fees will be published at the Budget in the usual way, the government does not collect figures on scholarships, bursaries and other financial support offered by private schools. There are therefore no plans to make an assessment of the impact on the number of children taking up sports scholarships.

Marie Goldman:

[\[6752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport of the potential impact of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees on the international competitiveness of British sport.

Stephen Morgan:

Details of the government's assessment of the expected impacts of introducing VAT on private school fees will be published at the Budget in the usual way.

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that children leaving the independent sector are able to access state education within commutable distance.

Stephen Morgan:

This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy. Projections by the Institute for Fiscal Studies indicate that the number of pupils who may switch schools as a result of these changes is likely to represent a very small proportion of overall pupil numbers in the state sector, with any displacement 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>.

On the matter of home to school travel in the state sector, the department's policy aims to make sure that no child is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport. Local authorities must arrange free home to school travel for children of compulsory school age, 5 to 16, who attend their nearest school and would not be able to walk there because of the distance, their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, or because the nature of the route means it would be unsafe for them to do so. Local authorities have the discretion to arrange travel for other children, but are not required to do so.

Where a child is not eligible for free home to school travel from the local authority, it is the parent's responsibility to make the necessary travel arrangements.

Ben Obese-Jecty:**[6829]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that children leaving the independent sector in areas with no state school availability are safeguarded.

Stephen Morgan:

This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy. Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) indicates that the number of pupils who may switch schools as a result of this change is likely to represent a very small proportion of overall pupil numbers in the state sector and any displacement would be 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 cannot be certain of the precise level, if any, of transfer from private to state sectors additional to the movements between schools, and between the private and state sectors, which happen each year in all parts of the country. However, there is significant spare capacity in existing state schools. 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 our normal processes and continue to work with local authorities to meet any pressures.

Ben Obese-Jecty:**[6832]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees on the number of staff in support roles in such schools.

Stephen Morgan:

This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy and this tax policy change will be introduced at the Budget on 30 October. Following scrutiny of the government's costing by the Independent Office for Budget Responsibility, details of the government's assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes will be published at the Budget in the usual way.

■ **Pupil Referral Units****Kim Johnson:****[7570]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children are registered at pupil referral units by (a) sex, (b) ethnicity, (c) free school meals status and (d) region.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on pupil referral units is reported within the school census. The most recent publication is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. By following this link you will be able to use a table builder to find the information that you require. One example of the outputs from the table builder can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/90137e0b-149c-42fc-410d-08dce44cbd16>.

■ **Pupils: Bullying****Dan Norris:****[5846]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent guidance her Department has provided on best practice for (a) responding to disclosures of bullying and (b) managing complex cases of bullying in schools.

Stephen Morgan:

All schools are legally required to have a behaviour policy with measures to prevent all forms of bullying. They have the freedom to develop their own anti-bullying strategies appropriate to their environment and are held to account by Ofsted.

The department has published guidance for schools, which outlines schools' responsibilities to support children who are bullied. These responsibilities to support children who are bullied include where bullying has a severe impact and the bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern under the Children Act 1989, where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or where a child is likely to suffer significant harm. The guidance makes clear that schools should make appropriate provision for a bullied child's social, emotional and mental health needs. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>.

■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs

Neil O'Brien:

[6454]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of of 13 September 2024 to Question 4411 on Pupils: Per Capita Costs, what the funding per pupil was in state schools for (a) Dedicated Schools Grant block funding, (b) pay and pensions, (c) pupil premium, (d) growth and premises and (e) other funding in each (i) region and (ii) local authority in each year since 2018/19

Catherine McKinnell:

Schools core funding is allocated through the dedicated schools grant (DSG), which includes growth and premises funding. These can be found as separate funding lines in the published DSG tables. DSG allocations are available at a regional and local authority level at the following links:

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2018-to-2019.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2019-to-2020.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2020-to-2021.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2021-to-2022.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2022-to-2023.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2023-to-2024.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2024-to-2025.

The department also provides pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. These allocations are also available at regional and local authority level using the published tables, which can be accessed at:

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-conditions-of-grant-2018-to-2019.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2019-to-2020.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2021-to-2022.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2022-to-2023.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2023-to-2024.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2024-to-2025.

The department has also provided supplementary grants for schools to support them with the costs associated with teacher pay and pensions awards, as well as overall pressures. Information on the additional grants provided since 2018, such as the teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG), the teachers' pension employer contribution grant (TPECG) and the core schools' budget grant (CSBG), can be found here:

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pay-grant-methodology/teachers-pay-grant-methodology.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pension-employer-contribution-grant-tpecg/pension-grant-methodology.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-supplementary-grant-2022-to-2023.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/mainstream-schools-additional-grant-2023-to-2024.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pay-additional-grant-2023-to-2024.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pay-additional-grant-2024-to-2025.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pension-employer-contribution-grant-2024-for-schools-high-needs-settings-and-local-authorities-2024-to-2025.
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-schools-budget-grant-csbg-2024-to-2025.

Most of these grants have since been rolled into DSG allocations. The only exceptions are the TPAG 2024/25, the TPECG 2024/25 and the CSBG 2024/25, which will all be rolled into the DSG allocations from 2025/26 onwards.

Outside core funding, schools have received a wide variety of further grants and programme funding since 2018/19. These are typically considerably smaller than the core funding streams set out above. This includes both funding provided nationally, and funding provided to particular areas and/or particular schools.

■ Religion: Education

Mr Peter Bedford:

[7345]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to review the opt outs for the teaching of religious education in secondary schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government has launched an independent review of Curriculum and Assessment and will also consider any changes it wishes to make to support the aim of delivering a rich and broad curriculum for every child whilst the review is conducted.

The Curriculum and Assessment Review group has launched a call for evidence, setting out a number of key questions and themes on which it would particularly welcome evidence and input to help direct the focus of the review and engagement with the sector over the autumn term. Anyone can access and respond to the call for evidence to provide a view on any area of the curriculum.

■ School Rebuilding Programme

Priti Patel: [\[6156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the timescale for the completion of works at each school announced in the School Rebuilding Programme in February 2024.

Stephen Morgan:

Schools selected for the school rebuilding programme (SRP) will enter delivery at a rate of around 50 per year. All schools, including those announced in February 2024, have been given individual indicative start dates, so responsible bodies can prepare and make informed decisions around their estate.

Once they have entered delivery, SRP projects have taken on average 3-5 years to complete. We assess the individual timelines at each school once delivery begins.

■ Schools: Admissions

Damian Hinds: [\[5977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, to which English parliamentary constituencies each Secondary Planning Area relates.

Stephen Morgan:

Information on Secondary Planning Areas as of May 2023 is published at school level in the annual School Capacity statistics publication. This can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>. Secondary Planning Areas are groups of schools that can relate to more than one parliamentary constituency. Therefore, there is not a one-to-one list of parliamentary constituency to Secondary Planning Area.

School level capacity data can be combined with information from 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS) to identify parliamentary constituency. This 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: Black History Month

Tom Hayes: [\[7126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support (a) schools and (b) colleges to mark Black History Month.

Tom Hayes: [\[7127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the representation of people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds within the national curriculum.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

will seek to deliver a curriculum that reflects the issues and diversities of our society, ensuring all children and young people are represented in their learning. The review group has recently launched a call for evidence, setting out a number of key questions and themes where it would particularly welcome evidence and input. Following the independent review, all schools will be required to teach the core national curriculum.

Schools and colleges are free to decide which events to commemorate and what activities to put in place to support pupils' understanding of significant events and particular months or days dedicated to specific communities, such as Black History Month. Schools also have the opportunity to promote such events through the curriculum, for example through subjects such as history and citizenship. The flexibility in the history curriculum means that schools can teach Black history in all three key stages, and within citizenship teaching at key stage 4, pupils should be taught about the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.

■ **Schools: Bury North**

Mr James Frith:

[6427]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make new capital funding available for school buildings in Bury North constituency; and if she will meet with (a) the hon. Member for Bury North, (b) representatives from The Derby High School and (c) Bury Council to discuss that funding.

Stephen Morgan:

Ensuring schools have the resources and buildings they need is a key part of our mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life.

The department is committed to improving the condition of the estate through the department's annual funding, the continuing school rebuilding programme and by fixing the problem of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

We will set out further details on wider spending plans, including for capital funding, following upcoming fiscal events.

■ **Schools: Census**

Damian Hinds:

[6012]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her planned timetable is for publishing results from the school census data collections of (a) 3 October 2024 and (b) 16 January 2025.

Stephen Morgan:

In accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics, statistics publications are pre-announced on the GOV.UK website and are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and->

[statistics?content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-education&order=updated-newest](https://statistics.contentstore.document.type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-education&order=updated-newest).

The scheduling ensures that statistics are released as soon as they are ready, while abiding by standards set by the Code of Practice for Statistics, in terms of trustworthiness, quality and value. The Code can be found here:

<https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>.

■ Schools: Concrete

Anna Sabine: [\[7234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) primary, (b) secondary and (c) sixth-form schools are affected by RAAC in Frome and East Somerset constituency.

Stephen Morgan:

No primary, secondary or sixth form schools in the Frome and East Somerset constituency have been identified as being affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

■ Schools: Finance

Damian Hinds: [\[6005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what pupil number projections the (a) resource and (b) capital spending budgets for the Department for Education for (i) this and (ii) next year are based.

Damian Hinds: [\[6006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to amend the capital spending budget for the Department for Education based on actual full-time-equivalent pupil numbers in the (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26 financial year.

Damian Hinds: [\[6007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to amend the revenue spending budget for the Department for Education based on actual full-time-equivalent pupil numbers in the (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26 financial year.

Catherine McKinnell:

Ensuring schools have the resources and buildings they need is a key part of the department's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life.

The department has allocated £1.8 billion in capital funding to improve the condition of school buildings for the 2024/25 financial year. This funding, which includes school condition allocations (SCA) and the budget for the condition improvement fund (CIF) programme, was based on a methodology that takes account of data on condition, location and pupil numbers weighted by phase of education. Pupil number data was taken from the spring 2023 census and the 2022/23 Individualised Learner Record (ILR). Details of the methodology are published on GOV.UK.

The department provides capital funding through the basic need grant to support local authorities to provide school places, based on their own pupil forecasts and school capacity data from the annual school capacity survey. Over £700 million of allocations have been confirmed to support local authorities to create school places needed in September 2025 and September 2026.

£850 million has also been allocated to local authorities for 2024/25 to support them to provide sufficient school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or who require alternative provision (AP). This funding was allocated using data from the school census, the Special Educational Needs survey (SEN2) and the school capacity survey (SCAP23).

School revenue funding for 2024/25 has already been allocated using pupil numbers recorded in the October census 2023. The department is also providing almost £1.1 billion through the new core schools budget grant (CSBG) to support schools with their overall costs. CSBG allocations for 2024/25 have also been calculated by reference to the October census 2023.

Departmental expenditure limits for 2025/26 will be agreed at the Budget on 30 October. This will also confirm budgets for 2024/25. This includes the 2025/26 core schools' budget and school capital budgets.

Ellie Chowns:

[\[7167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make it her policy to restore school funding in real terms to the level provided in May 2010.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is increasing overall core revenue funding for schools to almost £61.8 billion this year (2024/25). In July, the department announced that it is providing schools with almost £1.1 billion of additional funding in the 2024/25 academic year through the new core schools budget grant (CSBG), to support them with overall costs. This matches what the department has calculated is needed to fully fund, at a national level, the teacher pay award and the support staff pay offer in the 2024/25 financial year, after accounting for the available headroom in schools' existing budgets.

This increase in funding shows the government's commitment to supporting schools as a part of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity.

Departmental expenditure limits for the 2025/26 financial year are yet to be agreed across government and will be set alongside the Budget on 30 October. This will include 2025/26 schools' funding.

■ Schools: Food

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[6893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to review the School Food Standards; and if she will update those standards in line with the UK's climate targets.

Stephen Morgan:

The school food standards regulate the food and drink provided at lunchtime and at other times of the school day. Compliance with the school food standards is mandatory for all maintained schools, academies and free schools. It is important that children eat nutritious food at school and the department encourages schools to have a whole school approach to healthy eating.

The government has the ambition to source half of all food served in public sector settings from local producers or food that has been produced by growers certified to higher environmental standards, where possible. The government wants to use the purchasing power of the public sector food supply chain to lead the way and to set the tone in delivering the government's wider ambitions on sustainability, animal welfare, economic growth, nutrition and health. The department has also committed to supporting schools to drive up their sustainable practices on food. Schools can voluntarily follow the government buying standards, which include lots of good advice around sustainable sourcing.

Ministerial teams are working with departmental officials on plans to deliver the government's manifesto commitments, including making quick progress to deliver breakfast clubs in every primary school. The department's aim is to deliver better life chances for all through a system which works for all. As part of this, as with all government programmes, the department will keep its approach to school food under continued review.

■ Schools: Inspections**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[5926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance will be issued to schools to assist with the new Ofsted framework for inspection.

Catherine McKinnell:

This is a matter for His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Martyn Oliver. I have asked him to write to the hon. Member for Romford and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Anna Dixon:[\[7205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether schools that were assessed before the announcement of the removal of single headline grades and which have not yet received their report will receive a single headline grade.

Catherine McKinnell:

This is a matter for His Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted, Sir Martyn Oliver. I have asked him to write to my hon. Friend, the Member for Shipley directly and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Schools: Transport

James Naish:

[\[6730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to extend free school transport in rural areas to include schools other than the nearest suitable school.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department's home to school travel policy aims to make sure that no child is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport. Local authorities must arrange free home to school travel for children of compulsory school age, 5 to 16, who attend their nearest school and would not be able to walk there because of the distance, their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, or because the nature of the route means it would be unsafe for them to do so.

There are extended rights to free home to school travel for children who are eligible for free school meals or whose parents claim the maximum amount of Working Tax Credit. These are intended to support school choice for families where the cost of travel may otherwise be a barrier. For children up until age 11, the walking distance remains set at 2 miles. Children aged 11 to 16 are eligible for free travel to one of their three nearest schools, provided it is between 2 and 6 miles from their home, or to a school that is between 2 and 16 miles from their home that their parents have chosen on the grounds of their religion or belief and there is no suitable school, having regard to that religion or belief, nearer to their home. Local authorities have the discretion to arrange travel for other children but are not required to do so.

I am keen to understand how well home-to-school transport supports children to access educational opportunity and will be working with departmental officials on this. In addition, this government has set out an action plan to deliver better bus services and drive opportunity to under-served regions. 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.

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data her Department holds on (a) the number of schoolchildren in Huntingdon constituency who receive local authority-provided school transport and (b) the annual cost of such transport in that constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Local authorities are responsible for assessing children's eligibility for free home to school travel and for arranging free travel for eligible children. The department does not currently collect data on the number of children who receive free home to school travel from local authorities.

The annual cost of home to school travel is not collected at constituency level. Section 251 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 requires local authorities to submit information about their education expenditure, including expenditure on home to school travel to the department. The information collected from local authorities is published on GOV.UK. Further details are available at:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/la-and-school-expenditure>.

Anna Dixon: [7204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to reduce (a) bus, (b) coach and (c) other transport costs for schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department's home to school travel policy aims to make sure that no child is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport. Local authorities must arrange free home to school travel, at the start and end of the school day. This is for children of compulsory school age, (5 to 16), who attend their nearest school and would not be able to walk there because of the distance, their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, or because the nature of the route means it would be unsafe for them to do so.

At their discretion, some schools may choose to organise their own school travel, which they may or may not charge for. Local authorities may also choose to meet their statutory responsibilities for arranging school travel through local arrangements with schools in some cases. I am keen to understand how well home-to-school transport supports children to access educational opportunity and will be working with departmental officials on this.

■ Science: Teachers

Andrew Pakes: [7153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the number of science teachers in Peterborough constituency in the 2023-24 academic year; and if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the number of science teachers in (a) England and (b) Peterborough constituency.

Andrew Pakes: [7154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of science teachers in Peterborough constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

High quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education. There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England, but this government must do more to ensure the country has the workforce needed to provide the best possible education for every child in all parts of the country. This is why the government has set out the ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers.

Data on subjects taught is only collected from secondary schools that use electronic timetabling software that can produce it in the format required. This is weighted to produce national estimates, but accurate breakdowns by local authority and parliamentary constituency are, unfortunately, not available. Nevertheless, we are

working to ensure that we have sufficient teachers across the country, particularly in shortage national subjects.

The first crucial step towards achieving this is to ensure teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession. As part of this, it is important that teachers get the pay they deserve, which is why this government has accepted the School Teachers Review Body recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools. This government is providing schools with almost £1.1 billion in additional funding in the 2024/25 financial year to support schools with overall costs. This matches what the department has calculated is needed to fully fund, at a national level, the teacher pay award, and the support staff pay offer in the 2024/25 financial year, after accounting for the overall available headroom in schools' existing budgets. Additionally, from 1 September 2024 schools are no longer required to use performance related pay (PRP) as the basis for appraisals and decisions related to pay progression.

The department knows there is further to go to get more teachers into science, which is why, alongside teacher pay, it is making around £200 million available for bursaries and scholarships annually, with physics and chemistry trainees eligible in the 2023/2024 academic year for the highest bursaries of £28,000 and £30,000 for scholarships. The department will shortly be announcing the trainee incentives for the 2025/26 academic year.

To help with retention, new teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing can also receive a Targeted Retention Incentive if working in disadvantaged schools in the first five years of their careers. 14 schools in Peterborough are eligible for payments to teachers of up to £6,000 after-tax.

Alongside fairer pay and financial incentives, the department is also committed to supporting teachers with workload and wellbeing, including further support for flexible working. Teachers are now allowed to undertake planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time remotely. The department is also funding bespoke support provided by flexible working ambassador schools and multi-academy trusts. The named flexible working ambassador for schools in Peterborough is Thomas Gainsborough School.

The department has also made available a range of resources to help address teacher workload and wellbeing, including its 'Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff' service and the 'education staff wellbeing charter'. Additionally, effective use of technology can automate tasks and help manage workload for teachers. For example, high quality AI tools have the potential to reduce the amount of time that teachers spend marking, whilst supporting effective feedback and tailored teaching which drive pupil progress.

In August 2024, the government announced a £1 million fund to support innovators to develop proof of concept AI tools to support teachers with marking and providing feedback. Oak National Academy has also recently launched a sector-leading AI

lesson planning assistant which enables teachers who choose to use it to create personalised and tailored lesson plans and resources in minutes.

High quality continuous professional development is also key to ensuring we have and retain an effective teaching workforce. The department's Teaching School Hubs play a significant role in delivering Initial Teacher Training, the Early Career Framework, National Professional Qualifications and Appropriate Body services. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Teaching School Hub is a centre of excellence supporting teacher training and development across Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, Peterborough and South Cambridgeshire.

■ Shipping: Training

Jim Shannon:

[\[6238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to engage with the maritime sector to encourage training of maritime workers.

Janet Daby:

Meeting the skills needs of the next decade is central to delivering the government's missions across all regions and nations, which is why the department's Ministers and officials regularly engage with business representative groups, employers, training providers and third sector organisations that represent all sectors.

Employers in the maritime sector have developed a number of apprenticeships to help meet their skills needs, including Level 2 Maritime Mechanical and Electrical Mechanic and Level 3 Maritime Electrical Fitter.

T Levels are a high quality technical option for 16 to 19 year olds. 21 subjects are now available, including three in Engineering and Manufacturing that are designed by relevant employers to meet the needs of the industry and to prepare students for work, further study or a higher apprenticeship.

In addition, Skills England is a new body that will tackle skills shortages and support sustained economic growth. Skills England will:

- Provide an authoritative assessment of national and regional skills needs in the economy now and in the future by combining the best available statistical data with insights generated from employers and other key stakeholders.
- Ensure that there is a comprehensive suite of apprenticeships, training and technical qualifications for individuals and employers to access that are aligned with skills gaps and what employers need. As part of this, Skills England will identify which training should be available via the new Growth and Skills Levy.
- Work together with combined authorities and other places with devolution deals, as well as other regional organisations, such as Employer Representative Bodies, to ensure that regional and national skills needs are met at all levels, from essential skills to those delivered via higher education, in line with the forthcoming Industrial Strategy.

The National Shipbuilding Strategy Refresh sets out the vision for a globally successful, innovative and sustainable UK shipbuilding enterprise. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/refresh-to-the-national-shipbuilding-strategy>. The UK Shipbuilding Taskforce report made recommendations for the UK Government and devolved governments to take forward.

The department will support the National Shipbuilding Office, through the Shipbuilding Skills Delivery Group as they move to delivery. The department will continue to monitor their progress to understand the impact of any potential changes to the skills system on shipbuilding.

■ Special Educational Needs

Fabian Hamilton:

[5878]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support local authorities in delivering education health and care plans.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department publishes annual data from the SEN2 survey in relation to every educational, health and care plan maintained by individual local authorities.

The department closely monitors the information from the annual SEN2 data collection and uses it to inform discussions with local areas.

Where a council does not meet its duties, the department can take action that prioritises children's needs and supports local areas to bring about rapid improvement. The department offers a range of universal, targeted and intensive support through department's managed programmes, such as the Sector Led Improvement Partners which provide peer-to-peer tailored support.

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission introduced a strengthened area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection framework in January 2023 leading to a greater emphasis on the outcomes being achieved for children and young people. It is the primary tool to maintain a focus on high standards in the SEND system across all partners.

Sir Julian Smith:

[6215]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve (a) inclusivity and (b) expertise in mainstream schools for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs, in order to restore parents' trust that their child will get the support they need.

To take this forward, the department will publish evidence reviews to identify the most effective tools, strategies and approaches for teachers and other relevant staff in mainstream settings to identify and support children and young people with different types of needs.

This government is committed to continuous improvement to transform the training and support for all new teachers, and to review the experiences and needs of early career teachers as well as trainees. The new Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF) is due to be implemented from September 2025 and will underpin all Initial Teacher Training courses and statutory induction training for early career teachers across the country.

The ITTECF contains additional content related to inclusion, adaptive teaching and supporting pupils with SEND. The inclusion content includes developing an understanding that teacher approaches to inclusion and SEND are a key determinant of pupil outcomes. The adaptive teaching content includes, for example, developing an understanding of different pupil needs, and learning how to provide opportunities for success for all pupils.

The department will also work with Ofsted to ensure that schools are held accountable for their approach to inclusion, so that all children are given the high quality support they need to learn and thrive. The department is committed to improving the inspection system, moving away from the single headline grade to a richer system to assess school quality through a report card, giving a more rounded picture of how a school is performing and providing parents with greater clarity on the support a school has in place for children with SEND.

Sir Julian Smith:

[6216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that Education, Health and Care Plan applications are processed promptly.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department's aim is to deliver better life chances for all, through a system which works for all.

The department knows that some parents have struggled to get the right support for their children, particularly through a long and difficult education, health and care (EHC) plan process. We will work across the sector to provide support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those needing alternative provision, and their families. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and alternative provision settings, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

The department wants to ensure that EHC plan applications are processed promptly and, where required, plans are issued as quickly as possible so that children and young people can access the support they need. The department has listened to a wide range of relevant stakeholders, such as children and young people, parents,

schools, colleges and local authorities and their partners, and it is reflecting on what practice could be made consistent nationally.

Anna Sabine:

[7236]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help support children with special educational needs and disabilities to receive an education, health and care plan.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department knows that parents have struggled to get the right support for their children, particularly through long and difficult education, health and care plan processes. The department will work across the sector to provide support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or needing alternative provision and their families. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and alternative provision settings, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

Where local authorities are failing to deliver consistent outcomes for children and young people with SEND, the department works with them using a range of support and challenge, improvement programmes and SEND specialist advisors to address identified weaknesses.

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[7369]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help ensure that local authorities provide timely education, health and care plan assessments.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department knows that parents have struggled to get the right support for their children, particularly through long and difficult education, health and care plan processes. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach to support the sector, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and alternative provision settings, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

Where local authorities are failing to deliver consistent outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), the department works with them using a range of support and challenge, improvement programmes and SEND specialist advisors to address identified weaknesses.

Kim Johnson:

[7569]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children attend special educational needs schools by (a) sex, (b) ethnicity, (c) free school meals status and (d) region.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on children attending special schools is reported within the school census, with the most recent publication available here: <https://explore-education->

statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics. To access the data, use a table builder to find the required information. An example of the outputs from the table builder is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/06951e44-abe4-4c2b-4111-08dce44cbd16>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Ashfield

Lee Anderson:

[6481]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department taking to improve the provision of SEND support for children in Ashfield constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Nottinghamshire received a joint local area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in February 2023 under the current Area SEND Inspection framework. Ofsted and CQC found widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND which the local area partnership must address urgently. The report, published on 16 May 2023, included two areas for priority action (APA). The local area submitted a priority action plan (PAP) to Ofsted and CQC to address these APAs, which was approved on 14 July 2023.

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

The department has appointed a SEND advisor to work collaboratively with an NHS England Adviser to challenge, support and work alongside Nottinghamshire County Council and the local area partnership.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach in collaboration with local area partnerships to improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and to ensure special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

■ Special Educational Needs: Breakfast Clubs

Damian Hinds:

[6013]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her policy is on funding support for breakfast clubs at special schools.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is committed to making quick progress to deliver on its commitment to offer breakfast clubs in every school with primary aged pupils. Departmental officials are working closely with schools and sector experts to develop a programme

that meets the needs of all children, including children with special educational needs and disabilities, schools and parents.

The government has already taken decisive action by announcing in the King's Speech that, under the Children's Wellbeing Bill, every state funded school with primary aged children will offer a free breakfast club. Legislating for breakfast club provision will give schools the certainty they need to plan for the future.

The department is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs, to restore parents' trust that their child will get the support they need.

■ Special Educational Needs: Buckinghamshire

Callum Anderson:

[\[5463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data she holds on the number of children in Buckinghamshire who are on waiting lists for education, health and care plan assessments; and what steps she is taking reduce waiting times.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department publishes official statistics on education, health and care (EHC) plans annually, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>. This includes data at local authority level on the rate of EHC plans issued within the deadline of 20 weeks.

The table below contains details of assessments in 2023 in Buckinghamshire, by the duration, in days, between the date of the request for assessment and the date of the assessment outcome. This includes those for whom a plan was issued and those with the decision not to issue a plan, but excludes cases where the assessment was withdrawn.

Number of assessments completed by time between date received and assessment completion date in Buckinghamshire for the 2023 calendar year:

LESS THAN 6 MONTHS	BETWEEN 6 MONTHS TO A YEAR	BETWEEN 1 AND 2 YEARS	MORE THAN 2 YEARS	DURATION NOT AVAILABLE	TOTAL ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED
617	336	2	0	0	955

To note:

- Source: SEN2 Data collection
- "Duration not available" includes cases where the date of request is not available or was recorded after the outcome date

- In this table, “less than six months” refers to 180 days or less, “six months to a year” refers to between 181 days and 365 days, “1 to 2 years” refers to between 366 days and 730 days, and “more than 2 years” refers to over 730 days.

The person-level data collection on EHC plans is in its second year. As a result, the department expects the quality of data returns to improve over time, as the collection becomes established. In particular, the recording of the dates of the assessment request and the assessment outcome is subject to data quality issues, which become especially prominent when looking at a low level of granularity. For this reason, cases over two years have been aggregated, and where the date of request is missing or was recorded after the outcome date, this is marked in the table as ‘not available’. The department continues to work with local authorities in understanding and improving the data collection.

The department will continue to maintain close oversight of services in Buckinghamshire to ensure every child and young person with special educational needs and disabilities has access to high quality services.

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[7368]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with Buckinghamshire Council on the adequacy of SEND provision in Buckinghamshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is continuing to support and challenge Buckinghamshire to improve its delivery of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services.

The last local area SEND inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for Buckinghamshire was in March 2022, during which inspectors identified three areas of significant weakness:

- The lack of a cohesive area strategy to identify and meet the needs of those children and young people requiring speech and language, communication and occupational therapy.
- Waiting times for assessments on the autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnosis pathways, and the system-owned plans in place to address this.
- Waiting times to see a community paediatrician.

The local area was required to produce a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to address these areas of weakness, which was accepted by Ofsted and CQC.

Following the inspection outcome, the department has worked closely with its partners in NHS England to monitor, support and challenge the local area partnership in making the necessary improvements. This includes regular monitoring meetings with the local area, focussing on the impact of actions taken on improving the lives of children and young people with SEND and their families.

Buckinghamshire are part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme which provides £1 million in grant funding to support local authorities to provide more

effective SEND services by meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND at an early stage and with the right level of support. The department monitors Buckinghamshire's progress in the DBV programme through quarterly reporting and meetings with the local authority.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Childcare**

James Naish:

[6723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of SEND childcare requirements on parents in full employment; and what steps she plans to take to help support these parents.

Catherine McKinnell:

Every child with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) should be able to access high quality early years provision, with a workforce who can nurture a child's needs, recognise their strengths and build effective working relationships with parents to ensure all children are safe, cared for and able to learn.

All three and four year olds are entitled to 15 hours per week of funded childcare and early education for 38 weeks of the year, regardless of the income or working status of their parent or carer. This is termed the 'universal entitlement'.

Two year olds can get free childcare if they have an education, health and care plan, or are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

The duty on local authorities to secure sufficient childcare extends to children with SEND. The SEND Code of Practice and Equality Act 2010 place certain requirements on providers, holding both local authorities and providers to account.

Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 sets out the responsibilities for local authorities to ensure that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area.

The local authority statutory guidance on Early Education and Childcare sets out a clear requirement that local authorities must report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, including for children with SEND and make this report available and accessible to parents.

Departmental officials have regular meetings with each local authority in England about the sufficiency of their early education and childcare offer and any issues they are facing. This includes one-to-one support through our childcare delivery support contractor, Childcare Works, where appropriate. Childcare Works, is contracted to help local authorities and providers scale up delivery of the expanded early education entitlements and to meet their childcare sufficiency duty. Their activity includes support for local authorities to deliver for children with SEND, for example via national or regional events and supportive materials for use by both local authorities and providers.

■ Special Educational Needs: Finance**Sir Julian Smith:****[6218]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help tackle financial pressures on local authorities resulting from SEND expenditure.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department recognises that many local authorities are facing challenges in managing their high needs budgets, which has impacted their ability to balance their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. We will work with the sector as essential and valued partners to deliver our shared mission and restore parents' trust, including considering how we can help councils manage the impacts of DSG deficits on their finances.

The department has taken action to help those authorities with deficits and will continue to do so. It has published guidance on good practice and provided help and advice through direct contact with all those authorities that have deficits. High needs deficit intervention programmes are designed to improve SEND services by making the very best use of resources to deliver the support that children and young people need. Where additional support is required in a local area, particularly following an Area SEND Inspection, the department commissions specialist SEND Advisors and Commissioners to support local authorities to build on existing strengths and address areas of weakness in local provision.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has made regulations which ring-fence DSG deficits from councils' wider financial positions in their statutory accounts. This is a temporary accounting measure, currently in operation to March 2026, and it is still crucial that local authorities' high needs systems move to a more sustainable position in the near future.

Budgets for the 2025/26 financial year will be set in the forthcoming Spending Review.

Sir Julian Smith:**[6219]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) fairness of the funding allocation system for special educational needs and disabilities provision.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is taking time to consider the various funding formulae that the department and local authorities use to allocate funding for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It is important that there is a fair education funding system that directs funding to where it is needed.

Budgets for the 2025/26 financial year have not yet been set, meaning that decisions on the high needs and schools national funding formulae and the publication of allocations for that year are not to the usual timescales. The department will publish information as soon as possible, after the Budget later in October.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Free Schools**

Sir Julian Smith:

[\[6214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to (a) replace and (b) extend funding announced by the previous Government for 15 new special free schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is committed to making sure that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities receive the support they need to achieve and thrive, which includes a place in a special school where needed.

The window for trusts to apply to run these schools closed on 19 July 2024. The department will provide an update in due course.

The upcoming Spending Review and October Budget will set funding for the 2025/26 financial year. All other future spending decisions will be for the next phase of the Spending Review, which is expected to set budgets for future years in the spring.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Henley and Thame**

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[7242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the provision of SEND services in Henley and Thame constituency; and if she will have discussions with Oxfordshire County Council on (a) the level of and (b) the process for receiving funding for SEND provision.

Catherine McKinnell:

The last local area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for Oxfordshire was in July 2023, which identified widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. The report, published on 15 September, included four areas for priority action:

- The local area partnership should evaluate the quality and impact of services and joint working more effectively in order to inform improvements.
- Leaders should improve their strategic approach to transition planning at all ages.
- Leaders must continue to develop their oversight, strategy and commissioning arrangements of suitable alternative provision.
- Leaders across the partnership should continue to address the long waiting times for children and young people requesting support from health services and those awaiting assessments.

Every child and young person with SEND should have access to high quality services, and where a council does not meet requirements to provide appropriate support for these children, the department will take action to prioritise their needs and bring about rapid improvement.

Oxfordshire County Council was issued with an Improvement Notice on 9 November 2023. This sets out the steps the department expects the local authority to take in raising standards in their SEND services. The department is working closely with its partners in NHS England to monitor, support and challenge the local area partnership to making the necessary improvements, including through regular monitoring meetings, which focus on the impact of actions taken on improving the lives of children and young people with SEND and their families. Oxfordshire County Council are committed to working closely with us to improve their SEND services.

Oxfordshire County Council's high needs funding allocation for children and young people with complex SEND is over £111 million for the 2024/25 financial year, including funding for teachers' pay and pension costs. In addition, this government has allocated Oxfordshire Council an extra core schools budget grant of £1.3 million to help with special schools' costs. The department does not collect data or information on the Council's process for allocating this funding on to specific provision in the Henley and Thame constituency.

Oxfordshire are part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme which provides £1 million in grant funding to support local authorities to provide more effective SEND services by meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND at an early stage and with the right level of support. The department monitors Oxfordshire's progress in the DBV programme through quarterly reporting and meetings with the local authority.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Hertfordshire**

Daisy Cooper:

[6537]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Hertfordshire SEND Improvement Plan, published in December 2023, whether her Department (a) was consulted on and (b) agreed with the implementation of the Hertfordshire County Council target to complete 60% of all new Education, Health and Care needs assessments within the statutory 20 week deadline.

Catherine McKinnell:

The target of 60% of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans being completed within 20 weeks by Hertfordshire County Council is published in the local area partnership's priority action plan. The department understands from Hertfordshire County Council that the 60% target is a realistic initial target rather than the end goal. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission jointly review priority action plans and determine whether they are fit for purpose and they have confirmed that Hertfordshire's plan is fit for purpose. The department does not approve priority action plans; therefore, it did not approve this target. The department's role is to determine whether a priority action

plan is something that the local area can be monitored against, and we have confirmed that Hertfordshire's plan can be monitored.

The department expects all local authorities to meet their statutory duties, and we will continue to monitor and challenge Hertfordshire County Council's EHC plan 20-week timeliness.

The department provides support and challenge to the Hertfordshire local area partnership by monitoring progress against its priority action plan and improvement plan, and by providing advice and guidance via a special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) expert advisor. The partnership has also established a SEND Improvement Board, which is independently chaired by Dame Christine Lenehan, to oversee progress and provide appropriate challenge.

■ Special Educational Needs: Huntingdon

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[6836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children with an education, health and care plan in Huntingdon constituency have a place in (a) primary and (b) secondary school; and how many such children in that constituency do not have a school place.

Catherine McKinnell:

The special educational needs (SEN) publication publishes data on pupils in schools in England with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>. The data file titled "School level underlying data 2024 (csv, 10 Mb)" under the section "Additional supporting files" includes the figures at school level, including the school's parliamentary constituency. As these figures are taken from the January 2024 school census, the parliamentary constituencies are based on pre-election boundaries. Where statistics were published prior to the changes in parliamentary constituency boundaries, they will be updated to reflect the new boundaries in the next publication of statistics. This is expected to be in June 2025 for statistics on schools and pupils, including SEN.

It may be useful to note that as the data requested is published at school level, it can be combined with information from 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS) to identify parliamentary constituency. GIAS currently reflects the changes made following the general election parliamentary constituency changes and is accessible here: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>. Updates to geographical data are made on a quarterly basis using data published by the Office for National Statistics.

Information on the number of children in Huntingdon who do not have a school place is not readily available. Information is however available on the placements of children and young people with EHC plans, for the Cambridge local authority in the publication: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>.

An extract showing the number with placements other than in school or further education establishments, is given at this link: <https://explore-education->

statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/75145e5f-3b4f-4e79-4100-08dce44cbd16.

■ Special Educational Needs: Teachers

Sir Julian Smith:

[6217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to make the teaching workforce more inclusive for individuals with special educational needs and disabilities.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government is committed to making teaching a profession where all teachers, including those with disabilities, have equal opportunities to progress. This includes designing our world-class programmes such as the Early Career Framework and National Professional Qualifications to support teachers from diverse backgrounds. We expect schools, like all employers, to discharge their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and give due consideration to the way their employment practices affect staff at different stages of their careers.

To this end, we are improving data collection on disability within the teaching profession to better understand their barriers to success. In 2023, the department published a report on barriers to collecting disability data and have since enhanced guidance for schools on the School Workforce Census and conducted additional research via the School and College Panel and the Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders Study.

Additionally, the forthcoming Race Equality Act will require public services, including schools, to report data on staffing, pay, and outcomes by disability status, further promoting inclusivity. The department will support schools and multi-academy trusts to meet these requirements when they come into force.

■ Special Guardianship Orders: Carers' Benefits

Alistair Strathern:

[7890]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to make changes to how it calculates 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 department is committed to working with local government to support children in care, including through kinship arrangements.

Local authorities have the powers to provide a range of services, including financial support, to support children and families. As local authorities know their carers best, they have the power to decide what financial support should be provided to special guardianship carers and their children and any payments should be made in accordance with their model for assessing support needs. The government does not set a maximum or minimum allowance for local authorities to administer. While the

government recognises the financial constraints on local authorities, guidance makes it clear that children and young people should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare.

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: Finance

Wendy Chamberlain:

[6518]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the eligibility criteria for students in vulnerable groups in the 16 to 19 bursary fund to include young carers.

Janet Daby:

The department believes it is very important to make sure young carers can participate in education and get the support they need. This support will vary depending on family circumstances.

The 'defined vulnerable groups' face specific issues that mean they are not getting financial support from their families. This will be true of some young carers but not all.

The department provides a range of financial support for students who need it to enable them to participate in further education. This includes free meals, bursaries to help with the cost of education, such as travel, books, equipment and trips, as well as support for childcare and residential costs where required.

Young carers can discuss their individual needs with their school or college which can provide appropriate support, including from the institution's discretionary Bursary Fund.

Kim Johnson:

[6600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to introduce an alternative student finance product for Muslim students.

Janet Daby:

The department is committed to introducing an Alternative Student Finance (ASF) product, compatible with Islamic finance principles, as quickly as it can. To support this, in November we are reconvening the ASF working group, made up of representatives from the Islamic community and finance sector. We have also appointed a secretariat to take forward the Sharia-certification of the ASF product. The department is currently considering how it can best drive forward further progress on ASF and will provide an update on plans in due course.

■ Students: Loans

Anna Dixon:

[7218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase public awareness of the required parental contributions when accessing student loans.

Janet Daby:

Guidance on 'Understanding Student Living Costs' from the Student Loans Company is available on GOV.UK and reviewed on a regular basis. More information on this guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-student-living-costs>. This guidance makes it clear that students are expected to make up the difference between the maintenance loan amount available to them and their total living costs.

Students supplement their living costs support through a variety of means, including parental support, part-time employment, or savings. Students' living costs vary widely, according to their individual circumstances and where they study and reside, so it is not possible to provide a single figure for any parental contribution.

Students can also find more information about some of the alternative sources of funding, and guidance on how to budget for university, at Student Space here: <https://studentspace.org.uk/>.

■ Supply Teachers: Finance

Anna Dixon:

[7219]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing funding for local authority teacher supply pools.

Catherine McKinnell:

Supply teachers perform a valuable role and make an important contribution to the smooth running of schools by filling posts on a temporary basis and covering teacher absences.

Schools and local authorities are responsible for the recruitment of their supply teachers. Local authority supply pools are one of the approaches to providing supply teachers, and local authorities have the autonomy to decide whether to operate supply teacher pools.

The department, in conjunction with the Crown Commercial Service, has established the agency supply deal, which supports schools to obtain value for money when hiring agency supply teachers and other temporary school staff. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deal-for-schools-hiring-supply-teachers-and-agency-workers>.

■ Teachers: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Andrew Cooper:

[\[7062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of teachers in (i) Mid Cheshire constituency, (ii) Cheshire and (iii) England.

Catherine McKinnell:

High quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education. There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England, but the government must do more to ensure it has the workforce needed to provide the best possible education for every child in all parts of the country. This is why the government has set out the ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers and retain our excellent school staff.

The first crucial steps towards achieving this are to ensure teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession and to reset the relationship with the teaching profession. As part of this, it is important that teachers get the pay they deserve, which is why this government is fully funding, as recommended by the School Teachers' Review Body, the 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools. Additionally, from 1 September 2024 schools are no longer required to use performance related pay (PRP) as the basis for appraisals and decisions related to pay progression.

This government is providing schools with almost £1.1 billion in additional funding in the 2024/25 financial year to support schools with overall costs. This matches what we have calculated is needed to fully fund, at a national level, the teacher pay award, and the support staff pay offer in the 2024/25 financial year, after accounting for the overall available headroom in schools' existing budgets.

Alongside teacher pay, the department is making £200 million available for bursaries and scholarships annually, with shortage subject trainees eligible in 2023/2024 for the highest bursaries of £28,000 and £30,000 for scholarships. The department will shortly be announcing the trainee incentives for the 2025/26 academic year.

To help with retention, new teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing in the first five years of their careers can also receive a targeted retention incentive if working in disadvantaged schools. 6 schools in Mid Cheshire are eligible for payments to teachers of up to £6,000 after-tax.

The department has published a range of resources to help address teacher workload and wellbeing, including its 'improve workload and wellbeing for school staff' service and the 'education staff wellbeing charter'. Additionally, effective use of technology can automate tasks and help manage workload for teachers. For example, high quality AI tools have the potential to reduce the amount of time that teachers spend marking, whilst supporting effective feedback and tailored teaching which drive pupil progress.

In August 2024, the department announced a £1 million fund to support innovators to develop proof of concept AI tools to support teachers with marking and providing feedback. Oak National Academy has also recently launched a sector-leading AI lesson planning assistant which enables teachers who choose to use it to create personalised and tailored lesson plans and resources in minutes.

The department is committed to supporting schools to implement flexible working practices including taking planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time remotely, to improve recruitment and retention of teachers. The department is also funding bespoke support provided by flexible working ambassador schools and multi-academy trusts. Schools in Mid Cheshire can access support on flexible working here: <https://www.flexibleworkingineducation.co.uk/>.

The department has established teaching school hubs across the country, which provide approved high quality professional development to teachers at all stages of their careers. Cheshire Teaching School Hub is a centre of excellence supporting teacher training and development across Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester.

■ Teachers: Pay

Damian Hinds:

[6017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her policy is on the 2024-25 pay award for sixth form colleges that are not academies.

Janet Daby:

The government does not set or recommend pay in further education (FE), including in sixth form colleges. 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.

The department recognises the vital role that sixth form college teachers play, as well as other FE colleges, in developing the skills needed to drive the government's missions to improve opportunity and economic growth. That is why the department is investing around £600 million across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas, including in sixth form colleges. The department also continues 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.

Afzal Khan:

[\[6441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing teachers in sixth form colleges with the same pay increases as those agreed with school teachers.

Janet Daby:

The government does not set or recommend pay in further education (FE), including in sixth form colleges. 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.

The department recognises the vital role that teachers in sixth form colleges, as well as other FE colleges, play in developing the skills needed to drive the government's missions to improve opportunity and economic growth. That is why the department is investing around £600 million across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas, including in sixth form colleges. The department also continues 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.

Liz Jarvis:

[\[6689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to provide additional funding for a pay award for teachers in sixth form colleges that are not part of academies.

Janet Daby:

The government does not set or recommend pay in further education (FE), including in sixth form colleges. 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.

The department recognises the vital role that sixth form college teachers play, as well as other FE Colleges, in developing the skills needed to drive the government's missions to improve opportunity and economic growth. That is why the department is investing around £600 million across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas, including in sixth form colleges. The department also continues 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.

Anna Dixon:

[\[7214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department plans to take to help reduce the pay gap between (a) further education college teachers and (b) other teachers.

Janet Daby:

The government does not set or recommend pay in further education (FE). This remains the responsibility of individual colleges who are free to implement pay arrangements in line with their local needs.

The department recognises the vital role that FE teachers play in developing the skills needed to drive the government's missions to improve opportunity and economic growth. That is why the department is investing around £600 million across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas. The department also continues 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 for 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.

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Damian Hinds:

[\[5984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many full-time equivalent teachers (a) there were in 2019, (b) there are in 2024 and (c) she plans to have in post by 2029.

Damian Hinds:

[\[5985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 887 on Teachers: Recruitment, which phases of education count towards the 6,500 target of new expert teachers.

Damian Hinds:

[\[5986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 887 on Teachers: Recruitment, which subjects are included in the 6,500 target for new expert teachers.

Damian Hinds: [\[5987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 887 on Teachers: Recruitment, what her deadline is for achieving the 6,500 target for new expert teachers.

Damian Hinds: [\[5988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 887 on Teachers: Recruitment, whether the 6,500 target for new expert teachers relates only to new entrants to the profession.

Damian Hinds: [\[5999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of the new 6,500 teachers her Department expects to have recruited in each of the next five years.

Damian Hinds: [\[6000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish the pupil number projections by phase of education for her plan to recruit 6,500 expert specialist teachers.

Damian Hinds: [\[6001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish a breakdown by (a) region and (b) phase of education for the 6,500 expert specialist teachers.

Catherine McKinnell:

The within-school and -college factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's outcomes is high quality teaching. Although overall teacher numbers in state-funded schools in England have increased from 453,820 full-time equivalent (FTE) in November 2019 to 468,693 FTE in November 2023, teacher numbers have not kept pace with demand and there are currently shortages of qualified teachers across the country. That is why this government will work with the sector to deliver its pledge to recruit 6,500 additional teachers across schools and colleges over the course of this parliament to raise standards for children and young people and deliver the government's mission to break down the barriers to opportunity at every stage.

The department will share further details of the plans for delivery in due course.

These measures will include getting more teachers into shortage subjects, supporting areas that face recruitment challenges, and tackling retention issues.

The department has already made good early progress towards this key pledge by ensuring teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession. The department has accepted in full the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools, which is effective from September. The requirement for performance related pay has also been removed.

To aid retention, eligible early career teachers in priority science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and technical subjects will be able to claim targeted retention incentive payments worth up to £6,000 after tax from 14 October, with

payments made available to college teachers in key STEM and technical subjects for the first time.

Alongside this, the department is also supporting teachers to improve their workload and wellbeing, including opportunities for greater flexible working. Teachers are now allowed to undertake planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time remotely and the department is also delivering a programme focused on embedding flexible working in schools and multi-academy trusts (MATs). This includes the delivery of supportive webinars and peer support provided by flexible working ambassador schools and MATs. Additionally, the department has made available a range of resources to help address teacher workload and wellbeing, including its 'Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff' service and the 'education staff wellbeing charter'.

The department has also expanded the school teacher recruitment campaign, entitled 'Every Lesson Shapes a Life', and the Further Education teacher recruitment campaign 'Share your Skills'.

The department is dedicated to working in partnership with the sector to re-establish teaching as an attractive profession and as one that existing teachers want to remain in, former teachers want to return to and new graduates and industry professionals wish to join.

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 funding will be subject to the outcomes of these fiscal events.

Munira Wilson: [\[7553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to recruit 6500 teachers; and what her Department's planned timetable is for this recruitment.

Munira Wilson: [\[7554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding has been allocated to the recruitment of 6,500 new teachers.

Munira Wilson: [\[7555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what resources she is allocating to new measures to achieve the recruitment of 6,500 additional teachers.

Catherine McKinnell:

The within-school and -college factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's outcome is high quality teaching, but there are shortages of qualified teachers across the country. This is why this government will work with the sector to deliver its pledge to recruit 6,500 additional teachers across schools and colleges over the course of this parliament, to raise standards for children and young people, and deliver its mission to break down the barriers to opportunity at every stage. The department's measures will include getting more teachers into shortage subjects, supporting areas

that face recruitment challenges and tackling retention issues. Further details will be shared in due course.

The department has already made good, early progress towards this pledge by ensuring teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession. The department has accepted in full the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools, which is effective from September. The department is also removing the requirement for performance related pay.

Alongside this the department is also supporting teachers to improve their workload and wellbeing, including opportunities for greater flexible working. Teachers are now allowed to undertake planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time remotely and the department is also delivering a programme focused on embedding flexible working in schools and multi-academy trusts (MATs). This includes the delivery of supportive webinars and peer support provided by flexible working ambassador schools and MATs. Additionally, the department has made available a range of resources to help address teacher workload and wellbeing, including its improve workload and wellbeing for school staff service and the education staff wellbeing charter.

The department has also expanded the school teacher recruitment campaign 'Every Lesson Shapes a Life' and the further education teacher recruitment campaign 'Share your Skills'.

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 funding will be subject to the outcomes of these fiscal events.

The department is dedicated to working in partnership with the sector to re-establish teaching as an attractive profession, and one that existing teachers want to remain in, former teachers want to return to, and new graduates and industry professionals wish to join.

■ Universities: Freedom of Expression

Bradley Thomas:

[7046]

To ask the Secretary for Education, what steps she is taking to help protect free speech on university campuses.

Janet Daby:

This government fully supports freedom of speech and academic freedom. Higher education (HE) must be a space for robust discussion and intellectual rigour. This is enshrined within the existing legislation, whereby universities have a legal obligation to protect lawful freedom of speech, and protections for free speech are also set out in the requirements in the Office for Students' Regulatory Framework.

In addition, the government took the decision to pause implementation of further parts of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act because it wants to consider the impact of the Act and make sure that it effectively protects freedom of speech.

The department is continuing to meet with a full range of stakeholders, including academics with concerns about constraints on freedom of speech. This will feed into decision making on the future of the Act and this government's longer-term policy on protecting freedom of speech across the HE sector.

■ Vocational Education: Finance

Afzal Khan: [6440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to announce whether her Department will provide funding for (a) BTEC and (b) Alternative Technical Qualification courses in the (i) 2025-26 and (ii) 2026-27 academic year.

Janet Daby:

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

Additional details about the principles of the review were published in an FE Week article on 30 September 2024, which can be accessed here: <https://feweek.co.uk/how-well-go-about-reforming-the-level-3-landscape>.

The department is working to review the defunding due to take place in 2025 and will publish the outcomes of this review before the end of the year.

The department has not announced any defunding for 2026.

Abtisam Mohamed: [6932]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing funding for vocational qualifications at level three for the 2025-26 academic year.

Janet Daby:

The department funds vocational and technical qualifications for post-16 learners and will continue to fund them in 2025 in line with its broader policy on qualifications.

The government is clear that learners should study high quality qualifications that support its missions to grow the economy and break down barriers to opportunity. In July, the department announced that it was undertaking a rapid review of qualifications and paused the defunding due to take place on 1 August 2024. This review is well underway and will confirm the funding status for the Level 3 qualifications on the defunding lists.

There are qualifications on these lists which have low and no enrolments. These will have funding removed, although we also accept that there are exceptions, such as niche qualifications, and we will allow for this.

The department is open to qualifications continuing to be funded where they are needed. This could include large qualifications and those that overlap with T Levels where necessary. This may be in the short or longer term, and the department is clear that it wants to continue to reform qualifications so that quality improves.

The review of qualifications reform will be completed by the end of the year.

The department has also introduced new technical and academic qualifications at Level 3 and at Level 2 and these will be available from August 2025.

The qualifications landscape available in 2025 and beyond will include options in addition to A levels and T Levels, where they are needed to support economic growth, support employers and learners and broaden opportunity.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Capture and Storage

Clive Lewis:

[\[6325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential risks of investing in carbon capture storage technology.

Sarah Jones:

The Department has developed a risk management approach for monitoring the risks associated with investing in CCS technology. This approach follows government best practice and has been reviewed and approved by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority's major projects gateway process. The Department has documented the material risks within the Full Business Cases for the two clusters. These FBCs have been reviewed and approved by the departmental investment committee and Major Projects Review Group, reflecting the fact that these bodies are satisfied that the programme's approach to risk management is robust, and that the overall risk profile of the projects is consistent with the Department's stated risk appetite.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Civil Servants

John Glen:

[\[6129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many people have been appointed to civil service positions without open competition in his Department since 4 July 2024; what their (a) job titles and (b) salary bands are; and on what basis each was appointed

Michael Shanks:

All recruitment into the Civil Service is governed by the CSC Recruitment Principles 2018.

The recruitment principles are for departments to implement and set out how recruitment needs to be conducted, along with the exceptions that departments can apply to these principles. In the latest year for which data is available (year ending March 2023) around 9,000 people were hired through the different Exception routes across the civil service.

Exceptions typically involve bringing in relevant skills into the department for a time limited period, and initiatives to increase the diversity of the department. These are long established routes to bring talent, potential and expertise into the department.

In total, 24 people have been appointed to civil service positions in DESNZ through Exception routes since 4 July 2024. We are unable to provide job titles and salary bands as this could lead to individuals being identified due to the numbers being sufficiently low when broken down into these categories.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Ecotricity

Joy Morrissey:

[6511]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have met (i) Dale Vince and (ii) representatives of Ecotricity since 5 July 2024.

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.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[7000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type of each car is; and what the budget for those cars was in the 2024-25 financial year.

Michael Shanks:

DESNZ contracts with the Government Car Service for the provision of two cars for the use of Ministers.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-car-service>

Due to logistical and operational reasons the type of vehicles deployed can vary on a daily or weekly basis. The budget allocation for the 2024-25 financial year is £288,000.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[7001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Michael Shanks:

DESNZ contracts with the Government Car Service for the provision of two cars for the use of Ministers.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-car-service>

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[6130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, 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.

Michael Shanks:

The following appointments have been made by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero since 4 July 2024:

Direct ministerial:

Clean Power 2030 Commission – 8 commissioners

Great British Energy – Start-up Chair

Great British Nuclear – one interim non-executive director

Other appointments:

National Energy System Operator – Chair

Nuclear Decommissioning Authority – one non-executive board member

Nuclear Liabilities Fund Limited – Trustee Director and Chair of Audit Committee

No one has been removed from their post or asked to resign by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero since 4 July 2024.

Details of appointments can be found in the annual report and accounts of individual bodies or on GOV.UK.

■ District Heating: Prices

Clive Lewis:

[6321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with Ofgem on setting a timeline to bring heat network pricing in line with prices paid by other consumers.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Officials in my department have been working closely with Ofgem, ahead of the third and final, joint consultation on proposals for heat network regulation. This will include proposals on fair pricing. This consultation will be published in due course.

Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Neil O'Brien:**[\[6463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what data his Department holds on the number of bidirectional chargers for electric vehicles that have been installed.

Michael Shanks:

Bidirectional chargers for electric vehicles to enable them to export as well as import energy from their batteries is an emerging technology area. It will enable electric vehicle drivers to sell electricity back to the grid, as well as power their homes or business. This can save money for electric vehicle drivers and will contribute to delivering this Government's clean energy superpower mission.

Whilst Government does not currently hold data on the total number of bidirectional chargers installed, over 650 were installed in homes and workplaces across the UK as part of the UK vehicle to grid innovation programme which ran from 2017 to 2022. Ongoing UK government funded innovation is supporting the further development and deployment of this important technology.

Electrical Substations**James Naish:**[\[6718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to his keynote speech at the Energy UK conference 2024 on 17 September 2024, what steps he plans to take to help protect communities with an above-average number of substations resulting from high volumes of large projects being simultaneously submitted by different developers.

Michael Shanks:

The strategic network planning processes led by the Government's new National Energy System Operator ensures community impact is considered when recommendations for new transmission infrastructure are made and that new infrastructure locations are considered strategically and sensitively. Where such infrastructure is needed, developers seek to reduce impacts through its design.

It is also important to this Government that, where communities host clean energy infrastructure, they should directly benefit from it, and we are considering how to most effectively deliver this. This includes developing guidance on community benefits for electricity transmission network infrastructure, which we will publish in due course.

■ Electricity Generation: Wales

Llinos Medi:

[7929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of properties in Wales that are unable to generate their own electricity due to capacity constraints in the electricity distribution network.

Michael Shanks:

The Department does not hold data on this. For generation of 3.68kW or less a property owner only has to notify the distribution network operator (DNO) post-installation. For larger installations the DNO will assess the impact of the proposed generation on the network, and either allow it to connect immediately or provide a connection date, and any costs.

■ Electricity: Standing Charges

Sir Ashley Fox:

[6875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has had discussions with Ofgem on reducing electricity standing charges.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Although standing charges are a commercial matter for suppliers, and are regulated by Ofgem, we know that too much of the burden of the bill is placed on them. The Government has worked constructively with the regulator on the issue of standing charges, and we are committed to lowering the cost of them.

Ofgem's recently published discussion paper sets out the options for how standing charges could be reduced, including by moving some supplier operational costs off standing charges onto the unit rate, increasing the variety of tariffs available for consumer in the market, and in the longer term, reviewing how system costs are allocated. Ofgem's publication can be found here: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/call-for-input/standing-charges-domestic-retail-options>.

Sir Ashley Fox:

[6876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his Department's policy is on reducing electricity standing charges.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Although standing charges are a commercial matter for suppliers, and are regulated by Ofgem, we know that too much of the burden of the bill is placed on them. The Government has worked constructively with the regulator on the issue of standing charges, and we are committed to lowering the cost of them.

Ofgem's recently published discussion paper sets out the options for how standing charges could be reduced, including by moving some supplier operational costs off standing charges onto the unit rate, increasing the variety of tariffs available for consumer in the market, and in the longer term, reviewing how system costs are allocated. Ofgem's publication can be found here: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/call-for-input/standing-charges-domestic-retail-options>.

■ Electricity: Wales

Llinos Medi: [\[7928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to expand the capacity of the electricity distribution network in Wales.

Michael Shanks:

The government is committed to expanding the electricity network to support its Clean Energy Superpower mission and is working closely with Ofgem and industry to mobilise the required investment. Under the most recent price control for electricity distribution, covering 2023-2028, Ofgem has allowed £22.2bn for upfront network investment across GB, including Wales, of which £3.1bn is set aside for network upgrades to help the grid ready for low carbon technologies.

Additionally, the National Infrastructure Commission is providing recommendations in early 2025 on the policy decisions required to make the electricity distribution network fit for net zero.

■ Energy Company Obligation: Social Rented Housing

Mark Garnier: [\[6191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to retain the social housing obligation in future iterations of the Energy Company Obligation scheme.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The current iteration of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), ECO4, began in April 2022 and is scheduled to run until March 2026. ECO supports eligible social housing properties in energy efficiency bands D - F.

We are considering the role of supplier obligations in achieving our fuel poverty and clean power targets post-2026. Future iterations and changes to tenure eligibility would be subject to public consultation.

■ Energy Supply

Priti Patel: [\[6175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has a planned timetable for the (a) development and (b) publication of Strategic Spatial Energy Plans.

Michael Shanks:

We are committed to a more strategic approach to energy planning and will shortly commission NESO to produce the first Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP). The commission is the first step in the process, setting out our expectations for how the SSEP will be produced and governed. It will also include details on timelines for development, consultations and publication.

The SSEP will build upon independent advice provided by NESO on the pathway to delivering clean power by 2030 commissioned in August 2024.

■ Energy Supply: Refineries

Nick Timothy:

[\[6740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the role of the refining sector in UK energy security in the periods (a) 2025-30, (b) 2030-40 and (c) 2040-50.

Michael Shanks:

The UK has a diverse and resilient fuel supply, and refineries will continue to play a significant role in the UK's economy and energy security.

As the UK transitions to net zero, the production of low carbon fuels, including by refineries, will remain important to reduce emissions across the road, aviation and maritime sectors. Together, we will harness the skills and expertise of our oil and gas workforce to make Britain a clean energy superpower.

Nick Timothy:

[\[6741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the proposed ban on petrol and diesel cars on the (a) economic viability of the UK's refining sector and (b) UK's energy security in the context of the closure of Grangemouth refinery.

Michael Shanks:

As set out in our manifesto, we are committed to phasing out new cars that rely solely on internal combustion engines by 2030. We want to provide certainty and ensure consumers can benefit from more efficient vehicles. We will set out more details on specific 2025-30 requirements for both cars and vans shortly.

Refineries will continue to play a significant role in the UK's economy and energy security, and the government will support the sector to adapt to achieve our net zero ambitions. Together we will harness the skills and expertise of our refinery workforce to make Britain a clean energy superpower.

■ Energy: Billing

Chi Onwurah:

[\[8135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with Ofgem on guidance to energy companies on the maximum credit they can hold of their customers' funds before reducing the direct debt or offering a refund.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Ministers have discussed with Ofgem the need to drive higher standards of service for energy customers.

Ofgem requires suppliers to ensure that payments are set to avoid building up excessive credit balances, including taking regular meter readings. Excess credit balances should be refunded promptly, upon request.

Direct debit payments are designed to be flat across the year, meaning that energy accounts tend to build up a credit balance over the summer, when energy use low, with the reverse occurring over the winter months.

■ Energy: Community Development

Steff Aquarone: [\[7991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to publish an updated Community Benefits Protocol for England.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is planning to publish updated community benefits guidance for onshore wind in England in due course.

■ Energy: Conservation

Mark Garnier: [\[6187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a national energy efficiency advice service.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government recognises that access to trusted and impartial information is an important enabler to consumers, when making choices about how to retrofit their homes.

This is why the government delivers a number of digital services on GOV.UK to support consumers to take action.

The government is going further to simplify the user journey for consumers, on GOV.UK, creating a single access point for all homeowners, landlords and tenants at varying points in their retrofit journey. It will bring together information, sources of funding and links to trusted installers, and simplify and expand the current government advice and information offer. We will seek to build on this model as we roll out our Warm Homes Plan.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Home upgrade revolution as renters set for warmer homes and cheaper bills published on 23 September 2024, what account the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the changes to Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards will take of the Renters' Rights Bill.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

We have announced our intention to publish consultations on increasing minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector and the social rented sector by the end of the year.

DESNZ and MHCLG are working closely together to take account of the impact of MEES and the Renters' Rights Bill on the private and social rented sectors. The impact of potential changes to the wider policy landscape for private and social landlords will be considered in the respective Impact Assessments.

Energy: Debts**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[6453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of a help to repay scheme for energy debt.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government recognises that consumer energy debt is a large and increasing issue, and it expects energy suppliers to do everything they can to support customers who are struggling with bills, especially vulnerable customers. It is important that anyone who is struggling to pay their energy bills contact their supplier.

In August, I met with suppliers and encouraged them to build on the Voluntary Debt Commitment from last year and go further in supporting vulnerable customers this winter.

Tom Hayes:[\[7112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a scheme to help consumers repay energy debt.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government recognises consumer energy debt is a large and increasing issue, and it expects energy suppliers to do everything they can to support customers who are struggling with bills, especially vulnerable customers. Many energy suppliers provide schemes to help consumers to repay their energy debt. It is important that anyone who is struggling to pay their energy bills contact their supplier.

In August, I met with suppliers and encouraged them to build on the Voluntary Debt Commitment from last year and go further in supporting vulnerable customers this winter.

Energy: Disability**Tom Hayes:**[\[7109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to ensure utilities are affordable for disabled households.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes that the only way to permanently protect billpayers, including disabled households, is to speed up the transition towards homegrown clean energy and reduce our reliance on volatile international fossil fuel markets.

Whilst we make this transition, the Government is committed to ensuring vulnerable households are supported with their energy bills and we are looking at all options on how to support these households.

In the short-term, we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 annual rebate on energy bills for eligible low-income households. We are also working with energy suppliers to ensure they are providing additional support to vulnerable customers that are struggling with bills.

Energy: Housing**Alex Mayer:**[\[6929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that programmes to retrofit homes to make them more energy efficient protect against extreme heat as well as cold.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has started delivery of the Warm Homes Plan, including a new Warm Homes: Local Grant, and the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund. These schemes require installers to be Trustmark registered and measures to be installed in accordance with the Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 2030 and PAS 2035. This ensures the risks of unintended consequences, such as mould, condensation due to poor ventilation and overheating, are minimised.

The Warm Homes Plan will ensure that homes are fit for the future. To support policy development in this area, the Government is conducting research to identify which building types are most vulnerable to extreme heat and appropriate adaptation solutions.

Edward Morello:[\[7321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many homes had energy efficiency measures installed in West Dorset constituency between 2010 and 2024.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Information on the number of homes that have had energy efficiency measures installed in West Dorset constituency from 2013 onwards can be found in the tables accompanying the following scheme statistical releases:

- [Energy Company Obligation](#) – Table 4.5
- [Great British Insulation Scheme](#) – Table 6
- [Green Homes Grant Vouchers Scheme](#) – Table 4.4
- [Local Authority Delivery and Home Upgrade Grant](#) – Table 11

- [Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund \(SHDF\)](#) – Table 7

Prior to 2013, Government support for energy efficiency measures was provided via the [Carbon Emissions Reduction Target](#) and [Community Energy Saving Programme](#).

■ Energy: Infrastructure

Priti Patel: [\[6173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the impact of new onshore energy infrastructure on local communities.

Michael Shanks:

Full account is taken of potential local community impacts when determining an energy infrastructure application. The Planning Act 2008 requires developers to engage with the local authority (or authorities) and consult the local community on a proposed development before submitting an application. Developers must take into account local community views when developing their proposals.

It is the government's priority to build support for developments by ensuring communities directly benefit.

■ Energy: Meters

James Naish: [\[6713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to ensure that people with a prepayment meter are eligible for electric vehicle friendly tariffs.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Prepayment meter households can be eligible for a range of tariffs, depending on their circumstances. To take advantage of charging an electric vehicle at off-peak rates a smart prepayment meter, or other meter that works on a time of use basis, is required and can be fitted free of charge.

■ Energy: Price Caps

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[6507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will meet with Ofgem to discuss the potential merits of reducing the energy price cap for winter 2024-25.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Energy Price Cap is set by Ofgem and there are different costs included in the price cap, such as the wholesale cost of energy. Any changes to these costs will affect how much the price cap will be each time it is reviewed, and the main driver of the price cap increase for the period 1 October to 31 December 2024 was an increase in wholesale energy prices.

As such, the Government believes the only way to protect consumers permanently is to speed up the transition towards homegrown clean energy and reduce our reliance on volatile international fossil fuel markets.

Whilst we make this transition to clean power by 2030, the Government is committed to ensuring vulnerable households are supported with their energy bills. We are looking at all options on how to make energy bills more affordable for these households.

In the short-term, we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 annual rebate on energy bills for eligible low-income households. We are also working with energy suppliers to ensure they are providing additional support to vulnerable customers that are struggling with bills

■ Energy: Prices

Shaun Davies:

[\[6691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help households reduce energy bills.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes the only way to protect billpayers permanently is to speed up the transition towards homegrown clean energy and remove our dependence on volatile international fossil fuel markets.

Whilst we transition to clean power by 2030, we will help families reduce their energy bills through our Warm Homes Plan which will upgrade homes across the country to make them warmer and cheaper to run. The Government will continue to provide additional support to vulnerable households struggling to pay their bills through our Warm Homes Discount.

■ Energy: Social Tariffs

Sir John Hayes:

[\[5864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing a discounted energy social tariff for disabled households.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has no plans to introduce an energy social tariff this winter. However, we are committed to ensuring vulnerable households are supported with their energy bills and we are looking at all options on how to support these households.

The Government is continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills to over 3 million eligible low-income households. We are also working with energy suppliers to ensure they are providing additional support to vulnerable customers.

The Government has also extended the Household Support Fund for an additional 6 months until 31 March 2025 with an extra £500 million in funding, and I encourage any individual who is struggling to pay their bills contacts their local authority to see if they are eligible for this support.

Alex Sobel:

[\[6431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to introduce social energy tariffs.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has no plans to introduce an energy social tariff this winter. However, we are committed to ensuring vulnerable households are supported with their energy bills and we are looking at all options on how to support these households.

The Government is continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills to over 3 million eligible low-income households. We are also working with energy suppliers to ensure they are providing additional support to vulnerable customers. The Government has also extended the Household Support Fund for an additional 6 months until 31 March 2025 with an extra £500 million in funding, and I encourage any individual who is struggling to pay their bills contacts their local authority to see if they are eligible for this support.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[6450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to Scope's report entitled Disability Price Tag 2024: Living with the extra cost of disability, published in September 2024, what steps he is taking with providers to help ensure that utilities are affordable for disabled households.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes that the only way to permanently protect billpayers, including disabled households, is to speed up the transition towards homegrown clean energy and reduce our reliance on volatile international fossil fuel markets.

Whilst we make this transition, the Government is committed to ensuring vulnerable households are supported with their energy bills and we are looking at all options on how to support these households.

In the short-term, we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 annual rebate on energy bills for eligible low-income households. We are also working with energy suppliers to ensure they are providing additional support to vulnerable customers that are struggling with bills.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[6452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing a discounted energy social tariff for disabled households, in the context of Scope's report entitled Disability Price Tag 2024: Living with the extra cost of disability, published in September 2024.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has no plans to introduce an energy social tariff this winter. However, we are committed to ensuring vulnerable households are supported with

their energy bills and we are looking at all options on how to support these households.

The Government is continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills to over 3 million eligible low-income households. We are also working with energy suppliers to ensure they are providing additional support to vulnerable customers.

The Government has also extended the Household Support Fund for an additional 6 months until 31 March 2025 with an extra £500 million in funding, and I encourage any individual who is struggling to pay their bills contacts their local authority to see if they are eligible for this support.

Shaun Davies:

[\[6699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with energy companies on expanding the social tariff to include all pensioners.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has no plans to introduce an energy social tariff this winter. However, we are committed to ensuring vulnerable households are supported with their energy bills and we are looking at all options on how to support these households.

The Government is continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills to over 3 million eligible low-income households. We are also working with energy suppliers to ensure they are providing additional support to vulnerable customers.

The Government has also extended the Household Support Fund for an additional 6 months until 31 March 2025 with an extra £500 million in funding, and I encourage any individual who is struggling to pay their bills contacts their local authority to see if they are eligible for this support.

Tom Hayes:

[\[7111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing a discounted energy social tariff for disabled households.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has no plans to introduce an energy social tariff this winter. However, we are committed to ensuring vulnerable households are supported with their energy bills and we are looking at all options on how to support these households.

The Government is continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills to over 3 million eligible low-income households. We are also working with energy suppliers to ensure they are providing additional support to vulnerable customers.

The Government has also extended the Household Support Fund for an additional 6 months until 31 March 2025 with an extra £500 million in funding, and I encourage any individual who is struggling to pay their bills contacts their local authority to see if they are eligible for this support.

Chris Hinchliff:

[7158]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a social tariff in the energy market.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has no plans to introduce an energy social tariff this winter. However, we are committed to ensuring vulnerable households are supported with their energy bills and we are looking at all options on how to support these households.

The Government is continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills to over 3 million eligible low-income households. We are also working with energy suppliers to ensure they are providing additional support to vulnerable customers.

The Government has also extended the Household Support Fund for an additional 6 months until 31 March 2025 with an extra £500 million in funding, and I encourage any individual who is struggling to pay their bills contacts their local authority to see if they are eligible for this support.

■ Energy: Standing Charges

Ian Lavery:

[6245]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with Ofgem on (a) the level of standing charges for (i) gas and (ii) electricity in the North East and (b) regional variations in standing charges.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Although standing charges are a commercial matter for suppliers, and are regulated by Ofgem, we know that too much of the burden of the bill is placed on them. The Government has worked constructively with the regulator on the issue of standing charges, and we are committed to lowering the cost of them.

The Government understands that there is a degree of variance in electricity standing charges across the country. This arises from a regional variation in electricity distribution costs and reflects the different costs of maintaining and upgrading the distribution network in a specific area, and the number of consumers those costs are spread across.

Ofgem's recently published discussion paper sets out the options for how standing charges could be reduced, including by moving some supplier operational costs off standing charges onto the unit rate, increasing the variety of tariffs available for consumer in the market, and in the longer term, reviewing how system costs are allocated. Ofgem's publication can be found here: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/call-for->

[input/standing-charges-domestic-retail-options](#). The Government will continue to support Ofgem in this work and ensure that standing charges are reduced.

Mary Kelly Foy:

[6508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of replacing the standing charge on household energy bills with a measure based on usage.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Although standing charges are a commercial matter for suppliers, and are regulated by Ofgem, we know that too much of the burden of the bill is placed on them. The Government has worked constructively with the regulator on the issue of standing charges, and we are committed to lowering the cost of them.

Ofgem's proposal to move some operational costs from standing charges to unit rates would see low-income households' overall bills reduced on average, but we are mindful of the distributional effects of changes to standing charges, particularly on vulnerable consumers.

Ofgem's recently published discussion paper sets out the options for how standing charges could be reduced, including by moving some supplier operational costs off standing charges onto the unit rate, increasing the variety of tariffs available for consumer in the market, and in the longer term, reviewing how system costs are allocated. Ofgem's publication can be found here: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/call-for-input/standing-charges-domestic-retail-options>.

■ Environment Protection: Industry

Mary Glindon:

[6235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to help increase the number of supply chain jobs in green industries.

Sarah Jones:

The Government will introduce a new Industrial Strategy to drive long-term sustainable, inclusive and secure growth - through securing investment into crucial sectors of the economy. The Industrial Strategy will be key in identifying levers to ensure that we continue to build strong domestic supply chains for green industries and are able to capitalise on the growth opportunities of the net zero transition.

Additionally, we have established the Office for Clean Energy Jobs within DESNZ. The Office is dedicated to ensuring that clean energy jobs are not only abundant but also of high quality, focussing on fair pay, favourable terms, and good working conditions.

■ Fuel Oil

Priti Patel:

[6170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) homes and (b) commercial premises that have oil heating (i) in Witham constituency, (ii) in Essex and (iii) nationally.

Michael Shanks:

The Office for National Statistics publish 2021 Census estimates of occupied household spaces in England and Wales by central heating type, at lower tier local authority level: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS046/editions/2021/versions/4>

The evidence base for non-domestic buildings is being developed by this Department through the Non-Domestic Building Stock project. Analysis of a survey of large off-gas grid buildings shows national-level estimates of energy source in Tables 26 and 27: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c3bc2c28a4a00012d2ba61/non-domestic-building-stock-large-off-gas-grid-premises.pdf>

The Department also publishes non-domestic building statistics in England and Wales. Tables 3A and 10 include data on the number of off-gas grid buildings, broken down to lower authority and constituency level:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65d605b52197b200117fa7ad/nd-need-2023-geographical-annex-data-tables.xlsx>

Priti Patel:

[6172]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of new (a) regulations or (b) legislation for oil heated (i) domestic and (ii) commercial premises.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government will make use of all available data to inform any future decisions on decarbonising heat in domestic and commercial properties off the gas grid.

■ Fuel Oil and Liquefied Petroleum Gas: Price Caps

Helen Morgan:

[6666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a price cap for heating oil and liquefied petroleum gas.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government's assessment is that the introduction of a price cap for heating oil and liquefied petroleum gas would not be in the long-term interests of consumers.

The structures of the heating oil and liquefied petroleum gas markets are different from those of gas and electricity supply. Imposing a price cap, which might fall below wholesale costs faced by heating fuel distributors, risks companies exiting the market or not accepting orders when they would make a loss on their fulfilment.

■ Fuel Poverty

Mark Garnier: [\[6188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to publish an updated Fuel Poverty Strategy.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Government is committed to slashing fuel poverty and is currently reviewing the Fuel Poverty Strategy, published in 2021. The review will be published in due course and will determine whether an updated strategy is required.

Andrew Cooper: [\[7051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of households in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England that spent more than 10% of their income on energy costs in each of the last three years.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The latest statistics for the number of households in fuel poverty (using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency fuel poverty metric) in parliamentary constituencies in England, can be found in the published sub-regional fuel poverty statistics, in Table 4: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-2023-2021-data>

The latest official Fuel Poverty Statistics for England were published in February 2024 here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics#2023-statistics>

Annex D of the report and table 20 of the Trends tables include statistics from 2010 to 2024 using an affordability measure of the number of households required to spend more than 10 per cent of their income on domestic energy. Affordability measure estimates are not held at sub-national level.

■ Geothermal Power: Cost Effectiveness

Munira Wilson: [\[6544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) costs of geothermal energy.

Kerry McCarthy:

We know that to achieve net zero, we must look at how we can accelerate the potential of all low carbon technologies including geothermal. The Government understands that geothermal can play a role in our decarbonisation ambitions particularly as a low carbon source for heat via heat networks. We have commissioned research into the potential costs of geothermal heat in the UK and will use this to understand how the government can support the sector to achieve its potential.

■ Great British Energy: Aberdeen

John Cooper:

[\[7384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what (a) evaluation and (b) assessment process his Department undertook when choosing Aberdeen as the headquarters of GB Energy.

Michael Shanks:

We considered a range of factors including (1) labour market analysis, (2) mapping of Government estate availability and costs, and (3) proximity to strategic partners and establishments.

I am confident that Aberdeen is the right place for Great British Energy's Headquarters. This decision recognises that Aberdeen is at the heart of the energy transition away from fossil fuels. The city also has an excellent talent pool to support the delivery of Great British Energy. Additional smaller sites in Edinburgh and Glasgow will enable us to take advantage of the expertise, skilled workforce and diversity of projects in place across Scotland.

■ Heat Pumps

Mark Garnier:

[\[6189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what plans his Department has to simplify the process of installing heat pumps.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is committed to simplifying the installation process at every stage of the customer journey and is investing up to £42m in the Heat Pump Ready programme to overcome barriers to heat pump deployment and support innovation in product design. The Government is also considering where regulatory improvements can be made, including supporting Ofgem's end-to-end review of network connections, for which a consultation is expected in Autumn, and reviewing Permitted Development Rights (PDR). The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is analysing responses to the previous government's consultation on PDR, and announcements will be made in due course.

■ Heating: Housing

Helen Morgan:

[\[6667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support residents of off-grid homes with the cost of heating.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government believes the only way to protect billpayers permanently is to speed up the transition towards homegrown clean energy. The creation of Great British Energy will help us harness clean energy, reduce our reliance on volatile fossil fuel markets, and enable us to meet our target to be a clean energy superpower by 2030.

In the short-term, we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 annual rebate on energy bills for eligible low-income households. I am also having regular discussions with energy suppliers to ensure that consumers are supported this winter.

■ Hydrogen: Carbon Emissions

James Naish: [R] [6731]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether it is his Department's policy to introduce a UK low carbon hydrogen certification scheme.

Sarah Jones:

We are considering the role of a UK Low Carbon Hydrogen Certification Scheme in achieving clean power by 2030. Further detail on the Government's approach will be announced in due course.

■ Industrial Energy Transformation Fund

James Wild: [6568]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he expects decisions to be made on applications to the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund Phase 3 Spring 2024 competition.

Sarah Jones:

The Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) Phase 3 spring 2024 window (3.1) is currently awaiting outcomes from the autumn fiscal event before decisions on applications can be made.

■ Insulation: Housing

Imran Hussain: [6283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will include (a) home insulation retrofit schemes, (b) the removal of defective home insulation installed under Government home insulation schemes and (c) measures to promote confidence in green home schemes as objectives to improve energy efficiency in the proposed Great British Energy Bill.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Great British Energy Bill is focused on making provisions related to the setting up of Great British Energy only. It is intentionally broad in scope so Great British Energy can operate flexibly, responding to any future changes in the energy market.

As part of the Warm Homes Plan, the Government has announced a new Warm Homes: Local Grant to help low-income homeowners and private tenants with energy performance upgrades including insulation, as well as the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund, to support social housing providers and tenants. More detail will be provided in due course, including our approach to consumer protection when issues arise with insulation.

Imran Hussain:

[6284]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will include support for homeowners in removing and replacing (a) wrongfully installed and (b) defective cavity wall insulation in their homes as part of his warm homes plan.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

As part of the work on the Government's Warm Homes Plan, we will set out our approach to consumer protection when issues arise with insulation.

Imran Hussain:

[6285]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of (a) wrongfully installed and (b) defective cavity wall insulation on the energy efficiency of homes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Cavity wall insulation is one the most cost-effective energy efficiency measures, saving up to £300 a year on occupants' energy bills. However, Government recognises that there are instances of cavity wall insulation being defective or installed in unsuitable homes which may reduce its energy efficiency performance.

As part of the work on the Government's Warm Homes Plan, we will set out our approach to consumer protection when issues arise with insulation.

■ Local Area Energy Plans

James Naish:

[6717]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to his keynote speech at the Energy UK conference 2024 on 17 September 2024, what steps he plans to take to promote formal local area energy planning at local authority level.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department is considering the role of local energy planning including how it might interact with new initiatives such as Great British Energy Local Power Plan and Ofgem's Regional Energy Strategic Plan, which Ofgem are consulting on.

■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme: Staffordshire

Adam Jogee:

[6975]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to return money the Government (a) has received and (b) will receive from the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme to mineworkers in (i) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (ii) Staffordshire.

Sarah Jones:

Pursuant to my answer to PQ UIN [5215](#) of 18 September 2024, our Manifesto committed to reviewing the surplus sharing arrangements and transferring the Investment Reserve back to scheme members. We are committed to ending the

injustice of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme and work on delivering these commitments is already underway.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Carbon Emissions**

Nick Timothy: [\[6738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the zero emission vehicle mandate on (a) levels of demand for fuel and (b) the economic viability of the refining sector.

Michael Shanks:

As set out in our manifesto, we are committed to phasing out new cars that rely solely on internal combustion engines by 2030. We want to provide certainty and ensure consumers can benefit from more efficient vehicles. We will set out more details on specific 2025-30 requirements for both cars and vans shortly.

Refineries will continue to play a significant role in the UK's economy and energy security, and the government will support the sector to adapt to achieve our net zero ambitions. Together we will harness the skills and expertise of our refinery workforce to make Britain a clean energy superpower.

■ **National Grid: Community Development**

Jess Asato: [\[6934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when the Community Benefits guidance for electricity transmission network infrastructure will be published.

Michael Shanks:

We are committed to ensuring that communities who live near new clean energy infrastructure can see the benefits of this and are currently considering how to most effectively deliver this. This includes developing guidance on community benefits for electricity transmission network infrastructure, which we will publish in due course.

■ **National Grid: East of England**

Priti Patel: [\[6167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the cost to (a) the public purse and (b) energy bill payers of providing a scheme of community benefits to communities affected by the Norwich to Tilbury great grid upgrade.

Michael Shanks:

We are committed to ensuring that communities who live near new clean energy infrastructure can see the benefits of this and are currently considering how to most effectively deliver this. This includes developing guidance on community benefits for electricity transmission network infrastructure, which we will publish in due course.

Whilst details of the guidance are still under development we are not able to estimate the costs of providing community benefits to communities affected by the Norwich to Tilbury grid upgrade. We will provide an update at the appropriate time.

Priti Patel:

[\[6168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will have discussions with National Grid on the potential impact of the proposed Norwich to Tilbury project under the great grid upgrade on local communities in the East of England.

Michael Shanks:

It is the responsibility of the developers of electricity network projects – in this case National Grid Electricity Transmission - to propose a route and obtain planning permission for that route. The government sets the rules for a robust and independent planning process that communities can participate in, with consultation being a central element of the planning process. Any engagement by Ministers must consider the role of the Secretary of State in deciding on planning applications for energy projects, and the limitations on discussing live projects in the development process which have not come to the Planning Inspectorate.

Priti Patel:

[\[6169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will meet local community representatives in the East of England to discuss the potential impact of the proposed Norwich to Tilbury project under the great grid upgrade on those communities.

Michael Shanks:

It is the responsibility of the developers of electricity network projects – in this case National Grid Electricity Transmission - to propose a route and obtain planning permission for that route. The government sets the rules for a robust and independent planning process that communities can participate in, with consultation being a central element of the planning process. Any engagement by Ministers must consider the role of the Secretary of State in deciding on planning applications for energy projects, and the limitations on discussing live projects in the development process which have not come to the Planning Inspectorate.

Priti Patel:

[\[6174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the potential cost of including a package of community benefits in the proposal for the Norwich to Tilbury Great Grid Upgrade.

Michael Shanks:

As details of the guidance on community benefits are still under development, we are not in a position to estimate the costs of providing such benefits to communities affected by the Norwich to Tilbury grid upgrade. We will provide an update at the appropriate time.

Patrick Spencer: [\[8080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussions his Department has had with the agricultural community on the construction of the Norwich-to-Tilbury pylon project.

Michael Shanks:

It is the responsibility of the developers of electricity network projects – in this case National Grid Electricity Transmission - to propose a route and obtain planning permission for that route. The government sets the rules for a robust and independent planning process that communities can participate in, with consultation being a central element of the planning process. Any engagement by Ministers must consider the role of the Secretary of State in deciding on planning applications for energy projects, and the limitations on discussing live projects in the development process which have not come to the Planning Inspectorate.

Patrick Spencer: [\[8081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a community benefit scheme for agricultural landowners affected by the National Grid Norwich to Tilbury project who will no longer be able to farm land with a pylon on it.

Michael Shanks:

The Government cannot comment on specific projects which will come before the Secretary of State for a final planning decision. All projects, regardless of location, must go through the independent and robust planning process.

We are committed to ensuring that communities who live near new transmission infrastructure can see the benefits of it and are considering how to most effectively deliver this. Community benefits are different to compensation. Depending on the specifics of each case, network operators must have an agreement with landowners impacted by the presence of transmission infrastructure projects on their land, which includes payment of appropriate compensation.

■ Private Rented Housing: Energy

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of requiring landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their properties to a EPC C rating by 2030 on (a) rent prices and (b) trends in the number of private sector landlords exiting the sector.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has announced its intention to consult by the end of the year on implementing a minimum energy efficiency standard of Energy Performance Certificate Band C or equivalent in the private rented sector by 2030. The consultation will be accompanied by an Options Assessment, which will consider

impacts arising from the policy proposals, including potential impacts on rent levels and the supply of properties in the sector.

■ Renewable Energy: Housing

Edward Morello:

[\[7320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to increase the number of homes powered by green energy in West Dorset constituency.

Michael Shanks:

As part of our clean power mission, we will work with the private sector to radically increase the deployment of onshore wind, solar and offshore wind by 2030. We will invest in carbon capture and storage, hydrogen and marine energy, and ensure we have the long-term energy storage required.

This will significantly increase the number of homes powered by clean energy across the country, including in West Dorset. Steps we have taken include the immediate removal of the de facto ban on onshore wind in England, establishing an Onshore Wind Industry Taskforce, the re-establishment of the Solar Taskforce, and securing 131 new projects through the AR6 auction.

■ Renewable Fuels: Public Consultation

Priti Patel:

[\[6171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to consult on regulations relating to the introduction of a renewable liquid heating fuel obligation.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Renewable liquid fuels could play a limited role in heating. As sustainable biomass is a limited resource, the Government expect to prioritise its use in sectors like aviation, and potentially homes that are not readily suitable for heat pumps, as these offer the greatest opportunity to reduce emissions and have fewest alternative options to decarbonise. The price of renewable liquid heating fuels is higher than fuels that are currently used off the gas grid. The Government would need to ensure they are affordable before making any decisions on whether to support wider deployment, including the introduction of any obligations.

■ Rented Housing: Energy Performance Certificates

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[6404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the answer of 30 August 2024 to Question 1617 on Energy Performance Certificates: Rented Housing and with reference to his Department's press release entitled Home upgrade revolution as renters set for warmer homes and cheaper bills, published on 23 September 2024, what account the requirement to improve properties to Energy Performance Certificate standard C by 2030 will take of changes to how Energy Performance Certificates are calculated.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has announced its intention to consult by the end of the year on implementing a minimum energy efficiency standard of Energy Performance Certificate Band C or equivalent in the domestic private and social rented sectors by 2030. Government will also shortly set out a consultation with proposals for improvements to Energy Performance Certificates to make them more accurate and reliable, which will be reflected in the consultations on minimum energy efficiency standards for rental homes.

■ Sizewell C Power Station: Finance**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[6413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much and what proportion of the funding that his Department has allocated to the proposed new nuclear plant at Sizewell C has been allocated for (a) land clearance, (b) other site preparation, (c) essential forgings and (d) other components for reactors.

Michael Shanks:

Specific details of the project's spending plans are commercially sensitive – and budget allocations for different elements of work are set by the company, Sizewell C Limited. As majority shareholders in the project, government has previously committed to invest £2.5 billion in the project's development and recently strengthened this with a further subsidy scheme of up to £5.5 billion to provide certainty and ensure the project has access to the necessary financial support to remain on schedule.

■ Solar Power: Housing**Anna Dixon:**[\[7200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department is taking steps to encourage new build developments to include solar panels.

Michael Shanks:

The Government fully supports the accelerated deployment of rooftop solar panels, which will be critical to achieving clean power by 2030.

From next year, Future Homes and Buildings Standards will ensure that all newly-built houses and commercial buildings are fit for a net zero future. The Government will encourage the installation of solar panels on these developments, where appropriate. The Department is working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as they develop these standards.

■ Solar Power: Roads**Dr Roz Savage:**[\[7379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the (a) construction and (b)

operational phases of solar parks on (i) traffic and (ii) communities whose main transport routes are single track highways .

Michael Shanks:

There are established routes in the planning system, such as the National Policy Statements, which consider the transportation impacts of solar projects throughout their construction and operation.

The main traffic impacts are likely to be during construction, however, solar farms are generally comprised of small structures, transported in smaller vehicles before being constructed on-site. Once operational, traffic movements are usually very light, mainly for site maintenance.

Developers are also required to consider the suitability of access routes as part of their application. They may need to modify existing or construct new roads where current infrastructure is unsuitable.

■ **Warm Home Discount Scheme**

Adam Jogee:

[\[6986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Warm Home Discount Scheme in England and Wales was reformed in 2022 to provide more rebates automatically. It currently focusses support towards those on lowest incomes who receive means-tested benefits and living in a property estimated to be relatively high cost to heat. The eligibility criteria are set to make best use of the data available to identify households at greatest risk of fuel poverty.

In winter 2023/24 the WHD scheme delivered rebates to 3.14 million households in Great Britain. This represents an increase of around 646,000 households receiving rebates and an increase of around £97 million of support, compared to 2022/23. Since the scheme began in 2011, over £4 billion in support has been provided to households.

This winter's scheme was launched today, 14 October, and we expect it again to support over three million households. We are exploring options to improve the design of the scheme beyond the current regulations which expire in 2026.

Adam Jogee:

[\[6987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the future of the Warm Home Discount scheme, in the context of the upcoming Autumn Budget 2024.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

This winter's scheme was launched today, 14 October, and we expect it again to support over three million households. We are exploring options to improve the design of the scheme beyond the current regulations which expire in 2026.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Eligibility**Marsha De Cordova:****[6451]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of widening the eligibility criteria for the Warm Home Discount Scheme to include people in receipt of (a) Personal Independence Payment and (b) Disability Living Allowance, in the context of Scope's report entitled Disability Price Tag 2024: Living with the extra cost of disability, published in September 2024.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Warm Home Discount Scheme is currently focused to support those on lowest incomes who receive means-tested benefits and are living in a property we have estimated to be relatively high cost to heat. This winter's scheme has been launched today, 14 October, and we expect it to support over three million households. We are exploring options to improve the design of the scheme beyond the current regulations which expire in 2026.

Tom Hayes:**[7110]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of expanding eligibility to the Warm Home Discount to people in receipt of Personal Independence Payment and Disabled Living Allowance.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Warm Home Discount Scheme is currently focused to support towards those on lowest incomes who receive means-tested benefits and live in a property estimated to be relatively high cost to heat.

This winter's scheme was launched today, 14 October, and we expect it again to support over three million households. We are exploring options to improve the design of the scheme beyond the current regulations which expire in 2026.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Newcastle-under-Lyme**Adam Jogee:****[6985]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many people in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency are in receipt of the Warm Home Discount.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The most recent published statistics on Warm Home Discount can be found here: [Warm Home Discount statistics, 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/warm-home-discount-statistics-2023-to-2024)

Table 5 shows that 4,992 households in Newcastle-under-Lyme received Warm Home Discount in the 2023-24 scheme year, making up approximately 12.1% of the overall number of households in the constituency (boundary as defined prior to the 2024 General Election).

■ Wind Power: Noise

David Chadwick:

[7226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department provides guidance to local planning authorities on (a) assessing the potential noise impact of proposed wind turbines and (b) the consideration of potential noise impact in planning applications for (i) individual wind turbines and (ii) wind farms.

Michael Shanks:

Noise from onshore wind turbines is limited and in most instances well sited onshore wind turbines will not be built in close proximity to dwellings and will therefore have minimal noise impacts. Nevertheless, we recognise that there can be exceptions to the rule, and that noise can be a concern for communities when this is the case. That is why we work closely with acoustic experts and leading scientists to ensure that planning authorities from across the UK have access to the best guidance, so that they can measure and take account of noise emissions when making decisions on onshore wind infrastructure.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Priti Patel:

[6176]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much energy is (a) generated by each offshore wind farm (i) off the coast of the East of England and (ii) across the UK and (b) forecast to be generated by each (A) consented offshore wind farm scheme not yet operational, (B) proposed offshore wind farm scheme under consideration and (C) location identified for future offshore wind farm schemes.

Michael Shanks:

The Department publishes total and regional breakdowns of UK electricity generation by renewable technology here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/regional-renewable-statistics>. Breakdowns of generation for each offshore wind farm cannot be provided as this is commercially sensitive information.

The Department does not publish generation forecasts for future projects - these will depend on specific factors such as precise site design and turbine size (among others) which may not yet be publicly known. Some individual developers will publish estimated output on their project websites.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture

Ben Goldsborough:

[8030]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will work with the relevant control bodies to enable vertical farms to apply for organic accreditation.

Daniel Zeichner:

Organic production is internationally recognised as a soil-based system, that is strictly regulated by assimilated organic Regulations 834/2007 and 889/2008. Vertical farming relies on hydroponic production, the method of growing plants with their roots in a mineral nutrient solution or in an inert medium, which is specifically prohibited within organic production systems. Therefore, it is not possible to certify vertical farming as organic.

Ben Goldsborough:[\[8033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Government's intended planning reforms on Controlled Environment Agriculture.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is committed to a prosperous horticulture sector.

Unlocking innovation is integral to enabling our growers to improve productivity sustainably, and to contribute to our food security. We are working with the industry to stimulate this, including through the adoption of Controlled Environmental Agriculture (CEA) technologies enabling crops to be grown and harvested year-round in a climate-controlled environment.

We are committed to working across Government and are reviewing responses to the recently closed consultation which asked for sector views on our proposed approach to revising the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

■ Animal Welfare: Slaughterhouses**Andy McDonald:**[\[6263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the adherence to animal welfare requirements of abattoirs in receipt of funding from the Smaller Abattoir Fund.

Daniel Zeichner:

Applications to the Smaller Abattoir Fund (SAF) closed on 30 September. All abattoirs eligible under the SAF are registered and approved by the Food Standards Agency, who are also consulted during the assessment of applications. The Food Standards Agency monitor and enforce animal welfare regulations in all approved slaughterhouses.

■ Beef: Exports**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[5909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 on deforestation-free products on levels of beef exports.

Daniel Zeichner:

The European Union's Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) is EU Legislation, and therefore guidance in respect of regulatory compliance is under the responsibility of the European Commission and the Government has not made an assessment of the impact on beef exports. We are aware that the European Commission has recently published additional guidance that stakeholders have been calling for. The EU Commission has also proposed an extra 12-month phase-in period to give stakeholders additional time to prepare. If approved by the European Parliament and the Council, it would make the law applicable on 30 December 2025 for large companies and 30 June 2026 for small and medium enterprises.

■ Biodiversity: Coastal Areas and Rural Areas**Edward Morello:**[\[7332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of rewilding to increase biodiversity in (a) coastal and (b) rural constituencies.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is supporting a number of initiatives to create wilder landscapes across England, as part of a broad approach to nature recovery.

The Government will publish a Land Use Framework for England later this year, taking a collaborative approach. The Framework will explore different approaches to delivery to ensure that we strike the right balance between a range of objectives on food security, economic growth, housing and infrastructure delivery.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Civil Servants**John Glen:**[\[6145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 requires that selection to the Civil Service must be on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition. There may be instances where a role may meet the requirements for use of a Civil Service Commission exception. As part of this, the Civil Service Commission requires that departments provide a quarterly return on their use of Exceptions at SCS2 and above. This information can be found on the CSC website.

The information requested could lead to individuals being identified therefore we are not able to provide job titles and salary bands (due to the potentially low numbers of people in each).

The information about the overall number of people who have been appointed to civil service posts in Defra without open competition will take a disproportionate amount of activity to analyse and provide.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Public Appointments

John Glen: [\[6146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

Daniel Zeichner:

No direct ministerial appointees have been removed or asked to resign from their post since 4 July 2024. Two public appointees have been removed from post since 4 July. The reasons why an appointee has left their role is the appointee's personal information and identifiable and would elicit GDPR considerations.

All appointments, including those made since 4 July 2024 are routinely published on GOV.UK.

■ Fisheries

Manuela Perteghella: [\[6895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to take steps to (a) bring forward legislative proposals to improve protections for farmed fish; and what steps his Department is taking to strengthen the sustainability of the UK's fishing industry.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Animal Welfare Committee's updated Opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing was published last year. A GB-wide farmed trout joint Government and industry working group is now examining the issues raised in the report to explore the potential options for more detailed welfare at killing requirements. The Scottish Government are also working closely with the salmon industry.

In line with the Fisheries Act 2020 the Government is making progress delivering Fisheries Management Plans which maintain or restore fish stocks to sustainable levels. Through fisheries negotiations with coastal states our objective is to set Total Allowable Catches in line with the best scientific advice to make sure that stocks are managed over the long term within sustainable limits whilst ensuring stock-building initiatives account for socio-economic considerations.

■ Flood Control: Cambridgeshire

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[6810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the asset condition of flood (a) defences and (b) infrastructure across Cambridgeshire's middle-level.

Daniel Zeichner:

Assets in the Middle Level are primarily managed by the Middle Level Commissioners with some managed by the Environment Agency (EA).

The 2021 EA's "[Future Fens – Flood Risk Management Project Baseline Report](#)" underscores the importance of these assets across Cambridgeshire Fens.

1. We do not have access to asset condition data for the Middle Level Commissioner's assets. www.middlelevel.gov.uk

The majority of EAs assets are at target condition, on the Low Bank there are 6 out of 66 assets below target condition and to be brought back to target condition.

The EA's Middle Level barrier bank, recently underwent a £44.3m embankment raising project, ensuring it remains in target condition.

1. The Middle Level Commissioners oversee flood risk with a total area of 734km² in size. Specifically for the Middle Level sub-catchment, the Future Fens baseline report has identified approximately £281m would need to be invested in both Environment Agency and Middle Level Commissioner's assets over the next 100 years to maintain the 2021 level of service. It also estimated that these assets deliver around £10.5bn worth of benefits.

The Environment Agency's Fens2100+ programme, with a £9.8m budget, aims to assess and develop a strategy for future asset management and investment needs.

■ Flood Control: Harpenden and Berkhamsted

Victoria Collins:

[7073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help protect rural communities in Harpenden and Berkhamsted constituency from flooding.

Emma Hardy:

Protecting all communities around the country from flooding is one of the Secretary of State's five core priorities. The new Government has established a Floods Resilience Taskforce, a key commitment that marks a new approach to preparing for flooding and working between national, regional and local Government, including the devolved administrations, and flood risk partners.

In the Harpenden and Berkhamsted constituency, the Environment Agency (EA) monitors river levels, working with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), to engage areas that receive flood warnings and flood alerts and review these regularly.

The EA carries out maintenance on the main rivers running through this constituency to ensure that the rivers' conveyance can be maintained during periods of heavy rain.

Upstream of Batford, the EA recently completed a Flood Storage area at Houghton Regis to limit flows, after heavy rain, through Luton and down the River Lee catchment. An updated hydraulic model of the Upper Lee has been completed, covering the east of the constituency from Harpenden to Wheathampstead. The EA supports HCC LLFA to build resilience to surface water flooding in Harpenden town centre. The EA is also engaging with the public to offer advice and guidance on watercourse maintenance and flood-related matters to the community of Astrope.

■ Flood Control: Huntingdon

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how the Floods Resilience Task Force will work with stakeholders in Huntingdon constituency.

Emma Hardy:

The Government's new Floods Resilience Taskforce marks a new approach to preparing for flooding and developing policy. It brings together a range of partners in national, regional and local Government, including the Environment Agency (EA), Devolved Administrations, selected Regional Mayors and Lead Local Flood Authorities.

Membership of the Taskforce from national, regional and local partners is flexed to meet the specific agenda and priorities but the Taskforce will also work with a wider range of flood risk partners as needed.

The EA also has ongoing engagement with the 12 Flood Liaison Action Groups which operate across the constituency, and it also conducts regular maintenance, inspections, conveyance, and public safety assessments along the River Great Ouse and its tributaries.

■ Flood Control: River Severn

Shaun Davies:

[\[6695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress his Department has made with the River Severn Partnership on (a) reducing flooding and (b) protecting (i) homes and (ii) businesses from flood risk.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency is working with partners in the River Severn Partnership (RSP) including local authorities, water companies, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Natural England and environmental organisations on a long-term, whole-catchment scale view of planning for the future in response to climate change: Severn 2100+.

Under Severn2100+ work, the partnership is developing a Climate Resilience Strategy including an options appraisal of the flood risk adaptation actions needed in the River Severn catchment.

The work includes an 'Adaptation Pathways Plan' to help the Environment Agency understand how to sequence those actions, who can help and when.

As a pathfinder, the Environment Agency is working with partners on the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme to examine how a suite of flood risk interventions in the upper catchment of the River Severn can reduce flood risk.

These long-term plans will help the RSP play a key role in bringing forward initiatives to reduce flood risk and improve the water environment whilst supporting economic growth in the area.

A demonstrator programme is underway delivering a series of 8 projects to test concepts and ideas that will support the future roll-out of the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme.

The partnership will be engaging with honourable members in the partnership area to update them soon.

The Defra sponsored capital programme endorsed by the English Severn and Wye RFCC continues to reduce flood risk to properties throughout the Severn Catchment in England.

■ Flood Control: Urban Areas

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent flooding in urban areas.

Emma Hardy:

Protecting all communities around the country from flooding is one of the Secretary of State's five core priorities. The new Government has established a Floods Resilience Taskforce, a key commitment that marks a new approach to preparing for flooding and working between national, regional and local Government, including the devolved administrations, and flood risk partners.

The Government is investing over £1.25 billion in 2024/25 to build and maintain flood defences to scale up national resilience including in urban areas and is strongly committed to requiring standardised sustainable drainage systems in new developments.

We need to see sustainable drainage systems in more developments; to designs that cope with changing climatic conditions, deliver wider water infrastructure benefits and help tackle our water pollution problems. We also need to ensure that appropriate adoption and maintenance arrangements are in place.

The responsibility for local flood risk management falls to lead local flood authorities. They do this in partnership with highways authorities and water companies.

Water and sewerage companies in England must prepare, publish and maintain Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans. They will help water and sewerage

companies better plan for extreme weather, such as flooding, and take the actions necessary to mitigate these current and future risks over the next 25 years.

■ Floods: Hitchin

Alistair Strathern:

[\[7888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Environment Agency on the response to flooding in the Hitchin constituency.

Emma Hardy:

Protecting communities around the country from flooding is one of Defra's five core priorities. That is why we have established a Flood Resilience Taskforce to improve coordination of the national and local flood response and strengthen preparedness ahead of the winter flood season.

Over 1,000 properties across the country have reported flooding to date following heavy rainfall in late September, with over 22,000 protected by flood defences. The Government sympathises with those impacted by recent flooding in the Hitchin constituency, and other areas across the country. As flooding minister, I visited affected communities impacted by flooding and also met with multiple agencies including the Environment Agency working to respond to the event.

These agencies have now shifted their focus to supporting communities to recover from recent flooding. Lead Local Flood Authorities will also begin investigating what happened during the event and identifying potential actions which could be taken by relevant partner agencies to reduce the risk and impact of flooding in future.

■ Food

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[8239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he will make an assessment of the potential merits of granting protected food status to traditional pie and mash.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra officials have already discussed the application process for Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) status with a representative of the producers. They are clear that an application for TSG status requires agreement on the recipe that producers would need to follow to use the name in future. They also understand that all those wishing to use the name would need periodic verification of their practices. Once a formal application is submitted a full assessment of the case can be made.

■ Incinerators

Andy McDonald:

[\[6256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the role of waste incineration capacity in the management of residual wastes in England.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to creating a roadmap to a circular economy, a future where we keep our resources in use for longer, waste is reduced, we accelerate the path to net zero, we see investment in critical infrastructure and green jobs, our economy prospers, and nature thrives. As part of this we will consider the role of residual waste treatment, including energy from waste and landfill, in the context of circularity, economic growth, and reaching net zero.

■ Lead: Contamination

Sir Julian Smith:

[\[6205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what funding he has allocated for the remediation of contaminated land surrounding abandoned lead mines in the the next five years.

Emma Hardy:

Funding to support local authorities in fulfilling their statutory obligations under part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to inspect potential contaminated sites and to seek remediation where required, remains in the form of the Revenue Support Grant.

The Revenue Support Grant is an unringfenced block grant covering many services. It is up to local authorities to decide how much funding is allocated to any service based on local priorities and they are held to account locally.

Through the Water and Abandoned Metal Mines Programme - a partnership between Defra, the Environment Agency and the Coal Authority - government is taking action to develop mine water treatment schemes and diffuse interventions to prevent metals from abandoned metal mines, including lead, entering local river systems. Pollution from abandoned metal mines can contaminate land, such as when spoil heaps contaminated by these mines wash into rivers following heavy rainfall, prior to wash onto agricultural floodplains following flooding events. Many diffuse interventions include natural flood management measures to slow the flow of rivers, along with planting of trees and other vegetation which sequester carbon dioxide in soils.

Local Authorities have the duty to inspect their Areas to identify contaminated land, including land contaminated by lead. If a Local Authority had concerns about land contamination, then they have relevant duties and powers under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to investigate and require the responsible person(s) to carry out remediation if they identify any contaminated land.

Sir Julian Smith:

[6206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance he provides to local authorities for testing land in proximity to former lead mining sites; and whether he is taking steps to inform (a) residents and (b) those involved in domestic food production of potential risk in affected areas.

Emma Hardy:

There are a variety of resources available to local authorities in regard to testing potentially contaminated land.

The Interdepartmental Committee on the Redevelopment of Contaminated Land (ICRCL) issued guidance on The Restoration and Aftercare of Metalliferous Mining Sites for Pasture and Grazing in 1990 ([ICRCL 70/90](#)). Although outdated, parts are still relevant due to the focus on the risks to plants and livestock grazing. The Environment Agency have since taken on the role of issuing technical guidance.

The current overarching guidance on managing risks for land contamination is found in [Land Contamination Risk Management](#) (LRCM). This sets out the 3-stage approach for managing all risks from land contamination including the first stage of risk assessment.

This work is supplemented by additional guidance such as the [Sewage sludge in agriculture: code of practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) which deals with risks to crops, livestock, and consumers from trace elements in soil. Other guidance such as the Environment Agency's Contaminated Land Exposure Assessment (CLEA) Software Model, and C4SL project issued by CL:AIRE provide detailed guidance in other areas, and the Food Standards Agency also play an important role in terms of the potential introduction of contaminants into the food chain.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) does not have a specific statutory role in relation to contaminated land but plays an advisory role in the overall health risk assessment process. UKHSA may be asked for support by local authorities in providing public health advice to their communities.

■ **Lead: Paint**

Tim Farron:

[5973]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Advice on lead paint in older homes, published on 1 April 2013 and withdrawn on 26 April 2024, for what reason it was withdrawn as out of date; and whether he plans to publish an up to date version.

Emma Hardy:

The referenced publication was removed as it was out-of-date.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries

Sarah Champion:

[6253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4529 on Marine Protected Areas, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of bottom trawl fishing on his nature conservation objectives in marine protected areas.

Emma Hardy:

Fisheries regulators make detailed assessments of the impact of all fishing activities on the protected species and habitats in our Marine Protected Areas and develop byelaws to restrict fishing when it has been assessed as damaging. These site-by-site assessments help to ensure fishing is not unduly restricted. Recent examples of these assessments can be found at [Stage 2 MPA Fisheries Assessment.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/stage-2-mpa-fisheries-assessment) and [Dogger Bank SAC Fisheries Assessment.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/dogger-bank-sac-fisheries-assessment).

■ Packaging: Recycling

Deirdre Costigan:

[6782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the proposed level of producer involvement in the (a) establishment and (b) administration of the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme Administrator.

Mary Creagh:

Yes. The Scheme Administrator is already guided by the Scheme Administrator Steering Group, whose membership includes representatives across the packaging and waste value chain including several producers and their trade associations. The Secretary of State is committed to continuing to include producers and the wider packaging value chain in co-designing the future iterations of the scheme's administration. This includes but is not restricted to supporting the development of future producer-led models including a Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO).

Deirdre Costigan:

[6784]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of incentives under the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme to encourage the use of reusable packaging.

Mary Creagh:

Re-use has a significant role to play in driving down unnecessary waste, and the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging will encourage use of reusable and refillable packaging.

■ Peatlands: Somerset**Anna Sabine:** [\[7229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect peatlands in Somerset.

Mary Creagh:

In our manifesto we said that we will expand nature-rich habitats such as wetlands and peat bogs.

In Somerset we are restoring and improving our peatlands through a number of projects, including the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, Landscape Recovery, and the Paludiculture Exploration Fund.

■ Plastics: Treaties**Alex Sobel:** [\[6433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024 to Question 3775 on Plastics: Treaties, whether he plans to personally attend the fifth intergovernmental negotiation meeting for the Global Plastics Treaty in November 2024.

Alex Sobel: [\[6435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024 to Question 3775 on Plastics: Treaties, which Ministers from his Department will attend the fifth intergovernmental negotiation meeting for the Global Plastics Treaty in November 2024.

Emma Hardy:

The host country and Secretariat for the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution have confirmed there will not be a dedicated Ministerial segment at the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. As with previous negotiating committee sessions, the UK plans to have a strong negotiating presence to pursue our aims of an ambitious Treaty covering the full plastics life cycle.

■ Recycling**Jess Asato:** [\[6940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish a strategy for the promotion of a circular economy.

Mary Creagh:

The Secretary of State has asked his Department to prioritise the development of a Circular Economy Strategy for England, to be published in 2025.

■ Robins: Conservation

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to minimise habitat loss of the native UK robin population.

Mary Creagh:

Robins are not of conservation concern and as such receive no targeted conservation action. However, Government actions to restore and create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat by 2042 will support a wide range of native bird species, including robin. Additionally, biodiversity net gain, which requires most planning applications to deliver a 10% increase in biodiversity compared to what was there before, will also benefit our native species through the creation of new or enhanced habitats.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Sarah Green:

[\[7880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of Not for EU labelling requirements on British businesses that export to the European Union but not to Northern Ireland.

Daniel Zeichner:

The previous Government carried out a consultation on extending Not-for-EU labelling requirements across Great Britain, including assessing the impacts on those businesses who export to the European Union but not to Northern Ireland. After reviewing that consultation, this Government has confirmed we will not introduce mandatory 'not for EU' labelling across Great Britain as proposed. This Government will continue to do everything required to support Northern Ireland's integral place in our internal market.

■ Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966

Robin Swann:

[\[7689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to reform the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government is aware of the calls for legislative changes within the veterinary industry. Officials are working closely with stakeholders to consider all options to support the sector.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[8212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to promote compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in Afghanistan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We have repeatedly condemned Taliban restrictions on women and girls' rights, including through UN Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions. As the Foreign Secretary said on 24 August, the exclusion of women from all aspects of public life is another tragic setback for Afghanistan. We are discussing with international partners ways to hold them accountable. More broadly, officials regularly press the Taliban to reverse their inhuman restrictions, both bilaterally and with international partners.

■ Afghanistan: Hazara**Mark Pritchard:**[\[5967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps with his international partners to help protect Hazara communities in Afghanistan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Government continues to call for the human rights of all Afghans to be protected, including those of Hazara communities, most recently in our statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 27 September. We condemn recent attacks against Hazaras. In line with the Hazara Inquiry report's recommendations, we continue to monitor and document discrimination and abuses against Hazaras, including through our support for the UN Special Rapporteur. Officials from the UK Mission to Afghanistan regularly press the Taliban on human rights abuses and the rights of minorities in Afghanistan.

■ Afghanistan: Women**Anna Dixon:**[\[7212\]](#)

To ask the Foreign Secretary, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help protect women from oppression in Afghanistan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We have repeatedly condemned Taliban restrictions on women and girls' rights, including through UN Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions. Most recently in August the Foreign Secretary stated that the exclusion of women from all aspects of public life is a tragic setback for Afghanistan. Officials regularly press the Taliban to reverse their inhuman restrictions, both bilaterally and with international

partners. We are committed that at least 50 per cent of those reached by UK aid in Afghanistan are women and girls, and we contribute to a \$20 million Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund project that supports civil society, particularly women-led organisations.

■ **Armed Conflict: Gender Based Violence**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle violence against women and girls in conflict zones.

Anneliese Dodds:

FCDO's work on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative continues to be a priority. In addition, the UK is a founding member of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, where we advocate for more effective action to tackle violence in conflict zones. FCDO's What Works to Prevent Violence programme is supporting women's rights organisations to prevent Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in conflict zones, for example in Somalia, and to expand the evidence on what works. Tackling violence in conflict zones was an FCDO priority at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, where we announced £2 million new funding to prevent GBV in conflict and crises.

■ **Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences**

Stephen Gethins:

[\[6301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to implement the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Strategy beyond 2025.

Anneliese Dodds:

Preventing conflict and empowering women and girls is critical to the delivery of the government's missions, and the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) remains a priority for the UK. We are working to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, including as vice chair of the International Alliance on PSVI and by supporting thousands of survivors around the world. Decisions on exact future strategies will be taken by ministers in due course.

■ **Armenia: Azerbaijan**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[6569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his article entitled The United Kingdom and the United States, United for Ukraine, published on Substack on 16 September 2024, what his policy is on the use of force by Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK remains steadfast in our support and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Azerbaijan and Armenia. The UK Government was clear during the military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023 that only peaceful diplomacy, not force, should have been used to resolve conflict. This position has not changed. We will work with Armenia and Azerbaijan to promote a prosperous, peaceful and stable South Caucasus. We will continue to work alongside our trusted international partners to help Armenia and Azerbaijan to secure a lasting peace agreement through peaceful negotiations. The UK supported displaced people in the region with £1 million funding to ICRC and we continue to work with partners to ensure humanitarian and other needs are met.

Asia: Storms**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[6502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support countries affected by Typhoon Yagi.

Catherine West:

Typhoon Yagi has had a major impact in many countries in South-East Asia. The UK Government has provided £1m to support the humanitarian response in northern Vietnam and £1.3m to help address the impact of severe flooding in Myanmar. The UK is also a major contributor to two global funds that have allocated funding. These are the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund that has released funds for the Myanmar response; and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Disaster Relief Emergency Fund that is assisting those most affected in Vietnam and Myanmar.

Azerbaijan: Human Rights**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[5933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Azerbaijani counterpart on meeting international human rights standards prior to COP29.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[5934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his international counterparts on Azerbaijan's human rights record in the context of COP29.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK Government regularly raises human rights obligations and commitments with the Azerbaijani authorities, as well as discussing such matters with international counterparts. Along with our international partners, we continue to urge Azerbaijan to improve human rights protections for all its citizens; Azerbaijan's hosting of COP29 in November provides the country with an opportunity to demonstrate meaningful action in this regard. We raised our human rights concerns during Azerbaijan's Universal

Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council in November 2023, and British Embassy Baku regularly raises with the Azerbaijani authorities at senior levels.

■ **Azerbaijan: Political Prisoners**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help protect political prisoners in Azerbaijan in the period (a) before, (b) during and (c) after COP29.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK Government has consistently urged the Azerbaijani authorities, including ahead of COP29, to ensure that those in detention are provided safe conditions and treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, in line with international human rights law. We encourage the authorities to guarantee those in detention are also afforded a fair trial, in accordance with Azerbaijan's international obligations and commitments. We raised our human rights concerns during Azerbaijan's Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council in November 2023, and British Embassy Baku regularly raises these issues with the Azerbaijani authorities at senior levels.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Azerbaijani counterpart on the detention of (a) Ruben Vardanyan and (b) Armenian political prisoners in Baku.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to his Azerbaijani counterpart on releasing Armenian political prisoners before COP29.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK Government is aware of the detention of Ruben Vardanyan and other ethnic Armenians as a result of September 2023's military action in Nagorno-Karabakh. We have consistently urged the Azerbaijani authorities, including ahead of COP29, to ensure that those in detention are afforded a fair trial and are provided safe conditions, in accordance with Azerbaijan's international obligations and commitments. We have been consistent in calling for the release of all remaining prisoners of war, and the return of the remains of the deceased, from the conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. British Embassy Baku regularly raises our concerns with the Azerbaijani authorities at senior levels.

■ **Bangladesh: Community Relations**

Paula Barker:

[\[6616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote civic reconciliation in Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

The UK Government is supporting the Interim Government in Bangladesh as it works to restore peace and order, ensure accountability and create a peaceful pathway to an inclusive democratic future. We support the work of the United Nations as it works to conduct an impartial and independent fact-finding to identify human rights violations. The UK Government is providing up to £27 million over five years (March 2023 to February 2028) under the Bangladesh Collaborative, Accountable and Peaceful Politics programme for protecting civic and political space, fostering collaboration, reducing corruption, and mitigating tensions that lead to violence.

■ Bangladesh: Corruption**Lloyd Hatton:**[\[7140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help (a) recover and (b) repatriate funds linked to corruption investigations involving former members of the government of Bangladesh.

Catherine West:

The UK is committed to assisting investigative, prosecuting and judicial authorities in combating international crime. The UK has robust illicit finance legislation and instruments which can be used to support asset recovery requests. Requests require significant domestic political, as well as cooperation from law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. We stand ready to support in these recoveries to the extent that we can. We are in discussions with the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre hosted by the UK's National Crime Agency and the International Centre for Asset Recovery on how to support the Interim Government of Bangladesh.

■ Bangladesh: Freedom of Religion**Laura Kyrke-Smith:**[\[7701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Bangladeshi counterpart on the right to freedom of religion in that country.

Catherine West:

The UK is committed to Freedom of Religion or Belief for all, as guaranteed under international human rights law and promoting respect and tolerance between different religious and non-religious communities. In July, the Foreign Secretary and I expressed concern about the situation in Bangladesh and called for all sides to work together to end the violence. We support the independent fact-finding mission by the United Nations to identify human rights violations in Bangladesh.

■ Bangladesh: Rohingya

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[8211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Bangladeshi counterpart on (a) education, (b) registration and (c) other assistance for Rohingya refugees arriving in that country.

Catherine West:

The UK regularly discusses the Rohingya refugee response with the Interim Government of Bangladesh. This includes the importance of providing education and skills training to those in the camps, and ensuring new Rohingya arrivals are registered and can access humanitarian assistance. The UK is a leading donor to the humanitarian response in Bangladesh and has provided £391 million to support the Rohingya refugees and host communities since 2017. During the UN General Assembly, Lord Collins, Minister responsible for the UN, and Human Rights, co-hosted a high-level event on the Rohingya crisis, urging greater efforts to improve conditions in the camps and enhance refugee skills.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Rupert Lowe:

[\[6953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will have discussions with the Leader of the House on a holding a debate on the transfer of sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius.

Stephen Doughty:

The agreement announced by the UK and Mauritius on 3 October concerning the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory / Chagos Archipelago is subject to the finalisation of a treaty. Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise the detail of the Treaty prior to ratification, in the usual way.

■ British National (Overseas): Vetting

Priti Patel:

[\[6178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterpart in Hong Kong on the process of securing a Certificate of No Criminal Conviction for people residing in the UK under the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) visa.

Catherine West:

The Government will continue to stand with, and support members of the Hong Kong community and we continue to engage with the Hong Kong authorities on a range of issues. We encourage all those seeking to apply for a CNCC to follow the process as set out by the Hong Kong Police Force, for which further information can be found on their website.

■ British Overseas Territories: Money Laundering

Tom Hayes:

[\[7664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to ensure Overseas Territories establish a public register of beneficial ownership under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018.

Stephen Doughty:

This month, as Minister for the Overseas Territories (OTs), I wrote to OT Governments to set out UK transparency expectations.

I noted that full public accessibility remains our expectation. Access filtered to those with 'legitimate interest' should be delivered to a clear timetable, as an interim step.

I also outlined a set of minimum requirements that UK Government would expect to see in any 'legitimate interest' regime.

At the UK-OT Illicit Finance Dialogue earlier this month, Officials discussed this and other priorities. I expect to continue discussions at the Joint Ministerial Council in November.

I am pleased to report that Monserrat announced its delivery of a public register of beneficial ownership on 11 October.

■ China: British National (Overseas)

Neil Coyle:

[\[8158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the China Audit will cover potential targeting of Hong Kong BNO status holders in the UK by Chinese representatives.

Catherine West:

This Government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests. We will co-operate where we can, compete where we need to, and challenge where we must. We will carry out an audit of the UK's relationship with China as a bilateral and global actor, to improve our ability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities China poses. As a Special Autonomous Region of China, Hong Kong will form part of this audit.

Attempts by foreign Governments to coerce, intimidate or harm critics overseas, are unacceptable. Freedom of speech and other fundamental rights of all people in the UK are protected under domestic law, regardless of nationality.

■ China: Detainees

Neil Coyle:

[\[8150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to hold discussions with his Chinese counterpart on the (a) arrest of (i)

Jimmy Lai and (ii) other democracy activists in Hong Kong and (b) targeting of activists in the UK during his visit to that country.

Catherine West:

The Foreign Secretary raised Jimmy Lai's case in his first meeting with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the ASEAN Summit on 26 July and his case remains a priority for this Government. We will continue to call on the Hong Kong authorities to end their politically motivated prosecutions of all democracy activists, including Jimmy Lai. I met with Sebastien Lai and Jimmy Lai's international legal team on Tuesday 8 October.

Attempts by foreign Governments to coerce, intimidate or harm critics overseas, are unacceptable. Freedom of speech and other fundamental rights of all people in the UK are protected under domestic law, regardless of nationality.

■ **China: Republic of Ireland**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[6582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the involvement of the People's Republic of China in joint marine research work with universities in the Republic of Ireland.

Catherine West:

My officials routinely monitor developments in partner countries, and any implications of these for the UK. The UK also regularly discusses economic and academic security issues with partners, including Ireland. Whilst in Dublin on 3 October, the Foreign Secretary and the Tánaiste agreed to intensify our existing cooperation on foreign and security policy issues.

■ **China: Tibet**

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[6892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how he plans to respond to Chinese government interference in Tibetan religious practices; and what diplomatic steps he plans to take to tackle human rights issues in Tibet.

Catherine West:

This Government stands firm on human rights, including China's repression of the people of Tibet. We will champion freedom of religion or belief for all abroad, and work to uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief through the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora, and through bilateral engagement.

The Foreign Secretary raised human rights in his first meeting with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi on 26 July.

■ Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the DSSI

Adam Jogee: [\[6973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments on delivering debt relief to lower income countries.

Anneliese Dodds:

Tackling unsustainable debt is a key development priority for this government. The G20 Common Framework, created in November 2020, brought the Paris Club and G20 together to coordinate debt restructurings for the first time. The Common Framework has delivered agreements in Chad in 2022, and among bilateral creditors and bondholders in both Zambia and Ghana in 2024. However, we acknowledge that the process took too long. We are continuing to work with international partners to strengthen the Common Framework and ensure it delivers for all participating countries.

■ Crimes against Humanity

Melanie Ward: [\[7150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to develop a new national strategy on atrocity prevention

Anneliese Dodds:

The FCDO supports a comprehensive approach to mass atrocity prevention. However, we have no plans to develop a new national strategy at this time. Since 2022, the FCDO's conflict directorate has been strengthening monitoring capabilities to identify and escalate atrocity risks before they occur. We will continue to develop our capacity to respond to atrocity risks, drawing on expertise across HMG and beyond, including from civil society, academia and cooperation with bilateral partners and multilateral organisations.

■ Developing Countries: Food Supply

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[5961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on strengthening global food security.

Anneliese Dodds:

Delivering development through partnerships is core to the government's mission to help create a world free from poverty on a liveable planet.

At the G20 Development Ministers Meeting, I endorsed the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty to promote partnerships and long-term solutions to tackling hunger and poverty and unlock much-needed finance. At the Hamburg Sustainability Conference, I engaged in discussions on financing development and reforming the global financial system for greater progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

This is alongside regular engagement with key international partners on food, agriculture and finance through the UK's bilateral and multilateral work.

■ **Developing Countries: HIV Infection**

Kate Osborne:

[\[6559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will have discussions with Unitaid on (a) licensing arrangements for lenacapavir and (b) potential steps to ensure the affordability of that treatment in (i) lower-income and (ii) middle-income countries.

Anneliese Dodds:

The FCDO welcomes the extraordinary clinical trial results for lenacapavir, representing a significant breakthrough in HIV prevention and, potentially, treatment.

The UK is a long-standing supporter of market-shaping initiatives in low- and middle-income countries and we are having ongoing discussions with our global health partners, including UNITAID, on how to best facilitate widespread access to lenacapavir. This includes the UK supporting UNITAID's ongoing investment, in partnership with the Clinton Health Access Initiative, in two pathfinder programmes for long-acting HIV PrEP in Brazil and South Africa. This work will shorten the time for effective adoption of lenacapavir, once available.

■ **Development Aid: Health Services**

Paul Davies:

[\[7280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with (a) Gavi and (b) the Global Fund on the adequacy of their funding.

Anneliese Dodds:

On 12 September, I [Minister for Development] met with the CEO of Gavi to discuss Gavi's recent Investment Case launch and replenishment timings. FCDO hosted the annual strategic dialogue with the Global Fund on 17 September, which focused on the UK's priorities ahead of the eighth replenishment.

The UK is working with the international community to coordinate efforts and ensure sustainable resources for all upcoming global health replenishments; including for Gavi, the World Health Organization, and the Global Fund. Effective coordination across the Global Health Initiatives will be needed to deliver for the global health challenges ahead.

■ **Development Aid: HIV Infection**

Paul Davies:

[\[7279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with (a) UNAIDS, (b) UNITAID, (c) the Global Fund and (d) the Robert Carr Fund on tackling HIV and AIDS.

Anneliese Dodds:

The FCDO regularly engages with key partners including the Global Fund, UNITAID, UNAIDS and grassroots organisation the Robert Carr Fund, as part of our ongoing commitment to the HIV response and advocacy for sexual and reproductive health and rights, including for vulnerable groups. This includes through our Board representation, bilateral dialogue and programmatic funding.

East Africa: Gender Based Violence**Adam Jogee:**[\[6971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help tackle violence against women and girls in (a) Uganda and (b) East Africa.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is committed to addressing violence against women and girls both in Africa and elsewhere. A pioneering UK-funded programme that reduced gender-based violence by half is now being scaled up through a new £67 million global investment, including in East Africa. Additionally, the UK is investing £35 million in the Africa-Led Movement to End Female Genital Mutilation programme. The UK is also partnering with the UN to prevent and respond to child marriage, with activities in Uganda.

Edmundo González**Dr Beccy Cooper:**[\[7259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help protect Edmundo Gonzalez, leader of the Venezuelan democratic opposition.

Catherine West:

It is completely unacceptable that the Maduro regime forced Venezuelan opposition leader Edmundo Gonzalez into exile and issued a warrant for his arrest. Baroness Chapman of Darlington publicly condemned the arrest warrant on 4 September. The Foreign Secretary has also spoken out against these reprehensible actions. I am grateful that Spain has been able to provide safety and asylum to Edmundo Gonzalez and he is now able to continue to speak out for the democratic will of the Venezuelan people. The UK continues to work with international partners to achieve a peaceful solution in Venezuela. Dialogue remains the only solution.

Falkland Islands: Politics and Government**Adam Jogee:**[\[7643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with members of the Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands.

Stephen Doughty:

I am in regular dialogue with members of the Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly (MLAs), and most recently held a video conference with MLAs and the Governor on 18 September. I have also met MLAs visiting the UK in person over recent months, and look forward to further such meetings during the Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council in November.

Faroe Islands: Cetaceans**Alex Mayer:**[\[7965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Faroe Islands on (a) dolphin and (b) whale hunting.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK strongly opposes the hunting of all cetaceans other than some limited activities by indigenous people for clearly defined subsistence needs. We reaffirmed our strong support for the global moratorium on commercial whaling at the September International Whaling Commission meeting with Danish government in attendance, where we co-sponsored a resolution on International Legal Obligations in Commercial Whaling. Ministers and senior officials will continue to raise the issue with the Faroese at every appropriate opportunity.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Paternity Leave**Shaun Davies:**[\[7908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in his Department was in each of the last three years.

Catherine West:

Due to the migration of IT systems, the FCDO is unable to provide indicate timescales for Parental leave at this time.

The FCDO's Paternity Leave offer enables staff to take one or two weeks' statutory paternity leave. This enables staff to take the necessary time off whilst balancing work and home commitments.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Public Appointments**John Glen:**[\[6148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, 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.

Catherine West:

Part (i)

The FCDO does not routinely record and collect the reasons why appointees leave their positions, so is not in a position to answer this part of the question. Additionally, the reasons why an appointee has left their role is the appointee's personal information and identifiable and would elicit GDPR considerations.

Part (ii)

The FCDO routinely announces public appointments and direct ministerial appointments on gov.uk. Since 4 July 2024, the following appointments have been made and announced:

1. Jonathan Powell has been appointed by the Foreign Secretary as the Special Envoy for BIOT negotiations. [<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jonathan-powell-appointed-as-special-envoy-for-biot-negotiations>]
2. Rachel Kyte has been appointed the UK's Special Representative for Climate. This appointment was made jointly by the Foreign Secretary and the Energy Secretary. [<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rachel-kyte-appointed-as-the-uks-special-representative-for-climate>]
3. Professor Ngaire Woods has been appointed by the Foreign Secretary to lead a review of the UK's global impact. [<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-launches-expert-reviews-to-strengthen-uks-global-impact-and-expertise>]
4. Baroness Minouche Shafik has been appointed by the Foreign Secretary to lead a review on how to maximise the benefits of the FCDO joint integrated development diplomacy model in our development work. [<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-launches-expert-reviews-to-strengthen-uks-global-impact-and-expertise>]
5. Sir Martin Donnelly has been appointed by the Foreign Secretary to lead a review on our economic capability in diplomacy. [<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-launches-expert-reviews-to-strengthen-uks-global-impact-and-expertise>]

■ **Gabon: Politics and Government**

Adam Jogee:

[6967]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for (a) his policies and (b) the Commonwealth of the change in political leadership in Gabon on 30 August 2024.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK has reassessed its relationship with Gabon following the coup in August 2023. The UK condemns military takeovers and, alongside other Commonwealth member states, welcomed the decision to partially suspend Gabon from the Commonwealth. However, we recognise the progress the transitional government is making on the timeline towards the restoration of civilian rule. The UK is ready to work with the Commonwealth to support Gabon's return to democracy and to uphold Commonwealth values.

■ Gaza and Lebanon: Ceasefires

Claire Hanna:

[\[6606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on implementing an immediate ceasefire in (a) Lebanon and (b) Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

A resolution to this conflict has been a priority since day one of this government - the Foreign Secretary has visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories twice and the Prime Minister has spoken to both PM Netanyahu and President Abbas. We were the first G7 country to call for the implementation of an immediate ceasefire between Lebanese Hizballah and Israel on 19 September. The Foreign Secretary spoke with Israeli Foreign Minister Katz on 2 October, and we continue to work in lockstep with our allies to de-escalate the situation and urge all parties to end this cycle of violence.

■ Gaza: Drinking Water

Mary Glendon:

[\[6233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help increase the amount of potable water in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As part of the wider ask for greater aid access into Gaza, this government, including the Foreign Secretary, have consistently raised the need for greater access to water supplies, and the opening of vital water lines, with Israel. Through UK funding to humanitarian agencies, including United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and UK-Med, we are also providing essential healthcare to civilians in Gaza, including activities to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). On 7 August, on her visit to Jordan, the Minister of State for Development announced £6 million of funding for UNICEF. The package will help tens of thousands of Gazans access food and water, as well as health, education and wellbeing services. The UK has also committed £1.2 million in co-funding with Kuwait to support UNICEF's WASH work in Gaza.

■ Gaza: Education

Ellie Chowns:

[\[7170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Humanitarian Situation Update No. 221 on the Gaza Strip, if he will have discussions with his Israeli counterpart on (a) the impact of air strikes on schools and (b) the proportion of school-age children who are accessing learning spaces in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

This Government is deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on children, and the high level of destruction to civilian infrastructure in Gaza, including schools. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary continue to press Israeli leaders to take all steps to avoid civilian casualties and the importance of upholding International Humanitarian Law. The Foreign Secretary stated that he was appalled by the tragic loss of life as a result of the Israeli military strike on the al-Tabeen school. The UK supports humanitarian agencies such as United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to provide education services to civilians in Gaza, including through UK funding to Education Cannot Wait, which delivers education to children in crisis.

■ Gaza: Health Services**Ellie Chowns:**[\[7171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Humanitarian Situation Update No. 221 on the Gaza Strip, if he will have discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the (a) proportion of (i) hospitals and (ii) primary healthcare facilities in Gaza that are not fully functional and (b) the shortages in (A) fuel, (B) medicine and (C) other essential supplies affecting such healthcare facilities; and what steps he is taking to support healthcare facilities in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The FCDO is closely monitoring the impact of the conflict in Gaza on access to medical facilities and healthcare, and we are deeply concerned by reports of the destruction of hospitals and healthcare facilities. As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement on 2 September, Israel could and must do more to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches civilians in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary continues to press Israeli leaders to ensure aid can flow freely into and within Gaza. Through our support for UK-Med, (including a further £5.5 million announced on 14 July) we are helping to run field hospitals in Gaza. We are also supporting other agencies such as United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and World Food Programme to support vulnerable families with lifesaving water, healthcare and specialist treatment for malnourished children.

■ Gaza: Hospitals**Mary Glendon:**[\[6231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Israeli Government on the Israeli military's reported use of the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The FCDO is closely monitoring the impact of the conflict in Gaza on access to medical facilities and healthcare, and we remain deeply concerned by reports that

many medical facilities are no longer in use. We call on all parties to abide by international humanitarian law.

■ **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

Mary Glendon:

[\[6230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help humanitarian bodies access northern Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK Government is very concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, including the deteriorating access to northern Gaza.

As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement on 2 September, Israel could and must do more to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches civilians in Gaza. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the need for greater aid access in his statement to the UN General Assembly on 26 September. The Foreign Secretary, working with international partners, continues to press Israeli leaders to ensure aid can flow freely into and through Gaza.

Mary Glendon:

[\[6232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help increase the amount of medical and surgical equipment entering Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is intolerable and deteriorating. During his recent visit to the region, the Foreign Secretary stressed the importance of the safe distribution of aid, including lifesaving medical supplies to civilians who desperately need them. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the need for greater aid access in his statement to the UN General Assembly on 26 September. It is the assessment of this Government that Israel can and must do more to ensure that aid can flow freely into and within Gaza.

Carla Denyer:

[\[6880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Humanitarian Situation Update No. 221 on the Gaza Strip, if he will have discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the proportion of (a) coordinated humanitarian movements in Gaza that were (i) denied and (ii) impeded in August 2024 and (b) planned World Health Organisation missions to Gaza between 13 and 18 September that were (A) significantly delayed and (B) denied.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK Government is closely monitoring the impact of the conflict and is deeply concerned by UN reports that humanitarian access is becoming ever more difficult, particularly to northern Gaza. As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement on 2 September, Israel could and must do more to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches

civilians in Gaza. This was one of the factors in the UK Government's decision in September to suspend some arms export licences to Israel. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the need for greater aid access in his statement to the UN General Assembly on 26 September. The Foreign Secretary also continues to press Israeli leaders to allow unfettered aid access in Gaza.

Siân Berry:

[\[7277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to UNICEF's State of Palestine Nutrition Cluster Dashboard, updated 29 September 2024, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on steps to increase access to (a) medical treatment and (b) food for children in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The people of Gaza face a humanitarian catastrophe. The whole population faces the risk of famine. As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement on 2 September, Israel could and must do more to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches civilians in Gaza. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the need for greater aid access in his statement to the UN General Assembly on 26 September. The Foreign Secretary also continues to press Israeli leaders to ensure aid can flow freely into and within Gaza.

Through our support for UK-Med, (including a further £5.5 million announced on 14 July) we are helping to run field hospitals in Gaza. We are also supporting other agencies such as United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and World Food Programme to provide health and nutrition surveillance and interventions.

Adrian Ramsay:

[\[7316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of UK aid trucks reaching Gaza in (a) September and (b) October 2024; what steps he is taking with international counterparts to tackle constraints reportedly imposed by the Israeli Government on the number of aid trucks entering Gaza; and if he will make an estimate of the average daily number of (i) aid trucks and (ii) tonnes of aid that were needed to meet the demand for aid in Gaza in the last month.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to the House on 2 September, this Government assesses that Israel must and should do more to ensure that life-saving food and medical supplies reach civilians in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary has raised repeatedly with Israeli leaders the need for a rapid increase of aid into Gaza, including during his joint visit with French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné in August. I also raised this concern directly with the Israeli Ambassador to the United Kingdom during our meeting on 24 July. The UK does not operate independent trucking routes into Gaza, as this is more effectively managed by the UN and our other delivery partners. Truck numbers are a poor metric of humanitarian delivery, but UN figures show a daily average of 97 trucks (both humanitarian and commercial) entered Gaza in September, far below the 500 daily before 7 October 2023.

■ Gaza: Peace Negotiations

Chris Law:

[\[6296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the progress of Qatari-led negotiations for a ceasefire in Gaza; whether the UK has a role in that process; and what his policy is on an immediate ceasefire and release of hostages.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We want to see an immediate ceasefire, the release of all the hostages detained by Hamas and more aid entering Gaza. An immediate ceasefire is the first step towards a lasting solution. The Prime Minister - along with other G7 Leaders - has fully endorsed efforts by the US, Qatar and Egypt to reach a comprehensive deal in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2735. We also continue to use our diplomatic efforts to find a resolution and to create a safe and secure Israel, alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

■ Georgia

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[6581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the territorial integrity of Georgia.

Stephen Doughty:

I reaffirmed my resolute support for Georgia's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, both to the Georgian Ambassador on 18 September and to Foreign Minister Darchiashvili on 9 October. We continue to support Georgian sovereignty through multilateral statements lobbying on behalf of Georgia's UN Human Rights Council resolution on Internally Displaced Persons, and by investing on the ground in community reconciliation. I also made clear to the Ambassador and Foreign Minister our support for Georgia to meet the aspirations of its population for a Euro-Atlantic path, and raised serious concerns about recent developments and rhetoric.

■ Georgia: Elections

Joe Powell:

[\[8050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support free, fair and peaceful elections in Georgia.

Stephen Doughty:

On 9 October, I [Minister Doughty] made clear to Georgian Foreign Minister Ilia Darchiashvili that Georgia's parliamentary elections must be held in accordance with international democratic standards. We have allocated £500,000 to support independent election monitoring in Georgia. The funding will enable the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) election observation mission and Georgian civil society groups to effectively monitor 26 October's parliamentary elections.

■ Georgia: LGBT+ People

Nadia Whittome: [\[8246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the safety of LGBTQI+ people in Georgia following the On Family Values and Protection of Minors legislation being passed.

Stephen Doughty:

It is our view that, despite the title of the law, these laws undermine fundamental rights of freedom of expression and assembly, and risk discriminating against and stigmatising Georgia's LGBT+ groups. The UK works closely with our international partners to advance equality, including through the Equal Rights Coalition and the European LGBTI Focal Points Network. On 9 October I raised my concerns over recent legislative changes, including these laws, with Georgian Foreign Minister Darchiashvili, and emphasised the importance of protecting minority rights, and wider human rights.

■ Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

David Mundell: [\[5939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the UK's financial contribution to the Global Fund was in (a) the 2023-24 financial year and (b) each of the previous 10 financial years.

Anneliese Dodds:

In November 2022 the UK pledged £1 billion to the 7th replenishment to support efforts to tackle malaria, TB and HIV and strengthen health systems between 2023 and 2025. This funding is being disbursed across three years; £850 million of the pledge was paid in financial year 2023/2024.

The UK has disbursed over £5.5 billion to the Global Fund to date; previous UK pledges are as follows:

REPLENISHMENT CYCLE	UK PLEDGE
4th replenishment 2014-2016	£1 billion
5th replenishment 2017-2019	£1.1 billion
6th replenishment 2020-2022	£1.4 billion
7th replenishment 2023-2025	£1 billion

David Mundell: [\[5940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the impact of the UK's contributions to the Global Fund on global health outcomes.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK has disbursed over £5.5 billion to the Global Fund to date; previous UK pledges are as follows:

REPLENISHMENT CYCLE	UK PLEDGE
4th replenishment 2014-2016	£1 billion
5th replenishment 2017-2019	£1.1 billion
6th replenishment 2020-2022	£1.4 billion
7th replenishment 2023-2025	£1 billion

The Global Fund is a high performing organisation that has saved 65 million lives, with combined deaths attributed to HIV, TB and malaria estimated as having been reduced by 61 per cent, because of Global Fund activities

David Mundell:[\[5941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that funds allocated to the Global Fund is administered (a) effectively and (b) transparently.

David Mundell:[\[5943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department takes with international counterparts to maximise the impact of contributions to the Global Fund.

David Mundell:[\[5946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the Global Fund's programmes are (a) inclusive and (b) reach the most vulnerable people.

Anneliese Dodds:

FCDO's Global Fund contributions are delivered in line with the Programme Operating Framework, which is intended to maximise UK aid's effectiveness and impact. This includes rules on aid transparency, value for money and equity to help reach the vulnerable.

FCDO engages regularly with the Fund to monitor and drive progress against its mission and UK priorities, including regular assessments of performance. We do this through our Board and Committee representation, alongside others, and bilateral strategic and programmatic levers.

5 per cent of UK funding is channelled through the Global Fund Accelerator programme, which acts as an additional lever to deliver UK priorities.

David Mundell: [\[5942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the key challenges faced by the Global Fund in achieving its goals; and what steps his Department is taking to support efforts to overcome these challenges.

Anneliese Dodds:

Through our Board and Committee representation and bilateral levers, the FCDO engages consistently with the Global Fund to monitor and drive progress against its goals and UK priorities. This includes making regular assessments of the risks to its operations and strategy.

David Mundell: [\[5944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the role the Global Fund plays in his Department's broader strategy for international development and global health.

Anneliese Dodds:

Our investments in the Global Fund play a critical role delivering the Government's international development priorities: to create a world free from poverty, on a liveable planet, putting equality at the heart of all we do. This includes strengthening health security, improving preparedness and response and protecting citizens and economies from health and climate threats.

David Mundell: [\[5945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help mitigate the potential impact of changing levels of funding on the Global Fund's ability to help tackle (a) HIV, (b) AIDS, (c) tuberculosis, and (d) malaria.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK wants to see a successful Global Fund 8th replenishment in 2025. We are considering all our health investments in the round to make strategic funding decisions and maximise impact. Effective coordination across Global Health Initiatives will be needed to secure sustainable resources and deliver for the global health challenges ahead.

As an active Board and Strategy Committee member, the UK is playing a strong role, alongside others, in supporting the Global Fund to identify and manage risks ahead of the 8th replenishment. This includes planning for a range of funding scenarios.

David Mundell: [\[5947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with the Global Fund to (a) help tackle emerging global health threats and (b) ensure sustainable health systems.

Anneliese Dodds:

The FCDO engages regularly with the Global Fund to monitor and drive progress against its mission and UK priorities, including global health security and sustainable

health systems. The Global Fund is the world's largest grant funder of health systems, investing approximately \$3.7 billion a year. This also supports countries to better tackle emerging global health threats, alongside the Covid-19 Response Mechanism. The Global Fund Strategy 2023-2028 sets out a clear ambition to do more to strengthen health systems and explicitly recognises the role the Fund plays in pandemic preparedness and response.

■ Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office

Neil Coyle:

[\[8157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last reviewed the status of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office; when he plans next to review it; and for what reason it has diplomatic status.

Catherine West:

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Act 1996 provides the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office with certain privileges and immunities in line with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, for the purposes of furthering economic and trade interests. There are no current plans to replace this legislation.

■ Human Rights: Older People

Blair McDougall:

[\[6801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of proposals to establish a UN convention on the rights of older people.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is fully committed to promoting and protecting the rights of all people, including older people. Building stronger legal frameworks at the domestic and international level is key. We were an active participant in the work of the UN's Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing and we welcomed the consensus adoption by the General Assembly in September of its recommendations. The UK seeks to play a constructive role on these issues and we are open to considering further standard-setting, including the possibility of a multilateral instrument to help further address the issues faced by older people.

■ Imran Khan

Mr James Frith:

[\[6426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Pakistani counterpart for the release of Imran Khan.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary met with Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on 4 September to discuss a range of key issues, including Pakistan's domestic political situation. We have consistently urged the Pakistani authorities to demonstrate their democratic credentials by acting in line with their

international obligations and with respect for fundamental freedoms, including the right to a fair trial for all its citizens.

■ India: Landslips

Jim Shannon:

[7771]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to help support families affected by the recent landslide in southern India.

Catherine West:

The UK is a major contributor to the Start Fund which has allocated over £200,000 to Caritas India and SEEDS India. These two non-governmental organisations are providing support to vulnerable communities that were severely affected by the landslides and flooding in Wayanad District in Kerala. This included basic household goods, such as bedding, kitchen and hygiene items, and cash assistance.

■ India: Religious Freedom

Ruth Jones:

[8221]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to secure the release of religious minorities accused of conversion activities in India.

Catherine West:

The UK continues to champion freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all. No one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. The British High Commission in New Delhi consistently monitors human rights, including the use of anti-conversion laws across India. However, the UK Government has a broad and deep partnership with the Government of India, and we discuss all elements of our relationship, including human rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief, and raise issues where we have them.

■ International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

Blair McDougall:

[6797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has taken steps to work with international stakeholders on creating an international fund for Israel-Palestinian Peace.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

This government has prioritised working to end this conflict and secure the safe release of hostages, in co-ordination with international partners, since day one. We will continue to use every diplomatic lever to bring about a ceasefire deal as the first step towards long-term peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians, and the wider region. The Foreign Secretary has raised the issue of securing long-term peace in all his meetings with counterparts across the region, in addition to the US, Germany and France. The UK will play our full diplomatic role in ending this conflict

and creating a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

■ Israel: Lebanon

Adam Jogee:

[\[6966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the Middle East on the situation in Lebanon.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary spoke to Lebanese Prime Minister Mikati on 28 September, expressing deep concern over rising tensions and civilian casualties in Lebanon. They discussed the need for a negotiated solution to restore stability and security across the Blue Line. On 01 October, the Foreign Secretary spoke with Iranian Foreign Minister Aragchi, warning against actions that could push the region further towards the brink. The Foreign Secretary also spoke with Israeli Foreign Minister Katz on 02 October, and with the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Iraq and Oman on 07 October. On 09 October, the Foreign Secretary visited leaders in Bahrain and Jordan, key regional partners for the UK, where he reiterated the UK's concern over the risk of escalation and miscalculation in the region and again called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Imran Hussain:

[\[6286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the International Criminal Court in respect of its investigation into the Situation in the State of Palestine; and whether he plans to increase support for that investigation in the context of the Government's assessment that there is clear risk of certain military exports to Israel being used in violations of international humanitarian law.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We await the Pre-Trial Chamber's decision on the Prosecutor's application for arrest warrants, after which all normal procedural steps would need to take their course. The UK respects the independence of the Court in investigating the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We support Israel's right to act in self-defence, in line with international humanitarian law.

Blair McDougall:

[\[6798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken in the context of the G7's commitment to support Israeli-Palestinian civil society peacebuilding.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary and I have stressed the need for an immediate ceasefire in our conversations with Israeli, Arab and regional leaders. The Foreign Secretary

reiterated this message during visits to the region on 14-15 July and 31 July - 1 August and during his joint visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories with his French counterpart on 16 August. The Prime Minister has also joined international leaders in this call.

Kirith Entwistle:

[6865]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will visit the Bolton Council of Mosques to discuss the conflict in Israel and Palestine; and if he will invite that Council to a meeting in his Department.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As of now, there are no scheduled visits for the Foreign Secretary to Bolton.

However, the Foreign Secretary welcomes correspondence from the Bolton Council of Mosques to learn more about their initiatives and efforts.

Mr Peter Bedford:

[7336]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that UNRWA staff members were named as Hamas operatives planning attacks against Israel from the Al-Jawni School in Gaza.

Mr Peter Bedford:

[7337]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent of the involvement of teachers working in schools run by the UN Relief and Works Agency with Hamas; and whether any UK funding of that UN body is conditional.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We were appalled by the allegations that United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) staff were involved in the 7 October attacks against Israel. The Secretary-General and the Commissioner General of UNRWA took these allegations seriously and acted decisively. We expect robust processes to continue to be followed. UNRWA have confirmed that a Hamas leader killed in Lebanon, Fatah Sherif, was a staff member, suspended without pay while under investigation, and that the termination of his employment was imminent. We take this very seriously; UNRWA must meet the highest standards of neutrality as laid out in Catherine Colonna's report, including staff vetting and acting swiftly when concerns arise. The UK has allocated £1 million to support UNRWA to implement the report's recommendations. The FCDO will continue its own annual assessment of UK funding to UNRWA, which plays a vital role in saving lives in Gaza.

■ Jehovah's Witnesses: Denmark

Jim Shannon:

[7780]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential implications for his

policies of the initiation of supervisory proceedings against Jehovah's Witnesses in Denmark.

Stephen Doughty:

The FCDO is aware of supervisory proceedings against Jehovah's Witnesses in Denmark. We are committed to the safeguarding of all vulnerable people, as well as promoting freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) around the world. We will continue to monitor developments.

■ **Jimmy Lai**

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[8097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will have discussions with his Chinese counterparts on the release of Jimmy Lai during his visit to China in October 2024.

Catherine West:

Jimmy Lai is the founder of Apple Daily, a former leading pro-democracy newspaper in Hong Kong. Lai is a British citizen and has been detained since December 2020. He has been convicted of fraud and faces more serious charges of foreign collusion under Hong Kong's national security law. Lai's national security trial, which began on 18 December 2023, will resume on 20 November 2024, when Lai will take to the stand in his own defence. I met with Sebastien Lai and Jimmy Lai's international legal team on Tuesday 8 October.

Consular officials submitted our latest request for consular access to Mr. Lai to the Hong Kong Prison Service on 2 October, also seeking assurances of appropriate medical treatment. Requests for consular access continue to be refused on the basis that China does not accept dual nationality.

■ **Lebanon: British Nationals Abroad**

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help protect British nationals and their dependents in Lebanon.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The safety of British nationals is our number one priority. Our consular teams are working around the clock to support British nationals. Border Force and military stand ready to aid consular operations. We chartered a limited number of flights from Lebanon to support British nationals to leave the country in response to the deteriorating security situation. The latest charter flight left on 6 October. British nationals who remain in the country should register their presence, book the first available flight and leave now while commercial routes remain available. FCDO continues to advise against all travel to Lebanon.

Adam Jogee: [\[6988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK citizens were in Lebanon on 1 October 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

As of 7 October, 2100 British nationals have registered their presence in Lebanon. Any remaining British nationals who want to leave are urged to register their presence immediately. Based on our contacts so far, we anticipate that only a fraction of those registered want to leave due to their strong ties in the country. The UK has helped over 430 people leave on four UK government charter flights taking British nationals out of Lebanon. Due to reduced demand, no further charter flights are planned, but we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

■ **Libya: IRA**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[5901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has held recent discussions with his Libyan counterpart on providing compensation to (a) victims and (b) victims' families of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK Government reiterates its sympathy for UK victims of Qaddafi-sponsored terrorism, and indeed all victims of the Troubles. The UK's position with regards to victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism is that it is the responsibility of the Libyan Government to provide compensation. The UK Government cannot lawfully use frozen Libyan assets to provide compensation to victims as doing so would break international law and our obligations as members of the UN. We will continue to call for Libyan authorities to address the Libyan State's historic responsibility for the Qaddafi regime's support for the IRA.

■ **Mexico: Judiciary**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[6580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterpart in Mexico on recent changes to judicial appointments.

Catherine West:

Democracy and respect for the rule of law are at the heart of the UK's values. We are closely monitoring Mexico's constitutional reforms and how they will be implemented in secondary legislation. Our Embassy in Mexico regularly engages with the Mexican Government to underline the importance of strong institutions and the importance of independent courts and the rule of law.

■ Middle East: British Nationals Abroad

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the safety of British nationals and their dependents in the wider Middle East region in the context of escalating tensions.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We continuously monitor the situation across the region. We advise all British Nationals and dependents to regularly check the FCDO's Travel Advice for the country which they are in, which is kept updated. Unless otherwise noted in Travel Advice, we maintain our usual consular services. We recommend affected people to subscribe to receive notifications when relevant Travel Advice changes. If there is a reason for our 'Register Your Presence' service to be launched in that country, this will also be noted on the Travel Advice. Meanwhile we continue to monitor the situation on the ground and maintain regular discussions with host governments and partners.

■ Muhammed Bhar

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[\[7358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Israeli counterpart on the death of Muhammed Bhar.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Whilst we have not raised this case specifically, the government does raise International Humanitarian Law compliance regularly with Israel. The Foreign Secretary last spoke with Israeli Foreign Minister Katz on 02 October. This Government is clear that International Humanitarian Law must be upheld, and civilians protected. The Foreign Secretary has raised issues of International Humanitarian Law compliance on several occasions with the Israeli government. We want to see an immediate ceasefire and we need the hostages returned immediately and unconditionally. We must see greater protection of civilians, a rapid increase in humanitarian aid to Gaza, and Israel to enable the UN and humanitarian agencies to be able to operate safely in Gaza.

■ Myanmar: Fuels

Graeme Downie:

[\[7188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to sanction the sale of jet fuel to Myanmar.

Catherine West:

The UK strongly condemns the Myanmar military's airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and places of worship. This is unacceptable. To date, the UK has imposed six sanctions targeting the import of aviation fuel, focusing on three individuals and three entities. The UK remains committed to sanctions that directly

impact the military without adversely affecting the wider population, and this will be a key consideration in any future designations.

■ Myanmar: Rohingya

Tim Farron:

[\[7727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with (a) members of the United Nations Security Council and (b) other international partners to help support Rohingya people in Myanmar.

Catherine West:

Since 2017, the UK has provided over £48 million in aid including cash assistance and water, sanitation and hygiene services to the Rohingya and other Muslim minorities in Rakhine state. We continue to work with members of the United Nations Security Council and international partners in calling for the protection of civilians and the need for unhindered humanitarian access to ensure support can reach the most vulnerable. In May 2024, the UK, along with international partners, released a statement calling on all armed actors to ensure the protection of civilians in Rakhine state. We will continue to work with international partners to ensure there is accountability for acts committed against the Rohingya, including through the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

■ Nigeria: Religious Freedom

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken with his Nigerian Counterpart to promote religious freedom in that country.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK champions freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all abroad. No one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. We work to uphold the right to FoRB through our position at the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora and bilaterally in Nigeria. The UK Government remains committed to supporting Nigeria to address ongoing security challenges including violent extremism and intercommunal violence, which continue to impinge on the rights of Nigerians to FoRB. Our UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership continues to engage with a range of stakeholders to address these complex issues.

■ Occupied Territories: Development Aid

Ellie Chowns:

[\[7168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to paragraph 279 of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion entitled Legal Consequences Arising From The Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, published on 19 July 2024, if he will take

steps to uphold the direction not to render (a) aid and (b) assistance in maintaining the situation created by Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We respect the International Criminal Court's independence and impartiality. We continue to call on Israeli authorities to exercise restraint, adhere to international law and clamp down on the actions of those who seek to inflame tensions. We are deeply concerned by the ongoing Israeli Defence Force military operation in the occupied West Bank and the attacks from Palestinian militants. We continue to press Israel to take all possible steps to avoid civilian casualties; allow the free passage of aid into Gaza; and prevent interference with humanitarian operations. We have been clear that if Israel's personnel are responsible for incidents, they should be held accountable.

■ **Palestinians: Children**

Kate Osamor:

[\[6331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the report by Defense for Children International - Palestine entitled Targeting childhood, Palestinian children killed by Israeli forces and settlers in the occupied West Bank, published on 9 September 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is deeply worried by the situation in the West Bank. The risk of instability is serious and the need for de-escalation urgent. The allegations in this report are deeply disturbing. Israel has a right to self-defence in line with international law, but we are deeply worried by the methods Israel has employed and by reports of civilian casualties, including children. Israel must respect the rights and vulnerabilities of children. We continue to call on Israeli authorities to exercise restraint, adhere to international law, take greater action to hold violent settlers to account and clamp down on the actions of those who seek to inflame tensions. The UK has sanctioned eight people and two groups responsible for perpetrating and inciting human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank.

■ **Palestinians: Polio**

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[\[7355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that all children in (a) Palestine and (b) Gaza have access to polio vaccination.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK convened the August 2024 emergency session of the UN Security Council to drive urgent action to address the risk of a polio outbreak in Gaza. We are supporting delivery through our funding to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), alongside our wider support to United Nations International Children's Emergency

Fund in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary noted the importance of the full and effective delivery of the polio vaccination campaign in his statement to the House on 2 September. The UK continues to work with international partners to reinforce the importance of pauses in military operation to allow the delivery of the second vaccination campaign this month. The UK also funds Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which is helping wider immunisation of children living in Gaza, the West Bank and within the Palestinian populations in Lebanon.

■ **Poland: Abduction**

Priti Patel: [\[6179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Polish counterpart on international parental child abduction.

Stephen Doughty:

This Government takes International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA) extremely seriously and I recognise the impact that it has on families, particularly the affected children. I raised the issue with my Polish counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister Prawda, during a meeting on 12 July. IPCA remains a priority for this government and we will continue to use every available opportunity to register our serious concerns and seek updates on the steps the Polish government are taking to address outstanding issues.

■ **Russia: Shipping**

Steve Darling: [\[6748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to enhance targeted sanctions against vessels in Russia's shadow fleet; and whether he plans to align his Department's vessel designations with those of the United States.

Stephen Doughty:

Since gaining the power to 'specify' individual vessels in May 2024, the UK has sanctioned 25 tankers transporting Russian oil as part of Putin's shadow fleet; a higher number than that undertaken by partners over the same period. This has disrupted Russia's efforts to undermine our oil sanctions, leaving the majority of these vessels struggling to re-enter the Russian oil trade and intensifying the pressure we have placed on Russian revenues. We have also sanctioned five vessels involved in the Russian LNG sector. We continue to step up our efforts, working closely with partners including the US, to ensure effectiveness and impact.

■ **Ryan Cornelius**

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[5825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 3938 on Ryan Cornelius, what

discussions he had with his UAE counterpart on Ryan Cornelius during his visit to UAE on 5 September 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary raised the importance of consular issues, although not this specific case, during his visit to the UAE on 5 September and first meeting with Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed. The Foreign Secretary and I fully appreciate the importance and urgency of Mr Cornelius' case, on which I have been briefed in detail by my officials. I look forward to meeting Mr Cornelius' family to discuss the detail of his case and HMG support going forward.

■ **Saudi Arabia: UN Human Rights Council**

Shaun Davies:

[\[6690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of Saudi Arabia's bid for election to the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK does not disclose voting positions on multilateral elections.

■ **South America: Forests**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[7548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to provide assistance to (a) Ecuador, (b) Paraguay, (c) Peru and (d) Brazil following forest fires in those countries.

Catherine West:

The UK has closely monitored recent forest fires in Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Brazil. The UK's support for sustainable development and climate change adaptation should reduce drought impacts and wildfires long-term. In Ecuador and Peru, we are contributing up to £12.3 million through the Andes-Amazon Biodiverse Landscape Fund and in Brazil, through the Amazon Fund (£80 million contributed, with a further £35 million committed). In Paraguay, we support capacity building on forest fire mitigation and response amongst indigenous and local communities. Climate Minister Kerry McCarthy MP visited the Amazon Rainforest last week, meeting firefighters on the front-line using equipment purchased through the Amazon Fund.

■ **Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief**

Chris Hinchliff:

[\[7161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to appoint a Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion and Belief.

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government will champion freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all. No one should live in fear because of what they do, or do not believe in. Envoy roles are

under Ministerial consideration and will be decided upon in due course. In the meantime, we will continue to use the strength of our global diplomatic network, including dedicated staff within the FCDO, to promote and protect FoRB around the world.

■ Sudan: Arms Trade

Fabian Hamilton: [\[5880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps at the United Nations Security Council to (a) widen the existing arms embargo on Darfur to cover all of Sudan, (b) enforce the existing arms embargo, and (c) to sanction (i) individuals and (ii) companies that (A) have violated and (B) are violating the arms embargo.

Anneliese Dodds:

There is a UN Arms Embargo and Sanctions Regime on Darfur, which the UN Security Council (UNSC) renewed in September 2024, which complements a longstanding bilateral UK arms embargo in place for the whole of Sudan. These regimes have been used to constrain the flow of weapons into the country, and individuals and entities who breach the UN arms embargo may be subject to targeted measures as stipulated in resolution 1591. Since the outbreak of conflict in April 2023, the UK has sanctioned five entities linked with the Rapid Support Forces and four entities linked with the Sudanese Armed Forces. We consistently use our position as penholder on Sudan at the UNSC to call on States urgently to refrain from enhancing either side's fighting capability.

■ Sudan: Development Aid

Sarah Champion: [\[6251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Development in response to the question from the hon. Member for West Worcestershire, during the Urgent Question on Sudan of 3 September 2024, Official Report, column 161, how much and what proportion of the £97 million funding announced for Sudan this financial year has been disbursed; and what his planned timetable is for the disbursement of remaining funds.

Anneliese Dodds:

As of the end of September 2024, £70 million had been disbursed. The rest of the UK's funding to Sudan this year - which now stands at £97 million following further UK support since March - will be distributed by the end of the financial year.

■ Sudan: Humanitarian Aid

Stephen Gethins: [\[6300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to disburse the £89 million pledged to Sudan in March 2024.

Anneliese Dodds:

As of the end of September 2024, £70 million had been disbursed. The rest of the UK's funding to Sudan this year - which now stands at £97 million following further UK support since March - will be distributed by the end of the financial year.

■ Sudan: Humanitarian Situation**Adam Jogee:**[\[6972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the World Health Organisation about levels of starvation in Sudan.

Anneliese Dodds:

The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces has created a humanitarian disaster in Sudan with over 9 million people facing emergency or famine conditions. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is carrying out vital work in Sudan, including the treatment of severely malnourished children. The UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) this financial year is £97 million, £84 million of which is on humanitarian assistance. This funding is going to partners including key UN agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP) to provide assorted food commodities to those most in need; and UNICEF to provide life-saving food assistance particularly in hard-to reach areas in Sudan, including nutrition, water and hygiene services for 500,000 children under 5.

■ Sudan: Sanctions**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[5879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing targeted sanctions on (a) people responsible for serious crimes in Sudan in line with those sanctioned by the United States, Canada and the European Union, (b) people identified in the UN Panel of Experts report of January 2024 and (c) commanders and officials obstructing humanitarian assistance.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The use of sanctions is one of the tools the UK employs to respond to ongoing conflict in Sudan. Since the outbreak of the conflict in April 2023, the UK has sanctioned five entities linked with the RSF and four entities linked with the SAF. Six of those sanctions were issued on 12 July 2023 under the UK's Sudan Sanctions (EU Exit) Regulations 2020. The UK announced a package of three further sanctions designations on 15 April 2024. These sanctions froze the assets of three commercial entities linked to each warring party. The UK welcomes the Panel of Experts' report from January. Although we do not speculate on future measures, our sanctions policy is continually under review. We continue to engage closely with key international partners on Sudan.

■ Sustainable Development: Food Supply**Sarah Champion:**[\[6249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report entitled State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, published by the UN on 24 July 2024, what steps his Department plans to take to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 2.

Anneliese Dodds:

We are committed to addressing the causes of global food insecurity and malnutrition. The UK is leveraging expertise and investment to build greater resilience to shocks. The UK is also helping to transform agrifood systems for greener, inclusive growth and nutritious and sustainable foods and support smallholder farmer livelihoods. Our support to the Child Nutrition Fund and CGIAR, the world's leading agricultural science and innovation organisation, is helping to tackle malnutrition.

At the G20 Development Ministers Meeting in July, I announced the UK would join the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty to work in partnership to lift ambition and finance for long-term solutions.

■ Unitaid**Paul Davies:**[\[7278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of UNITAID.

Anneliese Dodds:

As a founding partner, the UK has been a proud supporter of UNITAID for nearly 20 years. We continue to highly value our partnership and have contributed more than half a billion pounds in funding.

We assess UNITAID to be a highly impactful partner. More than 300 million people use UNITAID-supported health products every year - and they have consistently delivered against their programmatic objectives. We welcome recent analysis from UNITAID and Cambridge Economic Policy Associates showing they deliver £46 of impact for every £1 invested.

■ United Nations: Older People**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[7547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations at the United Nations on the potential merits of a UN convention on the rights of older persons.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is fully committed to promoting and protecting the rights of all people, including older people. Building stronger legal frameworks at the domestic and international level is key. We were an active participant in the work of the UN's Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, and we welcomed the consensus adoption by the

General Assembly in September of its recommendations. The UK seeks to play a constructive role on these issues, and we are open to considering further standard-setting, including the possibility of a multilateral instrument, to help further address the issues faced by older people.

■ **Vatican: Visits Abroad**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5916\]](#)

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

Stephen Doughty:

We continue to engage the Holy See regularly both bilaterally and in multilateral fora. The British Embassy to the Holy See supports ministerial and senior official visits from across the government including by Lord Khan, Minister for Faith, Communities and Resettlement, on 27-28 August. On 10 September the Foreign Secretary hosted a reception for the London Diplomatic Corps, which the Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía, attended. I hope to visit the Holy See as soon as diaries allow.

■ **Weapons of Mass Destruction: Proliferation**

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[\[8020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help prevent proliferation of (a) nuclear and (b) biological weapons.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK remains committed to supporting and implementing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a vital pillar of the international peace and security architecture. The NPT has created the non-proliferation framework that has both limited the spread of nuclear weapons and enabled safe access to nuclear technologies for peaceful uses. The UK contributes over £20 million each year to the International Atomic Energy Agency who ensure NPT compliance and hold member states to account on their obligations.

The UK is committed to universal implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We will work with other States Parties to strengthen the Convention in 2025, fifty years after it entered into force. The UK's ambition for enhancing our own resilience, is set out in our Biological Security Strategy.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Achondroplasia: Vosoritide**

Victoria Collins:

[\[7074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason vosoritide is not available for the treatment of achondroplasia in children.

Karin Smyth:

Voxzogo has not been licensed by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Should an application for Voxzogo, or any product containing the active ingredient vosoritide, be received, the MHRA will consider this accordingly, with regard to its quality, safety, and effectiveness. It is the responsibility of the company to apply to the MHRA for a marketing authorisation.

■ **ADHD: Drugs****Alison Hume:**[\[7175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with (a) NHS England and (b) pharmaceutical companies to ensure that patients have sufficient supplies of ADHD medication.

Karin Smyth:

The Department monitors and manages medicine supply at a national level so that stocks remain available to meet regional and local demand. Information is not collected on a local level.

The Department has been working hard with industry and NHS England to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of intensive work, some issues have been resolved and all strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules, and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available.

We are continuing to work to resolve supply issues where they remain, for methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets. We are engaging with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to assess the challenges faced and their actions to address them. We are also directing suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term. We anticipate intermittent regional supply disruptions to continue, and we expect supply to improve in the UK from October 2024.

In parallel, the Department has worked with specialist clinicians, including those within the National Health Service, to develop management advice for NHS clinicians to consider prescribing available alternative brands of methylphenidate prolonged release tablets or available alternative ADHD medicines. We would expect ADHD service providers and specialists to follow our guidance, which includes offering rapid response to primary care teams seeking urgent advice or opinion for the management of patients, including those known to be at a higher risk of adverse impact because of these shortages.

To aid ADHD service providers and prescribers further we have widely disseminated our communications, and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping

ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients.

■ **Air Pollution: Pollution Control**

Adam Jogee:

[\[6982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to tackle (a) poor indoor air quality and (b) its impact on the health and wellbeing of people in (i) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency, (ii) Staffordshire and (iii) England.

Andrew Gwynne:

Air pollution has reduced significantly since the 1980s, but remains one of the most significant environmental risks to public health in the United Kingdom. Improving the environment in which we live, work, and play is critical to supporting people to live longer, healthier lives. The Department continues to work collaboratively across Government on ways of improving both indoor and outdoor air quality.

The UK Health Security Agency supports the development of evidence on the health impacts of indoor air quality on health. Its Cleaner Air Programme includes efforts both to build the evidence base and to raise awareness of indoor air quality and its health impacts, especially in settings such as homes, schools, and public places.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has also published guidance on indoor air quality at home, designed to raise awareness of the importance of good air quality in people's homes and advise on how to achieve this. We will continue to work across Government on air quality as part of the Health Mission.

Adam Jogee:

[\[6983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will take steps to ensure that improving respiratory health of people in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency, (b) Staffordshire and (c) England is central to the NHS Long-term Plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Ten Year Health Plan will consider the change needed to meet the three health mission goals: a fairer system where everyone lives well for longer; a National Health Service that is there when people need it; and fewer lives lost to the biggest killers, including respiratory diseases. We will carefully consider policies with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders as we develop the plan.

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse**

Mary Glendon:

[\[6223\]](#)

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

Andrew Gwynne:

A vital part of delivering the Health Mission shift to prevention will be action to reduce the harms from excess alcohol consumption. The Department is continuing to invest

in improvements to local alcohol treatment services to ensure that those in need can access high quality help and support.

Funding for alcohol treatment services is provided through the public health grant. In addition, local authorities have received a further £267 million from the Department this year to improve the quality and capacity of drug and alcohol treatment and recovery, alongside £105 million made available by the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to improve treatment pathways and recovery, housing, and employment outcomes for people affected by drug and alcohol use. This additional investment is improving the quality and capacity of alcohol treatment services in England, which includes action to expand the alcohol treatment and recovery workforce.

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, over £30 million of national funding has been invested between 2019 and 2025, on an ambitious programme to establish new, or to optimise existing, Alcohol Care Teams in the 25% hospitals with the highest need, which are 47 out of the 188 eligible sites in England. This is estimated to prevent 50,000 avoidable admissions over five years.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities published a Commissioning Quality Standard providing guidance for local authorities to support them in commissioning effective alcohol and drug treatment and recovery services in their areas. This guide is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-quality-standard-alcohol-and-drug-services>

The UK clinical guidelines on alcohol treatment are expected to be published later this year, and will include recommendations to promote good practice.

Dr Ben Spencer: **[6561]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice he has received from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities on the harm to health of drinking in public houses compared to (a) private residences and (b) other settings; and whether he plans to introduce an alcohol harm reduction strategy.

Andrew Gwynne:

Under our Health Mission, the Government is committed to prioritising preventative public health measures to support people in living longer, healthier lives. The Department will continue to work across Government to understand how to best reduce alcohol related harms.

■ Allied Health Professions

Paula Barker: **[6625]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to utilise the expertise of (a) dietitians and (b) other allied health professionals to tackle long-term healthcare challenges.

Andrew Gwynne:

Dietitians are essential to a range of pathways detailed within the NHS Long Term Plan, including diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke as part of the multi-disciplinary team which includes the other allied health professions (AHPs).

AHPs are critical to the delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan, and plans to recover core services including, urgent and emergency care, urgent community services, primary care and community care, elective care, cancer, and diagnostics pathways. This is underpinned by the Allied Health Profession (AHPs) Strategy for England 2022 to 2027 AHPS Deliver, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/allied-health-professions-strategy-for-england-ahps-deliver.pdf>

■ Alzheimer's Disease**Freddie van Mierlo:****[7240]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help (a) prepare the NHS for innovative medicines for the treatment of and (b) increase the use of MRI scanners for (i) detection and (ii) diagnosis of Alzheimer's.

Stephen Kinnock:

The National Health Service is a world leader in rolling out innovative treatments, including personalised cancer and life-saving gene therapies. A dedicated team is in place overseeing the NHS's preparations for the potential arrival of new Alzheimer's treatments that are approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and determined to be clinically and cost-effective by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

The team, supported by clinical experts and system leaders, has taken concrete steps to ramp up preparations across the country, for example identifying new clinical pathway requirements and assessing the additional scanning, treatment and safety monitoring capacity that would be needed. This includes options for securing additional genetic testing and diagnostic capacity including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), lumbar puncture and PET-CT scanning.

NHS England is also working with partner agencies to support and inform further research into other diagnostic modalities, including blood-based biomarker and digital tests, which may help improve identification and management of Alzheimer's disease. We are committed to transforming diagnostic services and will support the NHS to increase diagnostic capacity to meet the demand for diagnostic services, including for the detection and diagnosis of dementia, through investment in new capacity, including MRI scanners.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism: Schools

Anna Dixon:

[\[7206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase access to diagnosis for children with (a) ADHD and (b) autism in the context of applications for school places.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is currently considering next steps to improve access to autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) 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 and ADHD assessment services, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

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

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

Local authorities must ensure there are sufficient school places for all pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities. The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to keep the provision for children and young people with SEN and disabilities under review including its sufficiency, working with parents, young people, and providers. There is no requirement for a formal medical diagnosis to be made before requesting an Education Health and Care needs assessment.

■ Audiology: Children

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[5962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the provision of (a) Auditory Verbal therapy and (b) other support available for deaf (i) babies and (ii) children to develop language and communication; and what steps he is taking to help ensure all deaf children have the best start in life.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS Audiology services are locally commissioned and the responsibility for meeting the needs of children with hearing loss lies with local National Health Service commissioners. NHS England is supporting integrated care boards (ICBs) to make informed decisions about the provision of audiology services so that they can provide

consistent, high quality, and integrated care to children with hearing loss. In 2019 NHS England, with input from the National Deaf Children's Society, produced a guide for commissioners and health and local authority providers which supports children and young people with hearing loss, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/what-works-chswg-guide.pdf>

These specific assessments have not been made and there are currently no plans to assess the adequacy of provision of Auditory Verbal Therapy for deaf children. However, NHS England met with Auditory Verbal UK (AVUK) last year and discussed the need for more higher-level research evidence for intervention and to develop evaluations of impact. AVUK was also invited to join the Chief Scientific Officer's Audiology stakeholder group.

The Government will ensure that every child has the best start in life and that we raise the healthiest generation of children ever. NHS England and the Department for Education are working in partnership to co-fund £10 million for nine Early Language Support for Every Child pathfinder sites over two years, to provide early identification and targeted and universal support for children with speech, language, and communication needs in both early years and primary school settings, and more timely referrals for specialist support if required.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[5963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential economic benefits of increasing access to Auditory Verbal therapy for deaf children.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[5965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the (a) outcomes achieved by deaf children who have been supported to learn to listen and speak with Auditory Verbal therapy delivered by a certified Auditory Verbal therapist working in public services and (b) potential merits of increasing the number of such therapists.

Stephen Kinnock:

These specific assessments have not been made. Audiology services are locally commissioned and the responsibility for meeting the needs of non-hearing children lies with local National Health Service commissioners.

In July 2016, NHS England published Commissioning Services for People with Hearing Loss: A Framework for Clinical Commissioning Groups, which supports integrated care boards to make informed decisions about what is good value for the populations they serve and to provide more consistent, high quality, integrated care. It also addresses inequalities in access and outcomes between hearing services. Additionally, in 2019, NHS England, with input from the National Deaf Children's Society, produced a guide for commissioners and providers who support children and young people with hearing loss.

NHS England met with Auditory Verbal UK (AVUK) last year and discussed the need for more higher-level research evidence for the intervention and to develop evaluations of impact. AVUK was also invited to join the Chief Scientific Officer's audiology stakeholder group.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[5964]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) help the NHS and local health services can maximise investment in (i) new-born hearing screening, (ii) cochlear implants, (iii) hearing aids and (iv) other hearing technology and (b) use Auditory Verbal therapy to maximise such interventions.

Stephen Kinnock:

National Health Service audiology services, including the provision of therapies for people with hearing loss, are locally commissioned, and the responsibility for meeting the needs of people with hearing loss lies with local NHS commissioners.

In July 2016, NHS England published Commissioning Services for People with Hearing Loss: A Framework for Clinical Commissioning Groups, which supports integrated care boards in making informed decisions about what is good value for the populations they serve and to assist in providing more consistent, high quality, integrated care. NHS England also published specific guidance on newborn hearing screening in 2016, Newborn hearing screening programme (NHSP) operational guidance, which supports healthcare professionals and stakeholders delivering and managing newborn hearing screening programmes in England.

We also expect commissioners to follow guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). In 2018, the NICE issued the guidance, Hearing loss in adults: assessment and management, which aims to improve hearing loss services, including the provision of hearing aids .

Specialised ear surgery, such as cochlear implantation, is commissioned directly by NHS England as a specialised service. In NHS England's specialised commissioning specification, Cochlear implantation services for adults and children, updated in May 2023, Auditory Verbal Therapists are recognised as part of multi-disciplinary teams able to provide rehabilitation services, alongside a range of other health professionals.

■ **Audiology: Doncaster**

Sally Jameson:

[7040]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for audiology appointments in Doncaster Central constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board has advised that Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals is temporarily adjusting its Adult and Children Audiology services to enable the trust to make key improvements to its

information technology systems and clinical spaces. During this time, the trust has advised that urgent cases will be prioritised, with collaboration from neighbouring providers in South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire and essential services like hearing aid repairs, tinnitus clinics, and certain diagnostic tests such as Auditory Brainstem Response will still be provided. The trust has advised that full services are expected to resume early in the new year.

■ **Bowel Cancer: Screening**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department has provided for the early detection of bowel cancer in the 2024-25 financial year.

Karin Smyth:

We will get the National Health Service catching cancer, including bowel cancer, on time, diagnosing it earlier, and treating it faster so more patients survive this horrible set of diseases.

The NHS will maximise the pace of the roll-out of additional diagnostic capacity, delivering the final year of the three-year investment plan for establishing Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs), and ensuring timely implementation of new CDC locations and upgrades to existing CDCs, with capacity prioritised for cancer diagnostics.

The NHS bowel screening budget in FY24/25 is £293 million. Furthermore, in 2024/25, we will continue to extend the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme to additional cohorts, specifically 50 to 52 year olds.

■ **Brain: Diseases**

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[6874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to raise awareness of the symptoms of Chiari malformation with NHS practitioners.

Andrew Gwynne:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has produced guidance on the recognition and referral of suspected neurological conditions, which was last updated in October 2023. This guideline covers the initial assessment of symptoms and signs that might indicate a neurological condition, such as Chiari malformation. It helps non-specialist healthcare professionals to identify people who should be offered referral for specialist investigation.

The Royal College of General Practitioners has also produced an e-learning module on the recognition and referral of suspected neurological conditions, to raise awareness of these conditions and their associated symptoms amongst general practitioners.

At the national level, there are several initiatives supporting service improvement and better care for patients with neurological conditions such as Chiari malformation, including the Getting It Right First Time Programme for Neurology. NHS England has also established a Neurology Service Transformation Programme, a multi-year, clinically-led programme to develop a new model of integrated care for neurology services.

■ Breast Cancer

Olivia Blake: [\[8241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has conducted an equalities impact assessment on the NICE severity modifier for secondary breast cancer.

Olivia Blake: [\[8242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will undertake a review of the adequacy of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence severity modifier in the context of secondary breast cancer.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has no plans to conduct an equalities impact assessment on the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) severity modifier, or to undertake a review of its adequacy in the context of secondary breast cancer.

The NICE is responsible for developing the methods and processes it uses in its evaluations independently and in consultation with stakeholders. The severity modifier that the NICE introduced in 2022 is based on evidence of societal preferences and was introduced as part of a comprehensive review of the NICE's methods and processes, following extensive public and stakeholder engagement. The NICE considered equality issues in an equality impact document that accompanied the introduction of its new methods and processes, including the severity modifier.

The NICE recently concluded a review of the severity modifier and found that it is operating as intended. Since its introduction, the severity modifier has resulted in a higher approval rate for cancer medicines than under the NICE's previous methods, and has also allowed greater weight to be applied to non-cancer medicines that address a broader range of severe diseases, enabling the NICE to recommend medicines for conditions such as cystic fibrosis and hepatitis D. The NICE is keeping the impact of the severity modifier under review and is scoping further research into society's preferences on how much additional weighting to give to health benefits for people with severe diseases.

■ Breast Cancer: Screening

Tom Gordon:

[\[7895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to (a) increase breast cancer screening rates to pre-covid-19 levels and (b) meet his Department's breast cancer screening targets.

Andrew Gwynne:

Following COVID-19, a national restoration plan was implemented by NHS England in 2020/21 with targeted support to all breast screening services, to clear the backlog by the summer of 2023. In 2021/22 and 2022/23, activity was higher than in the previous 10 years with more women invited for breast screening compared to pre-pandemic years.

NHS England's national uptake improvement plan aims to address the fact that despite this action, some women are still not coming forward for breast screening. The plan includes active follow up of women who have missed appointments or who have not engaged with screening, a review to establish reasons for non-attendance to identify and address any barriers, and a look at how different invitation methods may impact on uptake, for instance factors such as age, screening history, and deprivation.

■ Cancer

Paul Davies:

[\[7306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of developing a specific Action Plan for (a) cancers of the (i) brain, (ii) liver, (iii) lung, (iv) stomach, (v) oesophagus and (vi) pancreas and (b) other less survivable cancers.

Andrew Gwynne:

Lord Darzi's report has set out the scale of the challenges we face in fixing the National Health Service, and the need to improve cancer waiting time performance and cancer survival. The report will inform the Government's 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS, including further detail on how we will improve outcomes for cancer, including less survivable cancers.

The Government's Health Mission aims to reduce lives lost to the biggest killers, including cancer, and we recognise the importance of tackling less survivable cancers as part of that Mission.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Tom Gordon:

[\[6680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of developing a specific action plan for (a) cancers of the (i) brain, (ii) liver, (iii) lung, (iv) stomach, (v) oesophagus and (vi) pancreas and (b) other less survivable cancers.

Tom Gordon: [\[6681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on their approach to less survivable cancers.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government has not made an assessment of the potential merits of an action plan for less survivable cancers individually or as a group, or had specific discussions with international counterparts on their approach to less survivable cancers.

Lord Darzi's report has set out the scale of the challenges we face in fixing the National Health Service, and the need to improve cancer waiting time performance and cancer survival. The report will inform the Government's ten-year plan to reform the NHS, including further detail on how we will improve outcomes for cancer, including less survivable cancers.

■ **Cancer: Screening**

Andy McDonald: [\[6267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to improve attendance at cancer screening appointments.

Andrew Gwynne:

There are currently three fully rolled out National Health Service cancer screening programmes: bowel; breast; and cervical. Lung cancer screening is also a formal programme, but is yet to be fully rolled out.

Bowel cancer screening has already introduced the faecal immunochemical test, which is an easier test to use and is done at home. Evidence shows more people from low participation groups such as men, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and people in deprived areas have engaged with screening since its introduction.

For breast screening, NHS England has developed a national uptake improvement plan in collaboration with key stakeholders such as cancer alliances. This plan includes a full review of the breast screening pathway, scoping digital innovations to improve uptake, evidence gathering on barriers to attend screening, investment to promote text message reminder alerts, media campaigns, and improved inclusive information.

Uptake of cervical screening has been declining for the last decade. As well as local initiatives to improve uptake, such as out of hours appointments, the UK National Screening Committee is looking at the use of human papillomavirus self-sampling for non-attenders following publication of the YouScreen study in July 2024. In addition, an in-service evaluation is being commissioned by the National Institute for Health and Care research to determine whether self-sampling could be offered to everyone eligible for cervical screening.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments

Mr Paul Foster:

[\[8273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients under the age of 18 are in receipt of an NHS funded cannabis-based (a) prescription and (b) medication.

Andrew Gwynne:

The NHS Business Services Authority does not hold the information in the form requested as it is only a legal requirement for prescriptions to state the age for children under 12 years.

Between November 2018 and July 2024, 21,299 items of licensed cannabis-based medicines, namely Nabilone, Sativex and Epidyolex, were dispensed in the community in England against a National Health Service prescription.

Data on unlicensed cannabis-based medicines is withheld in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, due to the number of items attributed to fewer than five patients and enhanced risk of release of patient identifiable information.

■ Cardiovascular Diseases

Tom Hayes:

[\[7115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce levels of (a) avoidable disability and (b) premature death for people at risk of cardiovascular disease.

Andrew Gwynne:

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a leading cause of avoidable disability and premature death in the United Kingdom. This is why the Government has set a goal for fewer lives being lost to the biggest killers, including from CVD, and why the NHS England Long Term Plan, published in 2019, sets out several actions that aim to help prevent up to 150,000 heart attacks, strokes and dementia cases by 2029.

The Government is continuing to support the delivery of NHS Health Checks, England's flagship CVD prevention programme, to people aged between 40 and 74 years old. This programme identifies people at risk of CVD, supports people to reduce their risk and prevents around 400 heart attacks or strokes each year. To improve access and engagement with the life-saving programme, we are developing a digital NHS Health Check which will be ready for testing in early 2025 and will enable people to undertake a check at home. We are also trialling the delivery of heart health checks to over 130,000 people in workplaces across the country.

Community pharmacies also provide a free blood pressure check service for anyone over 40. In cases where this results in a high reading, pharmacists can make sure people receive the right National Health Service support to reduce their blood pressure, whether that be simple advice on how to live healthily, or an urgent referral to see their general practitioner. This means more people at risk of CVD can access simple, low-cost treatments that will reduce their risk of death or serious disability.

■ Cardiovascular Diseases: Death**Rachael Maskell:** [8170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, What progress his department has made on reducing deaths from stroke and heart disease by a quarter within ten years.

Uma Kumaran: [8373]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on reducing deaths from stroke and heart disease by a quarter within ten years.

Andrew Gwynne:

Reducing avoidable disability and death from heart disease and stroke is a priority for the Government. This is why the Government has set a goal for fewer lives being lost to the biggest killers, including from cardiovascular disease (CVD), and why the NHS England's Long Term Plan (2019) sets out a number of actions that aim to help prevent up to 150,000 heart attacks, strokes, and dementia cases by 2029.

The Government continues to support the delivery of the NHS Health Check programme, England's CVD prevention programme, to people aged 40 to 74 years old. This programme identifies people at risk of CVD, supports people in reducing their risk, and prevents approximately 400 heart attacks or strokes each year. To improve access and engagement with the life-saving programme, we are developing a digital NHS Health Check which will be ready for testing in early 2025 and will enable people to undertake a check at home. We are also trialling the delivery of heart health checks to over 130,000 people in workplaces across the country.

Community pharmacies also provide a free blood pressure check service for anyone over 40 years old. In cases where this results in a high reading, pharmacists can make sure people receive the right National Health Service support to reduce their blood pressure and risk of death or serious disability.

We know there is more to do. The Department and NHS England are working together to achieve the Government's ambition for fewer lives lost to the biggest killers, including CVD, and we will share more in due course.

■ Care Homes: Aylesbury**Laura Kyrke-Smith:** [7359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to provide funding to cover basic costs for low-income care home users in Aylesbury constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

Charging, under the Care Act 2014, is based on several principles including that people should not be charged more than it is reasonably practicable for them to pay. Local authorities have discretion to implement charging policies which best meet the needs of the local populations they serve, whilst adhering to legislation and statutory guidance.

When assessing a resident's ability to pay for care in a care home, the local authority may take most of the income and benefits that people receive into account, unless these are specifically required to be disregarded by the regulations. However, it is required to ensure that the resident retains an amount for personal expenses, the Personal Expenses Allowance (PEA), which is currently £30.15 per week. This rate is reviewed annually, and local authorities have the ability to set a higher PEA if they wish.

In addition, where a person has no income, the local authority should support the person to access any relevant state benefits or independent advocacy service.

■ **Carers: Frome and East Somerset**

Anna Sabine:

[\[7238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of unpaid carers in Frome and East Somerset constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The 2021 Census found that there are approximately 4.7 million people in England who said they provided unpaid care. In the Frome and East Somerset constituency, the Census data showed that there were 7,900 people who said they provided unpaid care.

■ **Cervical Cancer: Screening**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[7838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) reduce disparities in access to cervical screening, (b) increase cervical screening rates and (c) improve cervical cancer outcomes within high-risk populations.

Andrew Gwynne:

A range of national improvements and innovations are being implemented to help address disparities, and increase uptake in cervical screening. In some areas appointments can now be made in any primary care setting rather than just your general practice, are available during evenings and on weekends, and can be made via integrated sexual health clinics. In addition, laboratories that analyse samples can now operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to accommodate surges in capacity.

We are currently working to see if an offer of self-sampling for cervical cancer screening would improve the uptake of people screened. As this method may reduce barriers that prevent people from engaging with the screening offer, including availability of appointments, physical disability, and past trauma.

The YouScreen study which has recently been published, provides evidence on offering a self-sampling test to non-attenders in the NHS Cervical Screening Programme. The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) plans to review this study once evidence has been collated.

In addition, an in-service evaluation is being commissioned by the National Institute for Health and Care Research to determine whether self-sampling could be offered as an option to everyone eligible for cervical screening. The findings from this evaluation will be used to inform any recommendations made by the UK NSC.

Through cervical screening and through our human papillomavirus vaccination programme we aim to reduce cervical cancer numbers in line with the World Health Organization's commitment for the elimination of cervical cancer.

■ **Chickenpox: Vaccination**

Dr Simon Opher: [6678]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help vaccinate children against chicken pox.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommended a universal varicella chickenpox vaccination programme be introduced as part of the routine childhood schedule. The JCVI statement is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-varicella-vaccination-programme-jcvi-advice-14-november-2023/jcvi-statement-on-a-childhood-varicella-chickenpox-vaccination-programme>

Ministers have accepted the JCVI recommendation, and the Department is in discussions with NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency on the potential implementation of the recommendation.

■ **Clinical Waste: Incinerators**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [6819]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many tonnes of medical waste are incinerated annually by the NHS in the East of England.

Karin Smyth:

The information is not collected in the format requested. However, the National Health Service collects data for all of England in the Estates Returns Information Collection, which is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/estates-returns-information-collection/england-2022-23>

■ **Community Diagnostic Centres: Private Sector**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [8218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of Community Diagnostic Centres are operated by private healthcare providers.

Karin Smyth:

The independent sector is involved in the delivery of community diagnostic centres (CDCs), in line with the role they play in supporting the NHS as trusted partners to recover elective services. There are 170 approved CDCs, 13 of which are fully owned and operated by private healthcare providers. A further 25 of the 170 are jointly operated by the private healthcare providers and the National Health Service.

Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients**Sir Ashley Fox:****[7619]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) local authorities and (b) integrated care boards to meet the requirements of Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is important that eligible individuals receive the aftercare they are entitled to under section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983, in order for them to stay well and to prevent readmission or detention.

The Discharge from Mental Health Inpatient Settings statutory guidance, published in January 2024, supports local authorities and integrated care boards to meet the requirements of section 117. It provides clarity in relation to how health and care systems can work together to support discharge from all mental health inpatient settings and ensure the right support in the community. It includes best practice on how patients and carers should be involved in discharge planning, and additional guidance on how budgets and responsibilities are shared to pay for aftercare under section 117. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/discharge-from-mental-health-inpatient-settings>

This year the National Health Service and local authorities are receiving £1 billion through the Discharge Fund. Local authorities and NHS integrated care boards have the flexibility to spend this investment in ways they deem most appropriate for their local area.

More broadly, we are committed to building consensus on the long-term reform needed to create a National Care Service based on consistent national standards. We will set out next steps for a process that engages with adult social care stakeholders, including cross-party and people with lived experience of care.

Coronavirus: Death**Rachael Maskell:****[7800]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of covid-19 related deaths in the last year.

Rachael Maskell: [7801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of trends in the level of covid-19 on (a) the NHS and (b) mortality rates.

Rachael Maskell: [7802]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to monitor the impact of covid-19 on public health.

Andrew Gwynne:

From the week commencing 6 October 2023 to week commencing 20 September 2024, there have been an estimated 9,972 deaths from COVID-19, as measured by death registrations with COVID-19 on death certificates. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://ukhsa-dashboard.data.gov.uk/topics/covid-19>

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) continues to monitor the ongoing impact of COVID-19 through a variety of surveillance systems, including in general practices, through the Royal College of General Practitioners' Surveillance Centre, in healthcare settings, and via the testing of patients in National Health Service and public health laboratories. In addition, a selection of these positive tests are sequenced to provide data on circulating variants and to potentially detect the arrival of new variants. This data is published on the data dashboard, and in surveillance reports, which are published weekly during the winter season, and fortnightly otherwise. The dashboard and surveillance reports are available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://ukhsa-dashboard.data.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2024-to-2025-season>

During vaccination campaigns, data on the effectiveness of the vaccines are collected and analysed, to inform ongoing discussion for future campaigns, both in terms of clinical and cost effectiveness.

Following increases in COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations during the waves that appear throughout the year, there is a proportionate increase in COVID-19 deaths. Based on UKHSA data, there is no evidence that recent waves or variants have shown a disproportionate level of severity or mortality. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://ukhsa-dashboard.data.gov.uk/topics/covid-19>

NHS England uses Urgent and Emergency Care Daily Situation Reports data to monitor COVID-19 impacts through general and acute bed closure data.

■ Coronavirus: Immunosuppression

David Chadwick:

[7225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that immunocompromised people with conditions that render them more vulnerable to covid-19 have timely access to effective (a) protective drugs and (b) support measures.

Andrew Gwynne:

Since June 2023, the pathway for COVID-19 treatments has been delegated from the former national pandemic-specific arrangements to more routine local arrangements for assessment and treatment. Integrated care boards are now responsible for ensuring that local health systems understand local pathways and how to refer patients for assessment and treatment. Information on treatments for COVID-19 is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/covid-19/treatments-for-covid-19/>

This autumn, individuals who are immunocompromised or otherwise at high risk will receive booster vaccinations, following the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. The UK Health Security Agency supports engagement within its remit with the voluntary and community sector, including through the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise Health and Wellbeing Alliance, the Immunocompromised Coalition, and organisations representing inclusion health groups.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Esther McVey:

[6194]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the study entitled Risk of all-cause and cardiac-related mortality after vaccination against COVID-19: A meta-analysis of self-controlled case series studies, published on 3 August 2023.

Andrew Gwynne:

All vaccines used in the United Kingdom are only authorised once they have met the robust standards of effectiveness, safety, and quality set by the UK's independent regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

The monitoring of vaccine safety does not stop once a vaccine has been approved. Whilst no specific assessment has been made of this study, the MHRA continuously monitors safety data from a range of sources including Yellow Card reports, interim and final study reports for clinical trials, post-authorisation safety studies, and data from scientific literature.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[8098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what modifications have been made to existing Covid-19 vaccine products; for what reasons were those modifications

made; and when those modifications were approved by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Medicines and Health products Regulatory Agency may authorise a line extension, which is a new product authorisation linked to the original marketing authorisation. Various versions of the COVID-19 vaccines have been approved as line extensions to the original vaccines since the first COVID-19 vaccines were approved in December 2020. Variations may be requested to add an indication, dosage form, strength or pack size, which will make the vaccine available for a wider patient pool, whilst maintaining effectiveness and an acceptable safety level. For example, Pfizer, in late 2021, made an application to extend the indication of their vaccines to children between five and 11 years old in a smaller 10 micrograms per dose, and later, via the European Commission Decision Reliance Procedure, a new three micrograms per dose in infants and children between aged six months and four years old. New versions of the vaccine have also been introduced to adapt the vaccines to the new strains of the virus.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[8100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the MHRA uses observed analyses instead of expected analyses in assessing the safety of Covid-19 vaccines.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency uses both observed and expected analysis in their assessment of safety signals for COVID-19 vaccines. Data obtained from the spontaneous Yellow Card reporting system, through which patients, public and healthcare professionals can report any incident associated with a medical product, was used to calculate 'Observed' figures. Estimated 'Expected' figures for pre-determined events were based on the total number of patients who had received the vaccine and the background rate of the event within a pre-pandemic period, using large electronic healthcare record databases. It should be recognised that the purpose of observed versus expected analyses is not to confirm the presence, absence, or magnitude of risks but to provide an alternative approach to rapid signal detection, in addition to disproportionality approaches, to maximise the value of spontaneous reports.

■ **Defibrillators: Cheshire**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[7846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of access to defibrillators in (a) Halton and (b) Cheshire West and Cheshire.

Andrew Gwynne:

No assessment has been made on the adequacy of access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in the Halton and Cheshire West and Cheshire. The

Government is committed to improving access to AEDs in public spaces, and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. We have made a further £500,000 available from August 2024 to fulfil existing applications to the Department's Community AED Fund. The criteria specified for the original grant continues to apply and will go to applications for AEDs in areas where there is the greatest need, including in areas of high footfall, hot spots for cardiac arrest, and areas that already have low access to AEDs.

■ **Defibrillators: Staffordshire**

Adam Jogee:

[\[6979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to defibrillators in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme and (b) Staffordshire.

Andrew Gwynne:

No assessment has been made on the adequacy of access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in Newcastle-under-Lyme or Staffordshire. The Government is committed to improving access to AEDs in public spaces, and reducing inequalities in access to these life saving devices. We have made a further £500,000 available from August 2024 to fulfil existing applications to the Department's Community AED Fund. The criteria specified for the original grant continues to apply, and will go to applications for AEDs in areas where there is the greatest need, including in areas of high footfall, hot spots for cardiac arrest, and areas that already have low access to AEDs.

■ **Dementia: Carers**

Lee Anderson:

[\[6495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support is available for carers of people with dementia; and whether his Department has plans to (a) review and (b) increase funding for that support.

Stephen Kinnock:

Local authorities have duties to support people caring for their family and friends. The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to deliver a wide range of sustainable, high-quality care and support services, including support for carers of people with dementia.

However, the Government also recognises the scale of the reforms needed in social care. That is why we will engage widely with a range of stakeholders, including unpaid carers, to ensure their voices are heard as we develop plans to create a National Care Service.

Lord Darzi's independent review of the National Health Service is also clear that a fresh approach to supporting and involving unpaid carers is required to improve outcomes for carers, people needing care, and the NHS.

We will carefully consider these findings as part of our 10-year plan for reforming and modernising the NHS and as we develop plans to reform adult social care, including through the National Care Service.

■ Dental Services: Mid Cheshire

Andrew Cooper:

[7055]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) adults and (b) children in Mid Cheshire constituency who (i) are not registered with an NHS dentist and (ii) have been unable to access NHS dental treatment in each of the last five years; and what steps his Department is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry in Mid Cheshire constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

Patients in England are not registered with a National Health Service dental practice, although many NHS dental practices do tend to see patients regularly. There is no geographical restriction on which practice a patient may attend, allowing patients the choice of where they would like to receive a course of treatment. Therefore, we cannot provide the number of people who are not registered with an NHS dentist.

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 Mid Cheshire constituency, this is the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB.

We do not hold information on the number of adults and children unable to access NHS dental treatment, but the GP Patient Survey (GPPS) gives information on the percentage of adults who tried to get an NHS dental appointment in the last two years but were not successful in doing so. The GPPS 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/>

The Government is committed to tackling the challenges for patients trying to access NHS dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and to recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and retaining NHS dentists.

■ Dental Services: North East Somerset and Hanham

Dan Norris:

[5854]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to recruit more dentists in North East Somerset and Hanham constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are determined to rebuild National Health Service dentistry, but it will take time and there are no quick fixes. Strengthening the workforce is key to our ambitions.

Integrated care boards have started to advertise posts through the Golden Hello scheme. This recruitment incentive will see up to 240 dentists receiving payments of £20,000 to work in those areas that need them most, for three years.

To rebuild dentistry in the long term, we will reform the dental contract with the sector, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

■ **Dental Services: Scarborough And Whitby**

Alison Hume:

[7178]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of dentistry practices in Scarborough and Whitby constituency accepting new (a) adult and (b) child NHS patients on the (i) most recent date for which figures are available and (ii) same date in 2010.

Stephen Kinnock:

While the data is not held for 2010, as of 9 October 2024, there were 15 open dentistry practices in the Scarborough and Whitby constituency, two of which were showing as 'accepting new adult patients when availability allows' and four of which were showing as 'accepting new child patients when availability allows'. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website, and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

■ **Dental Services: West Dorset**

Edward Morello:

[7317]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dental practices are offering NHS services in West Dorset constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

As of August 2024, the most recent data available, there are 14 dental practices offering National Health Service dentistry services in the West Dorset constituency. This information, from NHS Digital, is available at the following link:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/dentists-dental-practices/>

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Civil Servants**

John Glen:

[6131]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many civil servants, other than special advisers, have been appointed 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.

Karin Smyth:

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 sets out the requirement for the Civil Service Commission to establish recruitment principles which departments must follow. The Recruitment Principles 2018 provide the legal requirement for the

selection of appointments to the Civil Service to be made on merit and on the basis of fair and open competition. In addition, under section 12 of this act, it allows for exceptions to these principles.

Appointments by exception are an important part of how we bring talent and expertise into the Civil Service. These routes are long established and have been used properly and extensively by all modern administrations to bring in individuals with relevant experience and skills for a time-limited basis.

In the latest year across the civil service for which data is available, the year ending March 2023, approximately 80,000 people were hired through open competitions and approximately 9,000 people were hired through the different exception routes. Full details are available at the following link:

https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/15.101_CSC_ARA-2022-23_FINAL_WEB.pdf

In the period from the 4 July 2024 to 6 October 2024, the Department made 29 new appointments by exception to the recruitment principles. In line with our policy and data protection obligations, we are unable to confirm the job titles of those appointed at delegated grades, however we have provided the relevant pay bands and the exception used.

It should be noted that in the case of appointments by exception from senior civil servants at or above Payband 2, the Civil Service Commission publishes this information on a yearly basis, at the start of the financial year. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/publications/pb2-recruitmentexceptions/>

The following table shows the number of appointments, as well as the pay band of the appointments:

NUMBER OF APPOINTMENTS	PAY BAND
4	Senior Civil Servant
25	Delegated Grades from Grade 6 to Administrative Officer
4	G6
6	G7
2	Senior Executive Officer
7	Higher Executive Officer
6	Executive Officer

Note: job titles include Director General of the 10-Year Health Plan, Regional Director, Clinical Advisor to the Alcohol and Drugs Treatment and Recovery Team, Leading on Medical Interventions, Clinical Advisor to the Alcohol and Drugs Treatment and Recovery Team, and Leading on Psychosocial Interventions.

The following table shows the number of appointments made via exemption routes, broken down by the type of exemption route:

NUMBER OF APPOINTMENTS	EXCEPTION
6	Exception 1 temporary appointments
22	Exception 3 secondments
1	Exception 5 former civil servants

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[\[6132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Karin Smyth:

Two direct ministerial appointments have been made since 4 July 2024, to work on the 10 Year Health Plan, and to lead on the independent investigation of the National Health Service. Further information on these two announcements is available respectively at the following two links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/paul-corrigan-appointed-by-the-government-to-help-shape-health-plans>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-investigation-of-nhs-performance-terms-of-reference/independent-investigation-of-nhs-performance-terms-of-reference>

No direct ministerial or public appointees have been removed from their posts since 4 July 2024. As of 8 October 2024, 12 public appointees have had their terms extended or been re-appointed as non-executive board members. Further details on the public appointments are available at the following two links:

<https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/announcements?titleSearch=&bodySearch=Select+organisation&department=1014®ulated=&bodyJustice=&sort=openingAt%3Adesc#search-results>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-public-appointments-2024-to-2025/appointments-made-october-2024-to-march-2025>

■ Dietetics

Paula Barker:

[6627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department taking to use NHS dietitians to help reduce health inequalities.

Andrew Gwynne:

Dietitians have an important contribution to reducing health inequalities. The Department published Addressing health inequalities across allied health professional (AHP) services: a guide for AHP system leaders in May 2024. The guide focuses on what AHP leaders need to know and what actions they can take at a system level to address health inequalities. This includes the utility of dietitians to reduce health inequalities. The guide is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/addressing-health-inequalities-across-allied-health-professional-ahp-services-a-guide-for-ahp-system-leaders/addressing-health-inequalities-across-allied-health-professional-ahp-services-a-guide-for-ahp-system-leaders>

We continue to promote the framework, My role in tackling health inequalities: a framework for allied health professionals, published in 2021. This work describes how allied health professionals (AHPs), including dietitians, can raise awareness, take action, and optimise advocacy through six lenses: self; patients; clinical teams, pathway and service groups; communities and networks; systems; and nurturing the future. The framework is designed to support AHPs to do whatever they can, large or small, to tackle health inequalities. Each section of the framework is accompanied by examples of AHP-led work already under way across England. The framework is available at the following link:

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/reports/tackling-health-inequalities-framework-allied-health-professionals>

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Legislation

Satvir Kaur:

[8060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing legislation to require all vaping products to be (a) sold in plain packaging and (b) kept out of sight behind the counter.

Andrew Gwynne:

As set out in the Kings Speech, the Government will soon introduce legislation which will impose limits on the sale and marketing of vapes, and stop future generations from becoming hooked on nicotine.

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill will give ministers' powers to regulate the flavours, packaging, and point of sale display of vapes. Further consultation and assessment will follow which will determine what specific regulations are brought in using these powers.

■ Enzyme Replacement Therapy: Drugs

Anna Dixon:

[\[7199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his department is taking to tackle shortages in (a) ADHD medication, (b) Creon and (c) medications used in the management of enzyme deficiency disorders and cystic fibrosis.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working hard with industry and NHS England to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of intensive work, some issues have been resolved. All strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available.

We are continuing to work to resolve medicine supply issues, where they remain, for methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets. We are engaging with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to assess the challenges faced and their actions to address them. We are also directing suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term. We anticipate intermittent regional supply disruptions to continue, and we expect supply to improve in the UK from October 2024 onwards.

In parallel, the Department has worked with specialist clinicians, including those within the National Health Service, to develop management advice for NHS clinicians to consider prescribing available alternative brands of methylphenidate prolonged release tablets or available alternative ADHD medicines. We would expect ADHD service providers and specialists to follow our guidance which includes offering rapid response to primary care teams seeking urgent advice/opinion for the management of patients including those known to be at a higher risk of adverse impact because of these shortages.

The Department has also been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with Creon which is used by patients with conditions such as cystic fibrosis and certain cancers including pancreatic cancer. The supply issues with Creon are impacting countries throughout Europe and have been caused by limited availability of raw ingredients and manufacturing capacity constraints to produce volumes needed to meet demand. These issues have resulted in knock-on supply disruptions of alternative pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) medications. The Department is continuing to work with all suppliers of PERT to help resolve the supply issues in the short and longer term. This includes asking that they expedite deliveries, source stock from other markets and increase production.

The supplier of Creon has advised that they expect to have regular supplies released each month going forward and are working to increase the quantities released. Serious Shortage Protocols are in place for Creon 10,000 and 25,000 capsules which

pharmacists can use to restrict supply to one month at a time to ensure more patients have access to it whilst stock is limited.

We have issued comprehensive guidance to healthcare professionals about these supply issues, which provides advice on how to manage patients whilst there is disruption to supply. This guidance is being kept under review and updates will be made, as necessary.

■ Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry

Dr Jeevun Sandher: [\[7180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to integrate the recommendations of the Lampard inquiry into mental health services nationwide.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Lampard Statutory Inquiry began public hearings in September 2024. The Department will await the findings of the Inquiry and will consider its recommendations once submitted by the Chair. In the meantime, we are working with NHS England to understand the factors driving poor quality and safety in inpatient and community mental health settings to ensure patients are treated with dignity and respect throughout their treatment in a mental health hospital.

■ Fluoride: Drinking Water

James Naish: [\[6722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of expanding existing water fluoridation arrangements in Nottinghamshire to cover the whole of (a) Nottingham and (b) Nottinghamshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

No such assessment has been made. Public consultation is required on proposals for new, or the expansion of existing, community water fluoridation schemes. The Water Fluoridation (Consultation) (England) Regulations 2022 set out the requirements, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2022/1163/contents/made>

■ Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust: Radiology

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[8217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of trained radiologists within Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust as of October 2024.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England publishes monthly Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics for England. These report staff working for hospital trusts and other core organisations. This data is drawn from the Electronic Staff Record, the human

resources system for the National Health Service, and is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics>

The latest available published data, which is for June 2024, shows there are 40 full time equivalent (FTE) consultants, two FTE specialty doctors and further 11 FTE speciality registrars working in the radiology speciality group at the Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust.

■ General Practitioners: Shropshire

Helen Morgan:

[7886]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the annual amount of discretionary funding received by GP services in North Shropshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

The following table shows funding broken down by funding stream for general practices located in North Shropshire for the 2022/2023 financial year:

FUNDING STREAM	VALUE (£)
Global Sum	11,191,640
Direct Enhanced Services	557,897
Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF)	1,654,070
Pneumococcal Vaccine, Childhood Immunisation Main Programme	30,381
Reimbursement of Drugs Dispenses	4,627,145
Dispensing Fee	1,516,157
Prescribing Fee	188,567 ¹
PMS Expenditure	0
Information Management	36,767 ¹
PCO Administered	183,794
General Practice Transformation Fund	192,868
Local Incentive Schemes	1,139,579
Premises Payments	1,323,447
Primary Care Network Related Payments	1,288,714
Winter access fund	55,024

FUNDING STREAM	VALUE (£)
Covid Related Payments	128,487
Other	424,893
Total	24,088,762

Source: NHS England

Notes:

1. This data is based off published payments data. Note from the payments data on negative payment values reads as follows: Adjustments can be made whilst payments are processing to raise credits/debits against payments. These adjustments can result in what appear to be negative payments or positive deductions.
2. Health geographies do not align with parliamentary constituencies. When calculating payments to the North Shropshire Parliamentary Constituency we have included practices with postcodes within the North Shropshire parliamentary constituency. There will be patients registered at practices in this constituency who reside outside the constituency and vice-versa.
3. This includes primary care network (PCN) payments, where they are recorded against practices in North Shropshire in the Payments to General Practice data set. PCNs do not align with constituency boundaries and payments recorded in one constituency might benefit practices in the same PCN in other constituencies.

■ General Practitioners: South Holland and the Deepings

Sir John Hayes: [\[7403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time equivalent GPs were working in South Holland and the Deepings constituency on 7 October 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

As of 31 August 2024, the latest period for which data is available, South Holland and the Deepings constituency had 44 full-time equivalent (FTE) fully qualified general practitioners and 70 FTE doctors in general practice, including trainees.

■ GP Practice Lists

Sir John Whittingdale: [\[5824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the the average number of patients per GP is in (a) the Maldon District, (b) Mid and South Essex and (c) England.

Stephen Kinnock:

In August 2024, the median number of patients per full-time equivalent (FTE) fully qualified general practitioner was:

- 3,030 in the Maldon District;
- 2,759 in the NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB); and
- 2,300 in England.

In the same period, the median number of patients per FTE doctor in general practice was:

- 2,291 in the Maldon District;
- 2,191 in the Mid and South Essex ICB; and
- 1,797 in England.

■ Health Mission Board

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[7258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to establish a health mission board.

Karin Smyth:

My Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, chairs a cross-government Health Mission Board to oversee and drive delivery of the health mission to 'build a health and social care system fit for the future'.

■ Health Professionals: Regulation

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[8324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he supports regulation of Medical Associate Professionals by the General Medical Council.

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[8325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to define the role of medical associates to ensure there is a clear distinction with the role of doctors.

Karin Smyth:

Medical associate professions are valued members of the multi-disciplinary team and contribute to patient care. Regulation of Physician Associates (PAs) and Anaesthesia Associates (AAs) will begin in December 2024. The General Medical Council (GMC) will set standards of practice, education, and training, and operate fitness-to-practice procedures to ensure that PAs and AAs can be held to account if serious concerns are raised.

NHS England has issued clear guidance on the deployment of PAs and AAs in the National Health Service, which describes the expectations of how organisations providing NHS care should deploy PAs and AAs so that they can contribute to the delivery of safe and effective healthcare, in a supportive environment. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/summary-of-existing-guidance-on-the-deployment-of-medical-associate-professions-in-nhs-healthcare-settings/>

Ahead of regulation, the GMC has also published advice for doctors who supervise AAs and PAs, alongside updating its clinical governance handbook to set out how organisations that employ AAs and PAs should ensure appropriate deployment and supervision.

■ Health Services

Andrew Cooper:

[7058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England who have unmet care needs; and what steps his Department is taking to help ensure those care needs are met.

Stephen Kinnock:

Local authorities are responsible for assessing individuals' care and support needs and, where eligible, for meeting those needs. Where individuals do not meet the eligibility threshold, they can get support from their local authorities in making their own arrangements for care services, as set out in the Care Act 2014.

We recognise that there are challenges in adult social care, with people needing to fight a complicated system or go without the care they need. Lord Darzi's report indicated a growing gap between requests and those receiving publicly funded care, and the number of people receiving long term care decreased between 2015/16 and 2022/23. There is limited information on self-funders who arrange their own care.

Long-term reform is needed in adult social care. We will work with the sector to build consensus for a National Care Service, based on consistent national standards, to support people in living independent and dignified lives.

In the interim, Care Quality Commission (CQC) local authority assessments consider the performance of the delivery of the Care Act 2014 duties, including the timeliness of assessing care needs. If the CQC identifies that a local authority has failed or is failing its functions to an acceptable standard, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has powers to intervene. The CQC has published its first nine local authority ratings and reports.

Gill Furniss:

[8179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish a call to evidence for the NHS 10-Year Plan.

Karin Smyth:

The use of data and evidence is embedded throughout our development of the 10-Year Health Plan and we will undertake intensive engagement with the public and workforce to gain insights into experiences, priorities and ideas for change.

We will invite stakeholders to submit evidence to the plan in a variety of ways, as well as using evidence collected as part of Lord Darzi's Independent Investigation of the

National Health Service in England, to make sure the plan is based on the most reliable available evidence.

■ Health Services and Social Services: Homelessness

Paula Barker:

[6613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve (a) access to and (b) engagement with health and social care services for those who experience homelessness.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department recognises the importance of reducing barriers to services for those experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping. This is why we supported the development and implementation of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidance, which provides recommendations on ways to improve access to, and engagement with, health and social care services for people experiencing homelessness. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng214>

NHS England has also delivered the Inclusion Health Framework, which includes focus on the homeless population. Inclusion health is an umbrella term which includes homeless people and is used to describe people who are socially excluded, and who typically experience multiple interacting risk factors for poor health, such as stigma, discrimination, poverty, violence, and complex trauma.

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG214>

■ Health Services: Sleeping Rough

Deirdre Costigan:

[6773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve coordination between health services and homelessness support organisations to tackle the healthcare needs of rough sleepers with (a) substance misuse and (b) mental health challenges.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department is funding the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG) in 83 local authorities, of which Ealing is one. This programme funds targeted services to improve drug and alcohol treatment and support to people who sleep rough, or who are at risk of sleeping rough, and who have substance misuse needs. These services work closely with local homelessness organisations to ensure that coordinated support is provided, as well as providing support around people's co-occurring substance misuse and mental health needs.

In addition to the RSDATG, the Department is working to expand mental health outreach services to improve co-ordinated care for homeless individuals with co-occurring mental health needs. Since 2019/20 there has been a £30 million investment to meet the health needs of people sleeping rough, allowing for the

establishment of 37 sites with new mental health provision for rough sleepers. Beyond 2023/24, NHS England will provide recurrent annual funding of £9 million to support the specialist services that have been established as part of the NHS Long Term Plan programme.

■ Health Visitors and School Nurses

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[7257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the numbers of (a) health visitors and (b) school nurses.

Andrew Gwynne:

We are committed to creating the healthiest generation of children ever. To achieve this, we must ensure that families have the support they need to give their babies and children the best start and the building blocks for a healthy life.

The child health workforce, including health visitors and school nurses, is central to how we support families to give their child the best start in life. Their contact with parents, carers and children of all ages provides vital advice and support and helps ensure that health, development, and safeguarding needs are identified early.

We are committed to training the staff we need to ensure patients, their carers and their families are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it. We will want to assure ourselves, and the National Health Service, that the current plan will deliver the reform needed. We will need to do this in light of the 10 Year Plan.

■ Health: Homelessness

Paula Barker: [\[6615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will include health outcomes of those who experience homelessness in the NHS ten year plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

The NHS 10-Year Plan will consider the change needed to meet the three health mission goals: a fairer system where everyone lives well for longer; a National Health Service that is there when people need it; and fewer lives lost to the biggest killers. Officials within the Department will work closely with partners across the health service and NHS England as the plan is developed to consider better health outcomes for socially excluded groups, including those experiencing homelessness.

■ Heart Diseases

Mr Joshua Reynolds: [\[7370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting lists for heart care treatments, in the context of recent statistics published by the British Heart Foundation on trends in the number of premature deaths from heart and circulatory diseases.

Karin Smyth:

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission. The waiting list at the end of July stood at 7.62 million patient pathways, with 417,864 incomplete pathways waiting for treatment for cardiology.

We will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments per week, including in cardiology services, as a First Step in our commitment to ensuring patients can expect to be treated within 18 weeks.

We will be supporting NHS Trusts to deliver these through innovation, sharing best practice to increase productivity and efficiency, and ensuring the best value is delivered.

This government is committed to putting patients first. This means making sure that patients across all specialities, including cardiology, are seen on time and ensuring that people have the best possible experience during their care.

■ HIV Infection: Health Services**Daisy Cooper:****[6525]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution of Baroness Merron of 11 September 2024, House of Lords, Official Report, column 1565, what steps he is taking to engage with people who have been diagnosed with HIV but who have not accessed HIV care in the last year.

Daisy Cooper:**[6526]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any Integrated Care Boards fund programmes which (a) find and (b) re-engage with people living with HIV who have not accessed HIV care in the last year

Andrew Gwynne:

We are making progress in ending new transmissions of HIV within England by 2030 but we know more work needs to be done to achieve our ambitions. The Department, the UK Health and Security Agency, NHS England and a broad range of system partners are working together to develop a new HIV Action Plan, including a focus on HIV care, and retention and reengagement, which we aim to publish by summer 2025.

NHS England's Service Specification for Adult Specialised Services for People Living with HIV requires all service providers to have a policy describing how they aim to ensure retention in care, and re-engage those lost to care. This service specification is available at the follow link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/New-HIV-prescribed-service-specification-version-4.4.pdf>

Commissioning responsibility for adult specialist services for people living with HIV has been delegated by NHS England to integrated care boards (ICB) in the East of England, the Midlands and the North West regions of England from April 2024, with the South West, South East, London, and the North East regions of England to follow

in April 2025. NHS England National Specialised Commissioning does not have specific details on the activities of individual ICBs regarding any funded programmes for HIV services to find and re-engage with people living with HIV who have not accessed HIV care in the last year.

We are making excellent progress with the blood borne virus opt-out testing programme in the highest HIV prevalence areas, helping us reach those who do not typically engage with sexual health services and those who are not engaged in care. In its first 28 months, the programme has identified 1,360 undiagnosed or untreated HIV cases, and over 5,000 cases of untreated or undiagnosed hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Daisy Cooper: [\[6527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any HIV peer support services were (a) wholly or (b) partially funded by the public purse in 2023-24

Andrew Gwynne:

The Adult service specification for people living with HIV sets out the requirement for HIV services to ensure that people living with HIV have access to emotional and psychological support, including peer support. However, NHS England Specialised Commissioning does not directly commission HIV peer support services and does not hold any information or data on whether HIV peer support services have been wholly or partially funded by local National Health Service health systems.

■ Hospices: Finance

Julia Buckley: [\[7037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure long-term funding for hospices.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is determined to shift more healthcare out of hospitals and into the community, to ensure that patients and their families receive personalised care in the most appropriate setting, and palliative and end of life care, including hospices, will have a big role to play in that shift.

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

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

Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. The amount of funding charitable

hospices receive varies by ICB area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth of a range of palliative and end of life care provision within their ICB footprint.

I recently met with NHS England, and discussions have begun on how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and quality of, palliative and end of life care. We will consider next steps on palliative and end of life care, including funding, in the coming months.

■ Hospices: Social and Community Care

Mr James Frith:

[\[6422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase the use of hospices in social and community care.

Stephen Kinnock:

We want a society where every person, their families, and carers, receive high-quality, compassionate care, from diagnosis through to end of life. The Government is determined to shift more healthcare out of hospitals and into the community, to ensure that patients and their families receive personalised care in the most appropriate setting, and palliative and end of life care, including hospices, will have a big role to play in that shift.

■ Hospitals: Food

Esther McVey:

[\[6192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the cost to the public purse for hospital food in each of the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

The following table shows the cost of inpatient food services, as well as other patient food services, in England over the last five years:

YEAR	INPATIENT FOOD SERVICE COSTS	OTHER PATIENT FOOD SERVICE COSTS
2022/23	£750,600,000	£126,000,000
2021/22	£660,200,000	£89,700,000
2020/21	£617,800,000	£35,300,000
2019/20	£630,500,000	N/A
2018/19	£633,800,000	N/A

Source: the NHS Digital Estates Return Information Collection, published December 2023, available at the following link: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and->

[information/publications/statistical/estates-returns-information-collection/england-2022-23](#)

■ Hospitals: Listed Buildings

Clive Jones: [7081]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether funding is available to help with building repairs for Grade II listed hospitals.

Karin Smyth:

Currently, there are no national programmes providing funding specifically to Grade II listed hospitals and the Department does not keep records of which hospitals or buildings on hospital sites fit this criterion.

It is the legal responsibility of National Health Service organisations to maintain their estates and they are expected to use existing capital budgets and assets to maximum effect, prioritising and delivering locally to maintain and repair NHS buildings, including Grade II listed buildings, as and when appropriate.

In support of this, we are providing £4.2 billion for this financial year to upgrade, maintain, provide equipment to, and modernise NHS buildings in accordance with regional priorities.

■ Hydrocephalus: Diagnosis

Anna Dixon: [7222]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of instructing NICE to review its infant head circumference measurement guidelines, in the context of improving the diagnosis and treatment of (a) hydrocephalus and (b) other long term related complications.

Andrew Gwynne:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) develops its guidance independently and keeps its published guidelines under active surveillance so that it is able to update its recommendations in light of any significant new evidence.

Decisions on updates to existing guidance are made by NICE's Prioritisation Board in line with NICE's published common prioritisation framework.

NICE's guideline on "suspected neurological conditions: recognition and referral" includes recommendations on head circumference measurement. We understand that NICE is currently reviewing its recommendations to consider if any update to its recommendation is warranted.

■ Infant Foods

Dr Beccy Cooper: [7266]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing parents to buy first-stage baby formula using (a) loyalty

points, (b) grocery vouchers, (c) food bank vouchers and (d) other cash-equivalent methods.

Andrew Gwynne:

Infant formula legislation sets robust nutritional and compositional standards to ensure that all infant formula meets the nutritional needs of babies for healthy growth and development, irrespective of brand or price. The legislation also restricts the marketing and promotion of infant formula so as not to discourage breastfeeding. This is in line with our international commitments to support the World Health Organisation International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes to promote breastfeeding.

The Department has published guidance on infant and follow-on formula and food for special medical purposes, including specialist infant formulas, which advises businesses on the implementation of the regulations. Loyalty and reward card schemes vary between retailers, and it is for businesses to ensure that their activities are in compliance with the regulations on a case by case basis.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is undertaking a market study into competition in the infant formula sector in the United Kingdom. It is gathering evidence on: consumer behaviour, the drivers of choice, and the information and advice available to consumers to support their decisions; the role of the regulatory framework and its enforcement in influencing market outcomes; and the supply-side features of the market such as barriers to entry and expansion. The CMA's market study is expected to publish an interim report in October 2024. We look forward to the CMA's interim report into this issue and we will carefully consider any findings and recommendations for the regulatory framework for infant formula.

■ **Insulin**

Marie Goldman:

[\[6750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the previous Government's directive not to prescribe diabetes medication for non-licensed purposes on the availability of insulin stock; and what steps he is taking to safeguard those with diabetes from fluctuations in insulin availability.

Karin Smyth:

There are ongoing global supply issues with some medications used to treat diabetes, and we continue to work closely with all manufacturers of insulin and glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists to improve the situation and ensure alternatives remain available for patients. We have issued communications to National Health Service healthcare professionals, providing comprehensive management guidance, advice, and information to allow them to support their patients in the management of the supply issues.

Clinicians can prescribe medicines outside their licensed indication, which is known as off-label use, where they consider it to be the best treatment option for their patient, and, if in the NHS, subject to funding by the NHS locally. However, our

guidance is clear that the groups of medicines for diabetes, such as glucagon like peptide receptor agonists that are licensed to treat type 2 diabetes, should only be used for their licensed indication and should not be routinely prescribed for weight loss. The General Pharmaceutical Council, General Medical Council, Health and Care Professions Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council, and Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland have also issued a joint statement stressing the importance of health and care professionals meeting regulatory standards, including taking into account our guidance when prescribing these medicines.

■ **Kidney Diseases: Transplant Surgery**

Daisy Cooper: [\[6540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the conclusions of the report entitled *Transplant care in the UK: a patient perspective*, published by Kidney Care UK in July 2024, if he will take steps to ensure all chronic kidney disease patients who have received a transplant have access to physiotherapy services.

Daisy Cooper: [\[6541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the conclusions of the report entitled *Transplant care in the UK: a patient perspective*, published by Kidney Care UK in July 2024, if he will take steps to ensure people who have received a transplant have access to adequate psychological support.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department, NHS England, and NHS Blood and Transplant are working together to implement the recommendations of the Organ Utilisation Group's 2023 report through the Implementation Steering Group for Organ Utilisation. The recommendations state that psychological and social care support must be available for patients both around the time of transplant, and in follow-up.

In addition, NHS England's Service Specification for Renal Transplantation mandates that commissioned providers have access to both physiotherapy and psychological support services. NHS England is reviewing all specialised renal service specifications, including the requirements to offer these services. These will be in line with the recommendations of NHS England's Renal Service Transformation Programme (RSTP) toolkit.

The RSTP toolkit aims to support renal providers across England to transform care for patients with kidney disease. It includes ensuring all patients have access to physiotherapy and psychological care. Providers in England are supported by the NHS England commissioned Renal Clinical Networks to implement principles of the toolkit.

■ **LGBT+ People: Mental Health**

Mary Glendon:

[6226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve LGBTQ+ mental health.

Stephen Kinnock:

People with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they need, including those within the LGBTQ+ community, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health. We also want people to be confident in accessing high quality mental health support when they need it.

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

■ **Lister Hospital**

Chris Hinchliff:

[7155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of awarding teaching status to Lister Hospital; and when his Department plans to respond to the application on this matter.

Karin Smyth:

Lister Hospital is part of the East and North Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust. Officials are in correspondence with the trust about amending their establishment order to reflect teaching status.

■ **Liver Cancer: Medical Treatments**

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[6053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of selective internal radiation therapy for NHS liver cancer patients.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has made no such assessment, however the National Health Service has concluded that there is not enough evidence to make selective internal radiation therapy available to treat liver cancer patients at this time. The assessment can be found on the NHS website, at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ccp-statement-sirt-in-the-treatment-of-secondary-liver-cancers.pdf>

■ Liver Diseases

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[7264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of pathways for the earlier detection of non-alcohol related fatty liver disease.

Andrew Gwynne:

There are 10 community diagnostic centres (CDC) currently providing ultrasound liver elastography, otherwise known as a fibroscan. NHS England has plans to understand the diagnostic pathways for liver disease and how CDCs can further support this. The pathway for assessing liver disease should start with blood tests taken in primary care, with FIB-4 liver tests available at National Health Service trusts.

■ Liver Diseases: Children

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[7263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the prevalence of non-alcohol related fatty liver disease in children.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England is assessing the role of screening for non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in children as part of the initial 30 Complication from Excess Weight clinics. Children and young people are assessed within these clinics for a range of physical and mental health problems associated with excess weight with the intention to provide early interventions. The efficacy of this approach is currently being evaluated by the National Institute for Health and Care Research.

■ Lung Cancer: Research

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support research on (a) the causes of and (b) treatments for metastatic lung cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

Research is crucial in tackling cancer, which is why the Department invests over £1.5 billion per year in health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). NIHR research expenditure for all cancers was £121.8 million in 2022/23. The NIHR spends more on cancer than any other disease group, reflecting its high priority.

The NIHR also invests in research infrastructure to support the delivery of research. This includes research into a novel cancer vaccine for lung cancer patients that primes the immune system to recognise and fight cancer cells.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including lung cancer. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality. The

NIHR welcomes further high-quality proposals to understand the causes of and to inform approaches to treating metastatic lung cancer.

■ Lung Cancer: Yorkshire

Tom Gordon:

[\[7894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of eligible people have received a check through the targeted lung health check programme in Yorkshire since the establishment of that programme; and what steps he plans to take to help increase the update of those checks.

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.

The Yorkshire region is covered by three Cancer Alliances. NHS England has advised that in the Humber and North Yorkshire, of the 202,527 estimated eligible population, 75,973 people were invited for a lung check, representing 37.5% population coverage. 34,217 had lung checks, and 24,726 had scans. Uptake since inception of the programme is 45%.

In West Yorkshire and Harrogate, of the 202,836 estimated eligible population, 36,277 were invited, representing 17.9% population coverage. 19,941 people had lung checks, and 10,404 had scans. Uptake since inception of the programme is 55%.

In South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw, of the 177,788 estimated eligible population, 132,658 were invited, representing 74.6% population coverage. 49,682 had lung checks, and 32,561 had scans. Uptake since inception of the programme stands at 37%.

The Cancer Alliances undertake a range of community engagement, advertising, and 'reminder' activities to increase uptake. At a national level, NHS England continues to carry out behavioural insights research to inform their approach to supporting and improving uptake of the programme. NHS England has produced a range of engagement assets including for social media adverts, leaflets and posters which are used by local sites. They aim to run further social media adverts in future.

The NHS Lung Cancer Screening programme will be fully rolled out by 2029.

■ Malnutrition: Screening

Andy Slaughter:

[\[8110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that NHS patients receive appropriate (a) screening and (b) treatment for malnutrition.

Andy Slaughter: [8111]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an estimate of the potential savings to the public purse from increased levels of malnutrition (a) screening and (b) treatment.

Andy Slaughter: [8112]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what role he plans integrated care systems will play in addressing malnutrition across their localities.

Andrew Gwynne:

Malnutrition is a clinical condition affecting all ages, across all communities, and in all health and care settings. Most cases of malnutrition will be secondary to another health condition, which may impact on nutritional needs or a person's ability to eat and drink. All National Health Services are recommended to adhere to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) clinical guideline, Nutrition support for adults: oral nutrition support, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg32>

This sets out the recommendations, based on best available evidence, of the organisation, screening, and delivery of nutritional support in hospitals and communities. This includes screening for malnutrition and the risk of malnutrition. The NICE guidelines recommend that all hospital inpatients should be screened for malnutrition on admission, as well as all outpatients at their first clinic appointment. Screening should be repeated weekly for inpatients, and when there is clinical concern for outpatients. People in care homes should be screened on admission, and when there is clinical concern.

All people who are identified as being malnourished or at risk of malnutrition should be assessed by an appropriately qualified health professional, such as a dietitian, to receive an individualised care plan in line with their individual circumstances, dietary preferences, and medical needs.

NHS England's Nursing Directorate is leading on a review and refresh of the National Nutrition and Hydration guidance, which builds on NHS England's previous Commissioning Excellent Nutrition and Hydration guidance 2015-2018. This previous guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/nut-hyd-guid.pdf>

A National Hydration and Nutrition Advisory Board was established in June 2023, providing strategic advice, direction, and oversight across the review, codesign, and development of the policy.

There is no current estimate on the savings that could be made as a result of increasing the screening and treatment of malnutrition. However, efforts to prevent malnutrition and to treat it early could potentially reduce both the clinical and

economic burden to the healthcare system. Malnourished patients spend on average 30% longer in hospital than patients who are not malnourished .

Integrated care systems, made up of local partners including the NHS, councils, the voluntary sector, and others, are responsible for planning and commissioning health services for their local population. Integrated care systems and providers will be responsible for implementation and delivery of the refreshed National Nutrition and Hydration policy.

■ **Maternity Services: Safety**

Adam Thompson:

[6709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) progress can be monitored on all maternity safety improvement schemes and (b) all schemes can be effectively evaluated to assess impact.

Karin Smyth:

Improving safety and outcomes for women and babies is central to NHS England's three year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services, which is built on recommendations from recent maternity safety inquiries and specifically addresses the key themes they raised. The plan includes measures to determine success that will be used to monitor outcomes and progress in achieving key objectives in the plan. To facilitate monitoring against the key objectives, NHS England published technical guidance which includes information to provide clarity on the data sources and indicator construction for these measures.

There are a number of measures in place to monitor progress of maternity safety improvement schemes, including the perinatal quality oversight model (PQOM). The PQOM provides a structure with clear lines of responsibility and accountability for addressing and escalating quality and safety risks at a trust, integrated care board, regional, and national level.

The Maternity Safety Support Programme provides dedicated and intensive support to trusts that require additional support. Maternity improvement advisors work closely with trusts to develop tailored maternity improvement plans and monitor progress. NHS England undertook an evaluation of the programme this year and they are currently exploring where improvements can be made.

■ **Medical Examinations: Foster Care**

Andrew Cooper:

[7049]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of offering potential foster carers the required health assessment free of charge on the NHS.

Stephen Kinnock:

Foster carers must undergo a full assessment and be approved by a fostering service provider before any child can be placed in their care. This includes a medical

assessment. These assessments are not part of the GP contract with the National Health Service.

When asked to assist with medical evidence reports, there are some letters, certificates, or reports that general practices may charge for, and other certificates that they must not charge for. This is set out in law through the General Medical Services and Personal Medical Services Regulations, which form the basis of the GP contract with the NHS.

The Department for Education sets out National Minimum Standards for fostering, and costs for caring may be covered by local authorities or fostering agencies.

■ **Medicine: Student Numbers**

Lee Anderson: [\[6487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to lift the cap on the number of medical degree places.

Karin Smyth:

The Government does not currently plan to lift the cap on medical school places. We are committed to training the staff we need, including doctors, to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

■ **Mental Health Services**

Deirdre Costigan: [\[6762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate provision of early support for people with poor mental health that live independently.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know prevention is better than a cure, and early intervention is vital. Part of successful early intervention is ensuring that people, including those that live independently, have access to the mental health support that they need. As part of our mission to build a National Health Service fit for the future, we will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to child and adult services to reduce delays, bring waiting times down, and intervene earlier.

Our early commitment to roll out Young Futures hubs is also key to this and will offer open-access mental health support for young people in every community. In addition, there are currently approximately 65 locally funded early support hubs in England open to those aged 25 years old and under. During 2024/25, the Department is running a Shared Outcomes Fund project, backed by £8 million, to boost and evaluate the impact of 24 of these existing early support hubs.

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

Anna Dixon:

[7208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce waiting times for access to CAMHS support.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is unacceptable that too many children and young people are not receiving the mental health care they deserve, and we know that waits for mental health services are far too long. We are determined to change that.

As part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future and that is there when young people need it, this Government will recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across children and adult mental health services and introduce a specialist mental health professional in every school. This will mean mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, can be identified early on and prevented from developing into more serious conditions in later life.

■ **Mental Health Services: Schools**

Damian Hinds:

[6014]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportions of schools at each stage of education are served by Mental Health Support Teams.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department for Education publishes an annual analysis, with the most recent analysis available at the following link:

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

■ **Mental Health Services: Secondary Education**

Lee Anderson:

[6476]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that mental health services are accessible to secondary school children.

Stephen Kinnock:

There are currently approximately 65 locally funded early support hubs in England offering early easy access mental health interventions to thousands of children and young people aged 11 to 25 years old, including secondary school children. 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. They will provide open access mental health support for children and young people in every

community. The Department is working across Government to deliver our commitment of a specialist mental health professional in every school.

■ Methylphenidate

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[5625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the supply of methylphenidate hydrochloride in pharmacies.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working hard with industry and NHS England to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of intensive work, some issues have been resolved. All strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules, and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available.

We are continuing to work to resolve medicine supply issues, where they remain, for some strengths of methylphenidate. We are engaging with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to assess the challenges faced, and their actions to address them. We are also directing suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term. It is anticipated the methylphenidate supply issues will be resolved by October 2024.

In parallel, the Department has worked with specialist clinicians, including those within the National Health Service, to develop management advice for the NHS clinicians to consider prescribing available alternative brands of methylphenidate prolonged release tablets. We would expect ADHD service providers and specialists to follow our guidance to offer rapid response to primary care teams seeking urgent advice or opinion for the management of patients, including those known to be at a higher risk of adverse impact because of these shortages.

To aid ADHD service providers and prescribers further, we have widely disseminated our communications and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/prescribing-available-medicines-to-treat-adhd/>

■ Migraines: Health Education

Jim Shannon:

[7779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to raise awareness of the symptoms of migraines.

Andrew Gwynne:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline, Headaches: Diagnosis and management of headaches in young people and adults, updated in December 2021, sets out best practice for healthcare professionals in the care, treatment, and support of people who suffer from headaches, including migraines. It aims to improve the recognition and management of headaches and migraines.

NHS RightCare has also produced a Headache and Migraine Toolkit. The toolkit sets out key priorities for improving care for patients with migraines, which includes correct identification and diagnosis of headache disorders. Additionally, Getting It Right First Time for Neurology published a National Speciality Report, which makes several recommendations in relation to improving recognition and diagnosis of migraines by general practitioners.

The Royal College of General Practitioners has developed two e-learning modules about migraine and cluster headaches, which aim to raise awareness amongst primary care clinicians about the different types of migraine and their associated symptoms, and how to differentiate between them.

■ Moderna**Alex Burghart:**[\[6415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made with Moderna on the (a) manufacture of mRNA vaccines in the UK, (b) establishment of a global clinical trials base and (c) investment in UK-based research and development activities.

Andrew Gwynne:

As part of the Moderna-UK Strategic Partnership signed in December 2022, Moderna is building an mRNA vaccine manufacturing facility in Harwell, Oxfordshire. The Moderna Innovation and Technology Centre will support the United Kingdom to be more resilient in the face of future pandemics and health emergencies. It is expected to become operational in 2025.

Moderna is also committed to substantial investment in research and development activities in the UK over the 10-year partnership. This includes running a significant number of clinical trials in the UK and funding grants for UK universities, including PhD places and research programmes.

Since the partnership was established, Moderna has launched 13 trials at over 80 sites in England, Scotland, and Wales, including for Mpox, respiratory syncytial virus, and COVID-19 vaccines. Moderna has funded a PhD at the University of Cambridge and four mRNA Access Partnerships across UK universities. This partnership will also create over 150 skilled jobs in the UK.

■ Mortality Rates

Rachael Maskell:

[7469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of capacity in (a) the ambulance service and (b) emergency departments on trends in the level of excess deaths in (i) York and (ii) the UK.

Karin Smyth:

The method used by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and the Office for National Statistics, does not allow an assessment to be made of the potential influence of capacity in the ambulance service and emergency departments on estimates of excess deaths.

■ Motor Neurone Disease: Research

Frank McNally:

[7043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the devolved administrations on co-operation on research funding for motor neurone disease.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department funds research into motor neurone disease (MND) via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Government funding for MND research includes programmes that are working collaboratively across the United Kingdom. For example, an £8 million investment into the EXPERIMENTAL medicine Route To Success in ALS (EXPERTS-ALS) by the NIHR. EXPERTS-ALS is an early phase clinical research trial which screens for drugs that have the potential to be successful in clinical trials for people with MND. Government funders have also invested £12.5 million to support the best discovery science at the UK Dementia Research Institute. Working with LifeArc, the MND Association, MND Scotland, and the My Name5s Doddie foundation, Government funders have also contributed £1.1 million to the £4.6 million MND Collaborative Partnership. Department research leads meet regularly with their counterparts in the devolved administrations to discuss research matters of common interest across the UK.

■ Mpox: Disease Control

Rachael Maskell:

[7809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment the UK Health Security Agency has made of the level of risk of an Mpox outbreak.

Andrew Gwynne:

The latest risk assessment is set out in the UK Health Security Agency's (UKHSA) technical briefing, which was published on 16 September 2024, and is available at the following link:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66e83b367f20ecc7ec3aa1db/mpox-technical-briefing-9.pdf>

The risk to the general population of the United Kingdom of being exposed to Mpox clade I is currently considered low. The UKHSA is operating well established monitoring and surveillance processes, ensuring rapid testing and vaccines are available, equipping healthcare professionals with latest guidance and advice on how to respond to potential cases, developing robust protocols to reduce risk of transmission, and working closely with international partners to ensure our plans and risk assessments are informed by the latest global picture.

There is widespread planning underway across the Government, including work by the Department, the UKHSA, and the National Health Service to manage any potential cases in the UK and help minimise transmission.

■ NHS 111: Children

John McDonnell:

[\[5833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the NHS 111 paediatric clinical assessment service pilot in reducing A&E attendance of children and supporting families; and if he will take steps to embed paediatric clinical assessment in all NHS 111 services.

Karin Smyth:

There are significant challenges within child health, as outlined by Lord Darzi's report. Demand for services is increasing, and the health and care needs of children are becoming increasingly more complex. NHS England will continue to assess the expansion of existing pilot initiatives, such as the NHS 111 paediatric clinical assessment service pilot, in reducing accident and emergency attendance of children, young people, and supporting families.

The upcoming 10-Year Health Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that the three shifts, from hospital to community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention, are prioritised and meet the needs of children and young people. This includes the opportunity to develop the role of neighbourhood health services to support children and young people accessing high-quality holistic physical and mental health care in the community.

■ NHS: Carers

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[6523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help support NHS staff who are also unpaid carers.

Karin Smyth:

There are a number of initiatives in place to help support National Health Service staff who are balancing their jobs with caring responsibilities. Sections 33 and 34 of the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service (Agenda for Change) Handbook sets out the provisions required to support staff who have caring responsibilities for children and adults. These provisions were negotiated and agreed with trade unions. Further information on the handbook is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/publications/tchandbook>

This includes the requirement for employers to have a local policy in place which emphasises the benefits of balancing work and personal life, staff rights to request flexible working arrangements, and for employers to reasonably consider any such requests.

NHS England provides policy and guidance to support unpaid workers and includes the National Flexible Working People Policy Framework that sets out the right for everyone to request flexible working from day one of employment. This framework is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/national-flexible-working-people-policy-framework/#:~:text=What%20is%20flexible%20working.%20In%20the%20NHS%20everyone%20has%20the>

Additional support for unpaid carers also includes special leave policies which enable staff to take emergency leave for caregiving responsibilities at short notice. NHS staff are able to access the Carer Passport Scheme which helps identify staff as carers to ensure support and reasonable adjustments are put in place. Further information on the scheme is available at the following link:

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/guides-and-tools/what-is-the-carer-passport-scheme/#:~:text=A%20Carer%20Passport%20is%20a%20record%20that%20identifies>

There are also flexible retirement options in place to allow carers to reduce their hours or take phased retirement. NHS England also committed to and promoted the five days of unpaid carers' leave allowance stipulated in the Carer's Leave Act 2023, which came into force on 6 April 2024.

■ NHS: Dental Services

Lee Anderson:

[6491]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to develop a long-term strategy to ensure sustainable access to NHS dental services for all people; and how this strategy will be implemented.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to tackling the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and to recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists. We are 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.

■ NHS: Fees and Charges

Rupert Lowe:

[\[6941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what costs from the treatment of chargeable overseas visitors (a) are outstanding and (b) have been written off.

Karin Smyth:

The Department publishes data on the income identified from chargeable overseas visitors in England as part of its annual report and accounts. The cash payments received, and amounts written off in-year by the National Health Service from chargeable overseas visitors, are also published annually in the consolidated NHS provider accounts.

THE FOLLOWING TABLE SHOWS THE AGGREGATE INCOME IDENTIFIED, CASH PAYMENTS RECEIVED, AND AMOUNTS WRITTEN OFF IN-YEAR BY THE NHS IN ENGLAND, FROM OVERSEAS VISITORS, OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Aggregate income identified	£61,000,000	£67,000,000	£100,000,000
Cash payments received in-year	£21,000,000	£25,000,000	£32,000,000
Amounts written off in-year	£46,000,000	£36,000,000	£37,000,000

Source: DHSC Annual Report and Accounts and Consolidated NHS provider accounts.

NHS charges can be recovered up to six years from the date of invoice, and therefore the amount recovered in a year does not necessarily mean it was identified that financial year.

■ NHS: Waste

Jess Asato:

[\[7636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made towards setting targets for waste reduction in the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

In 2023, NHS England published a new Health Technical Memoranda (HTM) titled Safe and Sustainable Management of Healthcare Waste, as well as a new clinical waste strategy. Further information on the HTM is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/B2159iii-health-technical-memorandum-07-01.pdf>

Contained within the documents are targets and goals for improved clinical waste segregation, elimination of landfill waste, and increased waste recycling programmes. These measures will continue to reduce waste, and provide better value for money to the National Health Service.

■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures

Dr Simon Opher: [\[6677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will suspend permission for non-surgical filler injections for gluteal fat grafting procedures.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is currently considering what steps may need to be taken in relation to the safety of non-surgical cosmetic procedures, including filler injections. The Government will set out its position at the earliest opportunity.

■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Licensing

Mary Glendon: [\[6224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to conduct further public consultation on the licensing of non-surgical cosmetic procedures.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is currently considering what steps may need to be taken in relation to the safety of the non-surgical cosmetics sector. The Government will set out its position at the earliest opportunity.

■ Obesity: Gosport

Dame Caroline Dineneage: [\[7736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce obesity rates amongst (a) adults and (b) children in Gosport constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government recognises that prevention will always be better, and cheaper, than a cure. The prevention of ill health is a clear mission for the Government and the cornerstone of this is supporting children to live healthier lives. We face a childhood obesity crisis, and the Government will take action to tackle it head on, easing the strain on our National Health Service and creating the healthiest generation of children ever. Shifting the focus from treatment to prevention is one of the three shifts for the Government's mission for an NHS that is fit for the future.

We will bring forward the necessary secondary legislation to ban junk food advertising to children and stop the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to under-16-year-olds. The Government is also committed to stop the targeting of school children

by fast food outlets by empowering councils to block the development of new fast-food shops outside schools.

Officials in the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' regional teams work closely with local partners, including local authorities and the NHS, to support them with local initiatives to promote a healthy lifestyle and tackle obesity.

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[\[7737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase access to weight loss services in Gosport constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

Local authorities and the National Health Service provide weight management services to support their communities to achieve and maintain a healthier weight. These range from behavioural weight management programmes to specialist services for those living with obesity and associated co-morbidities. Local authorities are able to spend funding from the Public Health Grant on behavioural weight management services, whilst integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for commissioning NHS specialist weight management services. Local authorities and ICBs should consider their local population's need and relevant guidance.

A range of services are available for people in the Gosport constituency area, including: health and wellbeing coaches and social prescribers; weight loss and exercise programmes funded by Hampshire County Council; and Complications from Excess Weight clinics for eligible children in Portsmouth and Southampton.

Additionally, NHS England commissions the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme nationally for people living with obesity with an existing comorbidity of either diabetes or hypertension, or both. The 12-week online programme is available to eligible people across England, including in the Gosport constituency, via direct referral from any general practice or Community Pharmacy.

■ **Ophthalmic Services**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[6531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many staff have left the NHS ophthalmic sector to join ophthalmic units in independent treatment centres.

Karin Smyth:

The Department does not hold the information requested.

■ **Ovarian Cancer: Health Education**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[7841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to work with (a) the NHS, (b) stakeholders and (c) charities to increase awareness of ovarian cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England runs Help Us Help You campaigns to increase knowledge of cancer symptoms, address barriers to acting on them, to encourage people to come forward as soon as possible to see their general practitioner. The campaigns focus on a range of symptoms, including symptoms of ovarian cancer, as well as encouraging body awareness, to help people spot symptoms across a wide range of cancers at an early point. Previous phases of the campaign have focused on abdominal symptoms which, among other abdominal cancers, can be indicative of ovarian cancer.

NHS England and other National Health Service organisations, nationally and locally, also publish information on the signs and symptoms of many different types of cancer, including ovarian cancer. This information can be found on the NHS website.

■ Palliative Care: Drugs**Luke Taylor:**[\[6881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase access to medicines for patients receiving (a) palliative and (b) end of life care.

Stephen Kinnock:

Local integrated care boards (ICBs) can commission out-of-hours dispensing locally if there is a need for patients to access medicines outside of the core pharmacy hours, including as part of any palliative and end of life arrangements that the ICB is required to make under statutory guidance.

Adults in the last days of life who are likely to need symptom control should be prescribed anticipatory medicines with written instructions for how to use or administer treatment. The medicines are prescribed in advance so that they can be obtained during local pharmacy opening hours and kept safely at home, or at a care home, so that the person or their carer has access to them if they develop symptoms. The use of anticipatory prescribing is a quality standard in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline, Care of dying adults in the last days of life.

■ Palliative Care: Health Professions**Luke Taylor:**[\[6882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish independently-verified projections of future demand for the palliative and end of life care workforce at least every two years; and if he will take steps to ensure a properly resourced plan is in place for meeting this demand.

Stephen Kinnock:

At this time, there are no plans to publish independently verified projections of future demand for the palliative and end of life care workforce, as the current NHS Long Term Plan will deliver the reform needed.

■ Palliative Care: Training

Luke Taylor:

[\[6883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make palliative care training mandatory for health and social care workers.

Stephen Kinnock:

The training of health care professionals is the responsibility of independent statutory health care regulatory bodies such as the General Medical Council (GMC), the Nursing and Midwifery Council, and the Health and Care Professions Council. The training curricula for postgraduate specialty training, including for palliative and end of life care, is set by the relevant royal college, and has to meet the standards set by the GMC.

Additionally, to ensure the health and social care workforce is well equipped and supported in delivering personalised care to people at the end of life, Health Education England, now part of NHS England, hosts the End of Life Care for All e-learning training programme, which includes nine modules on improving care for people at the end of life.

■ Pancreatic Cancer

Paul Davies:

[\[7305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to improve awareness of the hereditary risk of pancreatic cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England is taking steps to deliver a range of interventions to improve awareness of the hereditary risk of pancreatic cancer. This includes providing a route into pancreatic cancer surveillance for those at inherited high-risk, to identify lesions before they develop into cancer. Through local Cancer Alliances, NHS England is working to spread knowledge across NHS providers about hereditary pancreatic cancer risks.

NHS England is working with Pancreatic Cancer UK to develop a public-facing Family History Checker, which enables people, and their families affected by pancreatic cancer, to self-assess if they have inherited risk. People identified at risk are referred directly to European Registry of Hereditary Pancreatic Diseases research trail, which aims to understand inherited conditions of the pancreas. Referrals to the trail can be made by any healthcare professional across all health sectors, or by individuals via self-referral.

■ Pancreatic Cancer: Diagnosis

Andrew Cooper:

[\[8011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve outcomes for patients who have been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

Andrew Cooper: [\[8012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the early (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment of pancreatic cancer in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

Andrew Cooper: [\[8014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of what the average time was to diagnose pancreatic cancer in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England in each of the last five years.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department is working with NHS England to deliver interventions to improve outcomes for those with pancreatic cancer across England, including Cheshire and mid-Cheshire.

Early diagnosis is imperative to improving outcomes for all types of cancer, especially pancreatic due to the non-specific nature of its symptoms. As the first step to ensuring faster diagnosis and treatment, we will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week.

For pancreatic cancer specifically, NHS England is providing a route into pancreatic cancer surveillance for those at inherited high-risk to identify lesions before they develop into cancer. NHS England is additionally creating pathways to support faster referral routes for people with non-specific symptoms and is increasing direct access for general practitioners to diagnostic tests.

NHS England is also funding a new audit into pancreatic cancer, aiming to provide regular and timely evidence to cancer service providers of where patterns of care in England may vary, to increase the consistency of access to treatments and to stimulate improvements in cancer treatment and outcomes for patients.

Information on the average time to diagnose pancreatic cancer in Chester, Cheshire and England is not available in the format requested.

■ Patient Choice Schemes

Jodie Gosling: [\[6684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that General Practitioners are (a) aware of and (b) able to communicate effectively the right for patients to choose medical care.

Jodie Gosling: [\[6685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that patients are aware of the right to choose medical care.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to putting patients back at the heart of care. This includes supporting a patient's right to choose, if they wish, where they go for their

first appointment when referred to consultant-led care as an outpatient. Further details for patients are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-choice-framework/the-nhs-choice-framework-what-choices-are-available-to-me-in-the-nhs>

The Department is working closely with NHS England on plans for targeted support starting in the most disadvantaged areas. General practitioners (GPs) can see waiting time information for different providers displayed as part of the e-Referral Service. GPs and patients can also use the Manage Your Referral service, allowing patients to make an informed choice of provider online or through the NHS App following their appointment.

■ Patients: Safety

Deirdre Costigan:

[6767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on patient safety of adult social care workers (a) administering vaccines and (b) undertaking other NHS delegated tasks.

Andrew Gwynne:

Employers in the health and care system are responsible for ensuring that adult social care workers are competent to undertake the healthcare activity delegated to them, with sufficient training, development, and support to the required standard.

The adult social care provider is also responsible for ensuring and demonstrating the delegation arrangements are being provided safely and effectively and the care workers have appropriate supervision and support.

We published national guidance and resources on the Skills for Care website in May 2023, setting out voluntary guiding principles for the safe, effective, and person-centred delegation of healthcare activities. We will also consider whether further support or regulation is needed.

■ Pharmacy: Shropshire

Helen Morgan:

[7884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many community pharmacies have closed in North Shropshire since 2016.

Stephen Kinnock:

There were 14 community pharmacies providing National Health Service pharmaceutical services in North Shropshire constituency on 30 June 2024, which is two fewer than in September 2016.

■ Podiatry: Sleeping Rough**Deirdre Costigan:****[6772]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to podiatry services for rough sleepers that are not eligible for full public funding due to their immigration status.

Andrew Gwynne:

Integrated care boards are responsible for ensuring that the services they commission meet the needs of their local population with the resources they are allocated, including in respect of podiatry services. This starts with general practice (GP) registration, and everyone is entitled to register with a GP regardless of residential or immigration status.

The Department recognises the importance of reducing barriers to services for those experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping. This is why we supported the development and implementation of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance, which provides recommendations on ways to improve access to, and engagement with, health and social care services for people experiencing homelessness. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng214>

■ Podiatry: Stockport**Navendu Mishra:****[6577]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an estimate of the average waiting time for podiatry appointments in (a) Stockport constituency and (b) Stockport Borough.

Karin Smyth:

Data reports from the Stockport NHS Foundation Trust show that the average wait time for their podiatry services in 2023/24 was 13 weeks, and that the average wait time reported for August 2024, the most recent data available, was 17.9 weeks.

■ Prescriptions: Pensioners**Mr Peter Bedford:****[7339]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of pensioners qualify for free prescriptions.

Karin Smyth:

The number of identified patients aged 60 years old or over who received a prescription that was recorded as exempt from the single item prescription charge in England in 2023/24 was 13.6 million.

■ Primary Health Care

Andrew Cooper:

[\[7056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve patient access to primary care in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to fixing the crisis in primary care to secure the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service and increase access to local services across the country.

We are also committed to moving towards a Neighbourhood Health Service, with more care delivered in local communities to spot problems earlier. We will trial Neighbourhood Health Centres to bring together a range of services under one roof, ensuring healthcare is closer to home and that patients receive the care they deserve.

We have pledged to train thousands more general practitioners (GPs) to increase capacity, and additional funding of £82 million has now been made available to include newly qualified GPs in the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme over 2024/25.

■ Prostate Cancer: Colne Valley

Paul Davies:

[\[7282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve prostate cancer (a) screening and (b) awareness in Colne Valley constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

Screening for prostate cancer is currently not recommended by the UK National Screening Committees. This is because of the inaccuracy of the current best test, the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). A PSA-based screening programme could harm men, as some of them would be diagnosed with a cancer that would not have caused them problems during their life. This would lead to additional tests and treatments which can also have harmful side effects.

NHS England runs Help Us Help You campaigns to increase knowledge of cancer symptoms, address barriers to acting on them to encourage people to come forward as soon as possible to see their general practitioner. The campaigns focus on a range of symptoms as well as encouraging 'body awareness' to help people spot symptoms across a wide range of cancers at an earlier point.

■ Prostate Cancer: Diagnosis and Medical Treatments

Alex Easton:

[\[8059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) increase access to and (b) improve prostate cancer (i) diagnosis and (ii)

treatment, in the context of disparities in early detection rates across different socio-economic groups; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of conducting more proactive screenings for high-risk individuals.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department has invested £16 million in the TRANSFORM trial which seeks to find ways to diagnose prostate cancer as early as possible. This trial will compare the most promising tests to look for prostate cancer in men that do not have symptoms, and aims to address disparities in early detection rates across different groups.

We are also working with NHS England to support the National Health Service in meeting the Faster Diagnosis Standard for cancer to be diagnosed or ruled out within 28 days from an urgent suspected cancer referral. This includes introducing best practice timed pathways for prostate cancer to streamline diagnostic pathways and speed up diagnoses.

To improve treatment, NHS England has funded 10 clinical audits, including on prostate cancer. Using routine data collected on patients diagnosed with cancer in an NHS setting, the audit will look at what is being done well, where it's being done well, and what needs to be done better. This will seek to reduce unwarranted variation in treatment and reduce inequalities across different groups.

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is already undertaking an evidence review into prostate cancer screening and will report within the UK NCS's three-year work plan. The evidence review includes modelling the clinical cost effectiveness of several approaches to prostate cancer screening, including targeted and proactive screening aimed at groups of people identified as being at higher than average risk.

■ **Prostate Cancer: Research**

Sarah Green:

[\[7588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support further research into levels of prostate cancer amongst black men.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 10 October 2024]: Research is crucial in tackling cancer. The Department 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 more than £121.8 million in 2022/23. NIHR spends more on cancer than any other disease group, reflecting its high priority.

On 19 November 2023, the Government and Prostate Cancer UK announced a £42 million screening trial to find ways of detecting country's most common male cancer earlier. Prostate Cancer UK is leading the development of the trial with the Government contributing £16 million through the Department.

The TRANSFORM trial will aim to address some of the inequalities that exist in prostate cancer diagnosis today. For example, 1 in 4 black men will develop prostate cancer, double the risk of other men, and often at a younger age. Yet previous

research has failed to involve and recruit enough black men and so has not been able to provide evidence needed to diagnose them earlier using a targeted approach. The TRANSFORM trial will ensure that at least 10% of the men who are invited to participate in the trial are black.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Adam Jogee:

[\[6955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking, alongside the Transform Trial to (a) speed up and (b) improve the efficiency of diagnostic pathways in prostate cancer in the short term.

Adam Jogee:

[\[6961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what immediate term steps his Department is in addition to the Transform Trial to (a) speed up and (b) improve the efficiency of diagnostic pathways in prostate cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to getting the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster, so that more patients survive with better outcomes, including for those with prostate cancer. The Department is supporting the NHS in taking steps to speed up and improve the efficiency of diagnostic pathways.

Since October 2023, the NHS has implemented the updated cancer waiting time standards to ensure patients receive timely diagnosis and treatment. The update included the removal of the two week wait standard which only ensured patients were seen by a clinician within two weeks, without a timeline of further investigations towards receiving a result. The two-week wait standard was replaced with the faster diagnosis standard (FDS) which ensures a patient receives their cancer diagnosis or has cancer ruled out within 28 days of an urgent referral.

To achieve the FDS, NHS England has streamlined cancer pathways, including implementing a best-timed prostate cancer diagnostic pathway so that those suspected of prostate cancer receive a multi-parametric MRI scan first, which ensures only those men most at-risk undergo an invasive biopsy. Best practice timed pathways support the on-going improvement effort to shorten diagnosis pathways, reduce variation, improve experience of care, and meet the FDS.

Furthermore, the NHS England's Getting It Right First Time programme published guidance in April 2024 to support the implementation of good practice in management of prostate cancer, which includes ensuring the diagnostic pathways for prostate cancer were implemented from primary care setting to secondary care presentation.

Adam Jogee:

[\[6962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of rates of late diagnosis of prostate cancer; and what steps his Department is taking to tackle those rates.

Karin Smyth:

No such assessment has been made. We recognise that late diagnosis of cancers, including prostate cancer, can impact treatment options, reduce a patient's chances of survival, and potentially increase the cost of effective treatments. NHS England is taking steps to raise awareness of prostate cancer, where there are opportunities to do so. For example, NHS England partners with Cancer Alliances, charities, and local representatives to reach people through projects in the heart of their communities. On 8 January 2024, NHS England also relaunched the Help Us Help You campaign for cancer, designed to increase earlier diagnosis of cancer by reducing barriers to seeking earlier help, as well as increasing body vigilance and knowledge of key red flag symptoms.

Screening for prostate cancer is currently not recommended by the UK National Screening Committees. This is because of the inaccuracy of the current best test, the Prostate Specific Antigen. The UK National Screening Committee is currently undertaking an evidence review for prostate cancer screening, and plans to report within its three-year work plan. The evidence review includes modelling of several approaches to prostate cancer screening, which includes different potential ways of screening the whole population from 40 years of age onwards, and targeted screening aimed at groups of people identified as being at higher than average risk, such as black men or men with a family history of cancer.

In addition, we are working with Prostate Cancer UK to launch the TRANSFORM trial. The £42 million nationwide screening study will compare the most promising tests to look for prostate cancer in men that do not have any symptoms.

■ Protective Clothing: Procurement

Jess Asato: [\[7633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the NHS to procure (a) sustainable and (b) upcycled medical garments.

Jess Asato: [\[7634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the use of (a) reusable and (b) otherwise sustainable medical garments within the NHS.

Jess Asato: [\[7637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how his Department plans to integrate the National Programme for a Greener NHS with (a) the use of upcycled and reusable medical garments and (b) other unsustainable initiatives to help the NHS meet its net zero targets.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service has committed to reaching net zero by 2045 for the emissions it influences through the goods and services it buys from its partners and

suppliers. This includes a greater focus on procuring and using sustainable and reusable medical garments where this is safe and effective, such as reusable sterile gowns.

To support this, NHS England is working with NHS organisations to share best practice and evidence-based approaches, understand operational challenges, for example, requirements for laundry infrastructure, and support the inclusion of lots to procure reusable medical textile services within relevant procurement frameworks. NHS England supported the Royal Surgical Colleges to develop and promote the Green Theatre Checklist to encourage sustainable theatre approaches, including medical garments. The checklist is available at the following link:

<https://www.rcsed.ac.uk/professional-support-development-resources/environmental-sustainability-and-surgery/green-theatre-checklist>

NHS England is also supporting innovation through the Small Business Research Initiative Healthcare programme, which has funded a project to support reuse of surgical textiles. More information is available at the following link:

<https://sbrihealthcare.co.uk/impact-case-studies/case-studies/revolution-zero>

The Department continues to work closely with the Greener NHS programme in NHS England to support the NHS to meet its net zero targets, including a focus on procuring and using sustainable and reusable products where this is safe and effective.

Jess Asato:

[7639]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of implementing procurement rules to ensure that NHS medical garments are not linked to forced labour.

Karin Smyth:

As part of the recommendations from the Department and NHS England's Review of risk of modern slavery and human trafficking in the NHS supply chain, published in December 2023, it was recommended to lay regulations with a view to eradicate modern slavery, supporting the amendment of Section 12zc in the NHS Act 2006. The regulations cover all goods and service procurements on behalf of the health service, which includes medical garments. Further information on the review is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-risk-of-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking-in-the-nhs-supply-chain>

The Department and NHS England have also collaborated to develop detailed guidance to support the embedding of the regulations and policies throughout the procurement exercise. This ensures alignment to procurements conducted under all legal regimes including the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, Procurement Act 2023, and the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023.

A public consultation for the content and approach of those regulations is to be launched in Autumn 2024. This will support my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to develop the regulations to ensure the National Health Service eradicates modern slavery in supply chains.

■ Protective Clothing: Recycling

Jess Asato: [7635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish a strategy on promoting a circular economy in medical textiles, including targets for the elimination of post-consumer plastic waste.

Jess Asato: [7638]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing stricter sustainability guidelines for medical clothing procurement.

Karin Smyth:

The Department's Design for Life Programme is dedicated to the exploration and delivery of a circular economy for medical devices, including consumables, through greater reuse, remanufacture, and recycling. Its work includes exploring regulatory, commercial, digital, policy, and research environments that support delaying products becoming waste for as long as possible. This includes working closely with the MedTech industry to determine sustainable ways of manufacture and reducing waste. More details on the Design for Life programme will be published shortly.

The NHS Net Zero Supplier Roadmap sets out the steps suppliers must take to align with the National Health Services' net zero ambition between now and 2030. NHS England will continue to work closely with regulators, suppliers, and industry bodies to shape our approach to further milestones, including product-level requirements, and give all suppliers the opportunity to align with our net zero ambition. This roadmap is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/get-involved/suppliers/>

■ Psychology

James Naish: [6715]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure that only appropriately accredited psychologists are able to (a) diagnose and (b) treat illnesses and psychological disorders.

Karin Smyth:

The British Psychological Society accredits undergraduate and postgraduate psychology programmes. Accreditation is an important hallmark of quality that is extensively acknowledged by employers in the field, and an essential stepping-stone for students who are looking to progress to become a Chartered Psychologist after graduation.

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), which is independent of the Government, is the statutory regulator of practitioner psychologists in the United Kingdom, meaning that only those who are registered with the HCPC and meet its standards can practise as practitioner psychologists.

In addition, the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care holds a list of accredited voluntary registers, which they have independently assessed against nine standards. In relation to psychological professions, accredited registers include: the British Psychoanalytic Council (a professional association of the psychoanalytic psychotherapy profession)'s Register of practitioners; and the British Psychological Society's Wider Psychological Workforce register of Wellbeing Practitioners and Associate Psychologists.

Employers in the health system are responsible for ensuring that their staff are trained to the required standards to deliver appropriate treatment for patients.

■ Radiotherapy

Anna Sabine:

[\[7237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the length of time between diagnosis and the start of radiotherapy treatment.

Andrew Gwynne:

We will get the National Health Service diagnosing cancer on time, diagnosing it earlier, and treating it faster, and 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.

■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[6371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with stakeholders on access to the RSV vaccination for people over 80.

Andrew Gwynne:

There is currently no advice on respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination for those aged over 80 years old to discuss with stakeholders. The Department accepted the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). The JCVI is

not a stakeholder but the independent expert committee that advises the Government on matters to do with immunisation.

In June 2023, the JCVI advised an RSV immunisation programme for older adults aged 75 years old and above. The committee suggested an initial programme to potentially vaccinate a cohort aged from 75 to 80 years old, and then for those turning 75 years old in subsequent years, and this is the current policy for the programme. In the JCVI's statement summarising the advice for the RSV programme, the committee stated that an extension to the initial programme would be considered when there is more certainty about protection in the very elderly and the real-world impact of the programme in 75 to 80 year olds.

In line with JCVI advice, RSV vaccination programmes to protect older adults and newborn babies, via maternal vaccination, began on 1 September 2024 in England. The Department will consider any further JCVI advice on who should be offered an RSV immunisation as the committee continues to keep the evidence under review.

Rachael Maskell:

[7797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason people who turned 80 before 1 September 2024 are not eligible for the RSV vaccine; and whether exceptions can be made.

Andrew Gwynne:

The policy for the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) programme is based on the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which is an independent expert advisory committee on vaccination and immunisation. That advice is provided to Government to inform, develop, and make policy.

In the JCVI statement summarising the advice for the RSV programme, the Committee stated that an extension to the initial programme would be considered when there is more certainty about protection provided by the vaccination in the very elderly and evidence of the real-world impact of the programme in the 75 to 80-year-old cohort. The statement is available at the following link:

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

Following an assessment of specific individual clinical situations, a doctor such as a general practitioner or hospital consultant may choose to prescribe vaccines outside of the national programme, under clinical discretion.

■ Schools: Nurses

Adam Jogee:

[7995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of school nursing services in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme and (b) Staffordshire.

Andrew Gwynne:

No assessment has been made by the Department. Local authorities are responsible for commissioning school nursing services based on local need and evidence. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities provides both commissioning guidance and a service framework through the Healthy Child Programme.

■ Sepsis: Screening**Lee Anderson:**[\[6496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve rates of early detection of sepsis in (a) hospitals and (b) primary care settings.

Andrew Gwynne:

In hospitals, clinicians are supported to recognise sepsis by using the National Early Warning Score, now used in 99% of acute trusts and 100% of ambulance trusts in England. Several trusts have also implemented the National Paediatric Early Warning Score to support the recognition of sepsis in children.

NHS England has launched several training programmes aimed at improving the diagnosis and early management of sepsis in primary care. These programmes are regularly reviewed and revised with support from subject matter experts.

To support clinical staff in primary and secondary care settings, the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence published updated national guidance in March 2024 on sepsis recognition, diagnosis, and early management.

■ Social Services: Training**Deirdre Costigan:**[\[6768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the training provided to adult social care workers that undertake tasks delegated to them by NHS staff.

Stephen Kinnock:

Employers in the health system are responsible for ensuring that their staff are trained to the required standards to deliver appropriate treatment to patients, which includes the provision of appropriate training for adult social care workers undertaking delegated healthcare activities. The regulated healthcare professional remains accountable for the appropriateness of the activity being delegated and is responsible for working with the adult social care employer to ensure staff are sufficiently trained and competent to carry out delegated healthcare activity.

The Department published national, voluntary guiding principles to support effective, safe, and person-centred delegated healthcare in May 2023. We work with Skills for Care, NHS England, and stakeholders to promote and embed the guiding principles and supporting resources, to ensure care providers and their staff receive the right training and support to carry out delegated healthcare activities.

■ Social Services: Waiting Lists

Deirdre Costigan: [\[6765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to reduce the number of people waiting for an adult social care assessment.

Stephen Kinnock:

We recognise there are challenges in adult social care, with some people waiting too long for a care assessment. There are long-term reforms needed in social care and we will work with the sector to build consensus for the reforms needed to create a sustainable care system. We are committed to building a National Care Service based on consistent national standards to support people in living independent and dignified lives.

In the interim, Care Quality Commission (CQC) local authority assessments consider the performance of the delivery of Care Act duties, including the timeliness of assessing care needs. Local authorities are required to submit their waiting list size, median, and maximum waiting times as part of this process. If the CQC identifies that a local authority has failed or is failing its functions to an acceptable standard, my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has powers to intervene. The CQC has published its first nine local authority ratings and reports.

■ Sterilisation

Olivia Bailey: [\[7349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people requested (a) vasectomies and (b) tubal ligations in the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

This data is not held in the format requested.

Olivia Bailey: [\[7350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) vasectomy reversals and (b) female sterilisation reversals were (i) requested and (ii) performed in the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

The information is not held for “requested” procedures. The following table shows the number of “performed” procedures in the last five years:

YEAR	VASECTOMY REVERSAL	FEMALE STERILISATION REVERSAL
2019/20	42	176
2020/21	34	66
2021/22	37	117

YEAR	VASECTOMY REVERSAL	FEMALE STERILISATION REVERSAL
2022/23	42	109
2023/24	32	96

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics (HES), NHS England

■ Sterilisation: Costs

Olivia Bailey:

[\[7348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average cost was of (a) vasectomies and (b) tubal ligations for (i) day cases and (ii) elective inpatients in the latest period for which data is available.

Karin Smyth:

The Department does not hold data in the requested format. Through the 2022 Health and Care Act, the 2023/25 NHS Payment Scheme has replaced the National Tariff Payment System. This is a set of rules, prices and guidance used by commissioners and providers of National Health Service care. The cost of procedures conducted in both day case and ordinary electives settings is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/2023-25-nhs-payment-scheme/>

■ Telemedicine

Lee Anderson:

[\[6492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to support the use of (a) telemedicine and (b) other digital solutions to (i) alleviate pressures on GP services and (ii) improve patient access to care.

Stephen Kinnock:

Technology is an important enabler for change, including in shifting from analogue to digital.

As independent contractors, it is largely up to individual general practices (GPs) how they run their surgeries and what systems they operate to best enable patients to access their doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals for routine or urgent advice and care.

Using digital tools and telemedicine, such as remote consulting, can enable faster, more convenient access for those that need it. We have committed to end the 8:00am scramble by introducing a modern appointment booking system which will improve access for patients.

Patients at 95% of the GP surgeries in England can also use all the features of the NHS App, allowing them to receive personalised services and self-serve, which helps free up GP staff time for those that need it most.

Digital tools are also helping to manage demand beyond primary care. 30% of all 111 triages start online and the most recent data for August 2024 shows that over 590,000 online sessions were completed in England, allowing patients to access more timely care. 111 Online is now also fully integrated and available in the NHS App, empowering more patients to take control of their own care.

■ Visual Impairment: Rehabilitation

Paul Davies:

[\[7299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that vision rehabilitation services are subject to the same (a) regulation and (b) monitoring as other adult social care services.

Stephen Kinnock:

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities in England have a legal duty to support people with sight loss to develop practical skills and strategies to maintain independence.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is now assessing how local authorities are meeting the full range of their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. These assessments identify local authorities' strengths and areas for development, facilitating the sharing of good practice and helping us to target support where it is most needed. This will also facilitate the development of national standards as part of our steps towards creating a National Care Service.

Therefore, although CQC is not currently required to assess vision rehabilitation services as regulated activities under Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, sensory services, including vision rehabilitation, do form part of CQC's overall assessment of local authorities' delivery of adult social care. In that context, CQC will report on sensory services when there is something important to highlight, for example, something being done well, innovative practice or an area for improvement.

Our new Client Level Data collection requires local authorities to collect person-level information covering most of their activity under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. Information on visual impairments is voluntary at this stage, but this will be kept under review.

Paul Davies:

[\[7300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making vision rehabilitation specialists a regulated profession.

Karin Smyth:

We do not currently have plans to regulate vision rehabilitation specialists.

Paul Davies:

[7301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve the integration of services between secondary and social care settings to ensure a seamless route into vision rehabilitation.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department understands the importance of having effective rehabilitation services available when people need them to help them recover and return to their day-to-day activities and regain their quality of life.

People who have sight loss to the degree they are certified as blind or partially sighted will receive a certificate of visual impairment (CVI). With the patient's permission the CVI form is shared with a person's local authority to help facilitate access to social care support. In accordance with the Care and support statutory guidance, local authorities should offer to carry out a needs assessment with a view to providing a care and support plan aimed at meeting any identified needs. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

Statutory integrated care systems are partnerships of organisations which come together to plan and deliver joined up health and care services. An integrated approach to person-centred care can enable a seamless route for patients coming out of hospital into social care. This helps to make sure people get the right support from health and social care services to return home as soon as possible, including patients requiring vision rehabilitation.

Paul Davies:

[7302]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for implementing the proposed changes to (a) vision rehabilitation services and (b) professional recognition.

Stephen Kinnock:

We do not currently have plans to regulate Vision Rehabilitation Specialists. The Care Act guidance advises that local authorities should consider securing specialist qualified rehabilitation and assessment provision, whether in-house, or contracted through a third party, to ensure that the needs of people with sight loss are correctly identified and their independence maximised.

■ Whipps Cross Hospital: Repairs and Maintenance

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[5826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September to Question 4582 on Whipps Cross Hospital, whether his Department has considered a request for the remaining funding for Whipps Cross Hospital.

Karin Smyth:

£1.2 million has recently been released to Barts Health NHS Trust to support them in continuing the development of their Outline Business Case for the new Whipps Cross Hospital during the review into the New Hospital Programme (NHP). While the review is taking place, we are continuing to support all schemes within the NHP. Requests for funding during this time are being considered on an individual basis. The review will feed into the Spending Review process, where decisions on the outcome will be taken in the round and the Government will confirm the outcome of the review as part of that process.

HOME OFFICE**■ Animal Experiments****Sarah Champion:****[6246]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals in Great Britain in 2023, published by her Department on 11 September 2024, what the project aims were for the 21 procedures for the creation and breeding of genetically altered animals; what the nature of the harmful phenotype was; and if she will take steps to end the use of procedures that involve the genetic alteration of dogs.

Dan Jarvis:

Research to develop a treatment for improving the length and quality of life for patients with muscular dystrophy utilises a dog model which has a harmful phenotype.

■ Animal Experiments: Cats**Sarah Champion:****[6247]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals in Great Britain in 2023, published by her Department on 11 September 2024, what the aims were for the 63 experimental procedures that used cats; what harms were experienced by the cats; and if she will take steps to end the use of cats in experimental procedures.

Dan Jarvis:

The Home Office publish non-technical summaries of all programmes of work concluded under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/animals-in-science-regulation-unit#non-technical-summaries>. For programmes involving experimental procedures that use

cats, these include immune system research, multisystemic research, urogenital/reproductive system research and research to develop a treatment for improving the length and quality of life for patients with muscular dystrophy utilises a dog model which has a harmful phenotype. The published Annual Statistics detail the actual severity experienced by animals.

This Government intends to work towards an end to the use of animals in scientific procedures. However, in limited circumstances where there is no animal alternative and procedures are required to deliver important benefits to people, the environment, and other animals then we deliver robust, rigorous and trustworthy regulation of those procedures

■ **Anti-social Behaviour**

Melanie Onn:

[\[6312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, what information her Department holds on the impact of youth services on the number of reports of anti-social behaviour in the last ten years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to rolling out a new Young Futures programme, including a network of Young Futures Hubs which will bring together services to help improve the way young people can access the support they need.

We will be engaging with local communities, the police, charities, and other key partners to support the design of the hubs and explore options for their delivery. This will include considerations of the most suitable locations as well as how best to engage with those young people who would benefit most from their support.

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is also a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission.

We will put thousands of neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities, to tackle the crimes blighting our town centres and high streets, with tough new powers for the police to crack down on resistant offenders. This will be also key to disrupting youth ASB through engaged and visible neighbourhood officers.

The Home Office does not hold data on the impact of youth services on the number of reports of ASB.

■ **Antisocial Behaviour: Aldershot**

Alex Baker:

[\[7645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to help tackle anti-social behaviour in Aldershot constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

We will put thousands of new neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities, so that residents have a named officer they can turn to when things go wrong and crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets by introducing tougher powers including new Respect Orders to tackle repeat offending.

■ Asylum

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the page entitled Asylum support on gov.uk, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the information under the heading Cash support on the number of people seeking asylum in the UK; and what recent assessment she has made of the factors leading people to claim asylum in the UK.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The prevailing evidence indicates there is a diversity of factors that influence asylum seeker decision-making in seeking to travel in the UK. This government is focused on restoring order to the asylum system.

Anna Dixon:

[\[7210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the backlog in asylum seeker claims.

Dame Angela Eagle:

We are committed to restoring order to the asylum system, clearing the backlog to end the use of hotels.

The Home Secretary has removed the retrospective application of the Illegal Migration Act. This allows asylum claims from individuals who have arrived in the UK since 7 March 2023, to be considered against the existing legislative regime under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, rather than waiting in the queue eligible for support.

The Home Office's programme of transformation and business improvement aims to speed up decision making to reduce the time people spend in the system and reduce the numbers who are awaiting an interview or decision and remain in hotels.

This will enable us to maximise our capacity and progress cases in a more efficient and cost-effective way.

■ Asylum: Employment

Andy McDonald:

[\[6259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a right to work for asylum seekers who have (a) lodged an asylum application and (b) been waiting more than six months for a decision on their asylum application.

Dame Angela Eagle:

As has been the case for many years, asylum seekers who have had their claim outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own, can apply for permission to work. Those permitted to work are restricted to jobs on the Immigration Salary List. This list is based on expert advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee.

Whilst we keep all policies under review, there are no plans to change this policy.

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system. We will ensure that the system operates fairly and with quicker processing of claims. This will see recognised refugees being able to access employment more quickly, whilst failed asylum seekers can be safely returned.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

Sorcha Eastwood:

[6899]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average length of time asylum seeker families are spending in contingency accommodation is in (a) the UK and (b) Northern Ireland.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office does not publish information regarding the length of time spent in contingency accommodation by asylum seekers. This period of time is determined by a number of factors including overall demand and availability of dispersal accommodation as well as individual circumstances.

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes identifying a range of options to reduce the use of hotels over time and ensuring efficiency and value for money across all accommodation arrangements.

■ Asylum: Visas

Andy McDonald:

[6258]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward proposals to pilot a refugee visa scheme for people from countries with high asylum grant rates to allow them to travel to the UK to apply for asylum.

Seema Malhotra:

The UK has always done our bit to help those fleeing persecution and continues to welcome refugees and people in need through our global resettlement schemes which include the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Community Sponsorship and the Mandate Resettlement Scheme. Alongside these schemes, we operate specific schemes for those fleeing Ukraine and Afghanistan, and an immigration route for British National (overseas) status holders from Hong Kong. There are also Displaced Talent initiatives which help displaced populations to access a skilled worker visa. The refugee family reunion policy allows immediate family members of those granted protection in the UK to stay with them or join them here, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country. Between 2015 and August 2024, 625,294 individuals were offered a route into the UK through these schemes and policies.

We are focused on ensuring existing pathways work effectively.

■ Border Security Command

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the Border Security Command's (a) target and (b) timeline is for reducing the number of people entering the country via small boat.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Border Security Command is providing cross-system strategic leadership to tackle Organise Immigration Crime, and wider border security threats. The small boat crisis, fuelled by dangerous criminal smuggler gangs, is undermining our security, and is costing lives. Criminal smuggling gangs are making millions out of these crossings and the Border Security Command, and whole system, will tackle the root of the problem by going after these dangerous criminals and bringing them to justice.

■ Border Security Command: Finance

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the in-year budget for the Border Security Command is for 2024-25.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Secretary announced on 17 September up to £75 million in new investment for the Border Security Command. This will deliver cutting edge new technology, extra officers and further covert capabilities across the system. The BSC will be appropriately resourced to ensure we can disrupt organised criminal gangs and respond to a range of threats to border security.

■ Border Security Command: Staff

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many additional staff will be required in (a) Government Departments and (b) Border Security Command for that organisation to reach full operational (i) readiness and (ii) effectiveness.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Border Security Command will recruit staff directly.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what opportunities for career progression will be available to staff in Border Security Command.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Border Security Command (BSC) has been launched and will sit as a new bespoke command led by Martin Hewitt and within the Home Office, working collaboratively with colleagues across the department and beyond. Staff will have the

same opportunities for career progression as all other Home Office staff in their respective agencies and Department.

Capabilities from across the Home Office have come together to build the foundational operating model of BSC. Wider recruitment is ongoing as part of the broader organisational design and any external opportunities for the BSC will be advertised on Civil Service Jobs as per existing processes.

The BSC will be appropriately resourced to ensure we can disrupt organised criminal gangs and respond to a range of threats across the border security system. The Command will collaborate with a wide range of agencies, recruiting hundreds of new specialist staff across these organisations, including investigators, to smash the criminal gangs and strengthen our borders. Our new Border Security Command is gearing up so that we can dismantle the criminal smuggling gangs who undermine our border security and put lives at risk.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[7267]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help ensure police officers are trained to deal appropriately with people who rely on prescribed medical cannabis.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office published Circular 018/2018 when Cannabis-Based Products for Medicinal Use (CBPMs) were introduced under Schedule 2 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 on 1 November 2018. The circular summarised the effects of the legislation, and is primarily aimed at law enforcement, including the police. It remains available on gov.uk. This guidance applies to all CBPM prescriptions, whether prescribed on the NHS or privately. The Circular is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/circular-0182018-rescheduling-of-cannabis-based-products-for-medicinal-use-in-humans>.

Additionally, the Home Office and the Department for Health and Social Care contributed to the NHS document '*Medical cannabis (and cannabis oils)*', which includes a summary of how patients may demonstrate that they are in lawful possession. This guidance is available at the following link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/medical-cannabis/>.

■ Clergy: Abuse

Caroline Voaden:

[7134]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with the Church of England on its response to allegations of abuse by clergy.

Jess Phillips:

Child sexual abuse is a despicable crime and this new government will be taking robust action to safeguard children, provide support and care to victims and survivors and ensure perpetrators face the full force of the law.

I have not had any specific engagement with the Church of England on this matter to date. However, I am clear that safeguarding of children from abuse is everyone's responsibility, including the Church.

I have met with Professor Alexis Jay recently and recognise her significant contribution to these important issues, having chaired the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse as well as the more recent independent review into safeguarding in the Church of England.

I will be working with the Home Secretary and ministerial colleagues across government to strengthen the cross-institutional response to identifying and responding to this horrific crime as a matter of urgency.

■ Community Policing: Greater London

Uma Kumaran:

[\[7190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of neighbourhood policing levels in East London.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Secretary has made a clear commitment to strengthen neighbourhood policing through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, which includes the addition of thousands more neighbourhood officers and other police personnel, as part of the Government's Safer Streets mission. Funding for 2025/26 will be subject to the Spending Review.

■ Crime Prevention

Andrew Cooper:

[\[7065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) financial and (b) other steps her Department is taking to help prevent crime in (i) Mid Cheshire constituency, (ii) Cheshire, (iii) England.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The 2024-25 police funding settlement provides funding of up to £18.5 billion. Cheshire Police's funding will be up to £264.2m in 2024-25. This is in addition to £2.5m provided for the 2024-25 pay award which has been allocated outside of the police funding settlement.

Further funding has been provided through the Hotspot Response Programme, under which Cheshire has been allocated £1,000,000 for 2024/25 to deliver visible uniformed patrols in the streets and neighbourhoods worst affected by serious violence and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

In addition, this Government has put prevention front and centre of our plans to improve the lives of people across the United Kingdom. We have committed to rolling out a network of Young Futures Hubs which will bring together services to help improve the way young people can access the support they need. We will be

engaging with local communities, the police, charities, and other key partners to support the design of the hubs and explore options for their delivery.

Finally, the Home Secretary has also made a clear commitment to strengthen neighbourhood policing through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, which includes the addition of thousands more neighbourhood police personnel, as part of the Safer Streets mission. Funding for 2025/26 will be subject to the Spending Review.

■ **Deportation: Offenders**

Sir John Hayes:

[5861]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been deported from the United Kingdom for convictions related to grooming in the last five years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes statistics on the returns of foreign national offenders by nationality and year. These returns are published in the Returns Detailed Datasets, Year Ending June 2024, which are available at: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables) The published statistics refer to enforced returns which include deportations, as well as cases where a person has breached UK immigration laws, and those removed under other administrative and illegal entry powers that have declined to leave voluntarily

We are committed to delivering justice for victims and safer streets for our communities. Foreign nationals who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, where appropriate, we will pursue their deportation, and they will be swiftly removed from the country.

■ **Domestic Abuse**

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[7260]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure programmes intended to reduce coercive control are trauma-informed.

Jess Phillips:

The Home Office and Ministry of Justice fund a wide range of organisations to provide support to victims and survivors of Coercive and Controlling Behaviour and Domestic Abuse, including providing £2.5 million in 24/25 funding to Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse for domestic abuse interventions in health settings, including support for those who have experienced CCB.

We will use every lever available to Government to halve violence against women and girls in the next decade, in the Home Office, across the whole of government, with policing and other experts, such as NHS England.

■ Domestic Abuse: Victims

Tom Hayes:

[\[7108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the findings on page 4 of the report by Women's Aid entitled *The Price of Safety: The cost of leaving an abuser and rebuilding a safe, independent life*, published in September 2024, what steps her Department is taking to close the estimated deficit between the cost of domestic violence survivor leaving an abuser and the financial support available from the state.

Jess Phillips:

My officials have received the report by Women's Aid Federation England and are reviewing its findings.

The Government is committed to halving violence against women and girls within a decade and ensuring sufficient and effective victim support is a central part of this work. As part of our cross-Government approach, we will work with colleagues at the Department for Work and Pensions on future schemes.

Decisions on future funding are subject to the outcomes of the ongoing Spending Review.

■ Electric Bikes and Electric Scooters: Lancashire

Mr Adnan Hussain:

[\[7143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help tackle the (a) anti-social behaviour and (b) dangers associated with the use of electric (i) scooters and (ii) bikes in (A) Blackburn and (B) Lancashire.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

We will put thousands of neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities and crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets by introducing tougher powers, including new Respect Orders to tackle repeat offending.

We will give police the powers they need to take action on dangerous and anti-social electric scooters and bikes so that they will be able to quickly destroy the bikes that they seize from offenders. We will set out more information in due course.

■ Emergency Calls: Hoaxes and False Alarms

Anna Dixon:

[\[7202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the number of hoax calls to emergency services.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Making a hoax phone call to the police is a criminal offence. All calls to the Police are recorded and the number can be traced, even if withheld. Local forces regularly remind the public of the serious consequences of wasting police time.

Emergency services may also request a Communications Provider to place a temporary restriction on the account of the hoax/nuisance caller. However, contact management, including the management of hoax calls, is an operational matter for policing. Any decision is for the emergency authority to take.

Where Policing receives a high number of hoax calls from a single source, they will look into the causation and undertake a longer-term response. Where hoax calling is deliberate policing may use existing legislation to prosecute persistent offenders.

It is for Chief Constables and democratically elected Police and Crime Commissioners or Mayors to decide how to appropriately respond to all calls, deploy resources and handle communications with the public based on their experience and knowledge of the communities they serve.

In FY24/25, the Home Office is funding the Police-led Digital Public Contact programme to explore a range of new contact capabilities, including the use of AI, to support Police call handlers, alleviate demand on the telephony system and improve the experience of crime reporting for the public.

■ Forensic Science

Tom Hayes:

[\[7104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve forensics as part of speeding up criminal investigations.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Fair and efficient police investigations and outcomes depend on the timely delivery of high-quality forensic science.

We are working with PCCs, Chief Constables, the Forensic Science Regulator and other leaders in forensic science to ensure forensic services are reliable and robust.

Government has also invested in a Digital Fingerprint Capability programme and a Digital Forensics Programme which are helping forces to access, develop, and deliver a more integrated forensic service and solutions to tackle forensics work more efficiently.

■ Gender Based Violence

Nadia Whittome:

[\[6651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure there is not a funding cliff edge for VAWG services in March 2025.

Jess Phillips:

We have set out our mission to halve violence against women and girls within a decade. The Home Office funds a range of organisations to deliver vital services that help deliver this mission and regularly engage with key stakeholders to inform future planning.

All decisions on funding will be made in due course as part of the Spending Review.

■ Gender Based Violence: Nottinghamshire

Lee Anderson: [\[6477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to tackle violence against women and girls in (a) Ashfield constituency and (b) Nottinghamshire.

Jess Phillips:

The scale of violence against women and girls in our country is intolerable, and we have set out our unprecedented mission to halve it within a decade.

Achieving this means overhauling every aspect of society's response to these devastating crimes.

This Government will treat tackling violence against women and girls as a national emergency and we will use every tool to target perpetrators and address the root causes of violence. This includes ensuring that victims can access support services.

Last month we unveiled a series of bold measures designed to strengthen the police response to domestic abuse, protect victims and hold perpetrators to account. This includes a new approach named 'Raneem's Law' which will be piloted from early 2025. Reneem's Law will see domestic abuse specialists embedded in 999 control rooms to advise on risk assessments, work with officers on the ground and ensure that victims are referred to appropriate support services swiftly. We will also seek to create dedicated domestic abuse teams within every police force.

In addition, Nottinghamshire PCC has received up to £1m between 2022 and 2025 through the Children Affected by Domestic Abuse Fund. All future decisions on funding will be made in due course as part of the Spending Review.

■ Home Office: Recruitment

John Glen: [\[6127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on the length of time for which job application forms for successful candidates are held.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The application process to apply for a role at Home Office is online. Personal information captured during the recruitment process is retained for two years.

■ Immigration Controls: Children

Andy McDonald: [\[6257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will (a) amend the Immigration Rules entitled Child staying with or joining a Non-Parent Relative (Protection), published on 25 February 2016, to allow children to join wider family members and (b) take other steps to increase the number of refugees who are reunited with their family members in the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

Our refugee family reunion policy is intended to allow those granted protection status in the UK to sponsor their partner or children to stay with or join them here, provided they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country of origin to seek protection. Appendix CNP (Child Staying with or Joining a Non-Parent Relative) allows for a non-parent relative with protection status in the UK to sponsor a child to stay with or join them, where there are serious and compelling circumstances. This can be in situations where the child has no family other than the non-parent relative that could reasonably be expected to support or care for them.

Appendix CNP requires sponsors to demonstrate that suitable arrangements have been made for the child's care which serves to both ensure that children may only come to the UK through this route where it is in their best interest and prevents additional pressures on local authorities. Immigration Rules changes were introduced to Appendix CNP as part of the Autumn 2024 rules changes to simplify existing requirements and provide greater clarity to applicants and decision makers. These changes take effect from 8 November 2024.

■ Immigration: Lebanon**Mohammad Yasin:**[\[6411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of implementing a (a) resettlement and (b) reunification scheme for citizens of Lebanon with family connections to the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

We are deeply concerned by the rising tensions and civilian casualties in Lebanon.

Lebanese nationals who wish to come to 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.

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

■ Knives: Crime**Alex Baker:**[\[7646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to prevent knife crime in Aldershot constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Halving knife crime over the next decade is a key part of the Government's mission to take back our streets. The Government is taking a range of steps to realise this ambition.

The government introduced a ban of zombie style knives and zombie style machetes. A surrender scheme was launched on 26 August to remove these knives from our streets. Following this, the manufacture, supply, sale and possession of zombie-style knives and machetes was outlawed on 24 September 2024. The government will soon so go further by publishing a consultation on the ban of lethal ninja swords.

We will also create a new Young Futures programme - intervening earlier to stop young people being drawn into crime. It is vital we have a system that can identify and support those young people who need it most and we will be introducing Prevention Partnerships and Young Futures Hubs to help deliver this.

■ Migrant Workers: Visas**Ellie Chowns:**[\[7172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to UK Visas and Immigration guidance entitled Register of licensed sponsors: workers, updated on 2 October 2024, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of provision in place to support workers where scheme operator licences are revoked; and whether there are mechanisms in place to inspect the accommodation to which seasonal workers are transferred when the licence of their original sponsor is revoked.

Seema Malhotra:

Processes have been put in place to ensure individuals impacted by sponsor licence revocation are not detrimentally impacted. The Home Office has helped facilitate continuity of work with alternative sponsors for those who were originally attached to such companies.

The Home Office is not responsible for setting or enforcing UK accommodation standards. Should any concerns be raised with the Home Office or identified during compliance activities, these will be passed to the relevant authorities.

■ Migrants: Documents**Andy McDonald:**[\[6264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the judgment of 7 June 2024 in RAMFEL & Anor, R (on the application of) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2024] EWHC 1374 (Admin), what steps her Department is taking to

provide digital document proving the lawful immigration status and attendant legal rights to all those with leave extended under section 3C of the Immigration Act 1971.

Seema Malhotra:

We are currently rolling out digital immigration status across all immigration routes. Over time, this will mean people with 3C leave will have this displayed on their digital status (e.g. their 3C leave rights will be displayed on our online services such as *View and Prove*). For example, by the end of this year all customers with a pre-existing digital immigration status will receive digital proof of 3C from any new application they submit. This rollout is the most expedient and comprehensive way to ensure beneficiaries of 3C leave are able to prove it.

Andy McDonald:

[\[6265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the judgment of 7 June 2024 in *RAMFEL & Anor, R (on the application of) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2024] EWHC 1374 (Admin), what steps her Department is taking, ahead of the provision of digital documentation, to urgently provide interim proof of lawful immigration status and attendant legal rights to all those with leave extended under section 3C of the Immigration Act 1971.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office continues to operate checking services to enable those with a legitimate interest to obtain confirmation of a person's immigration status, supported by published guidance and statutory codes of practice. Employers and landlords should continue to use the Employer Checking Service and Landlord Checking Service where an individual has an outstanding application, administrative review or appeal and is not able to provide evidence of their status digitally. The NHS is provided with information through the Immigration Health Surcharge data feed and through the Healthcare Application Programme Interface.

■ **Migrants: Homelessness**

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with (a) the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and (b) relevant organisations to increase the quality of data available to her Department on the number of (i) migrants with no recourse to public funds and (ii) other migrants who become homeless.

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the potential impact of the no recourse to public funds condition on levels of homelessness; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the operation of the condition.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office is committed to understanding how the NRPF policy impacts different migrant groups through engagement with public and private sector organisations on a regular basis, including at the quarterly NRPF Stakeholder Forum. The Government is looking at homelessness levels carefully and will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country to bring an end to homelessness.

The Home Office is in the process of migrating its casework operations to the new ATLAS system. Once fully migrated, it will be possible to explore what further information on NRPF can be produced using the new system.

■ Nitazenes

John Slinger: [\[6910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to enforce the classification of nitazenes as a class A drug; and what discussions she has had with law enforcement agencies on this issue.

John Slinger: [\[6911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of change in the level of illegal use of nitazenes; and what steps she is taking to help prevent the distribution of such drugs.

John Slinger: [\[6912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to work with international partners to tackle (a) production, (b) distribution and (c) sale of nitazenes.

Dame Diana Johnson:

A cross-Government taskforce is co-ordinating the response to the risk synthetic opioids, including nitazenes, pose to the UK. The Taskforce includes officials from the Home Office, Department for Health and Social Care, National Crime Agency (NCA), National Police Chiefs' Council and Border Force.

Additionally, the NCA, working closely with policing, Border Force and international partners is ensuring that all lines of enquiry are prioritised and vigorously pursued to stem any supply of nitazenes to and within the UK. The NCA and Home Office international networks are in key source and transit countries to work with other governments to identify and disrupt cartels who seek to exploit the UK. On top of this, the UK are also active in international fora such as the US led Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats, the United Nations and the G7.

The UK's early warning and surveillance system has been enhanced and captures multiple data sets of data including ambulance data, post-mortem toxicology, drug seizures and wastewater analysis among other sources. Findings will be shared with law enforcement and public health agencies, at national and local level, meaning that

rapid action can be taken in communities where harmful substances such as nitazenes are detected.

On 2 September, in line with recent advice from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, we laid an Affirmative Order to introduce a generic definition for nitazenes as well as to control 22 substances (including Xylazine). Subject to parliamentary processes, these amendments should come into force in early 2025.

■ **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022**

Carla Denyer:

[\[6879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 3626 on Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, when she plans to publish the report on the operation of public order measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Sections 73, 74 and 79 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC Act 2022) are currently being reviewed by the Government in line with commitments made in Parliament when the Act was passed. The final report on these sections will be published before the end of the year.

In addition, the Act itself will be subject to post-legislative parliamentary scrutiny between 3 and 5 years after Royal Assent, i.e., between April 2025 and April 2027.

■ **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and Public Order Act 2023**

Carla Denyer:

[\[6878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will launch a public consultation when undertaking post-legislative scrutiny of the (a) Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and (b) Public Order Act 2023.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 will be subject to post-legislative parliamentary scrutiny between 3 and 5 years after Royal Assent, i.e., between April 2025 and April 2027. The Government has also reaffirmed the commitment made by the previous administration to undertake expedited post-legislative scrutiny on all aspects of the Public Order Act 2023 next year.

The Government will carefully consider the best approach to undertaking this post-legislative scrutiny to ensure all measures are appropriately assessed.

■ **Police: Finance**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, from what year is the population data used to calculate the police allocation formula.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office publishes a Police Grant Report on an annual basis. The Report sets out the Home Secretary's determination, made under section 46(2) of the Police Act 1996, of:

- the aggregate amount of grants for police purposes paid under Section 46, and;
- the amount of grant paid to pay each local policing body in England and Wales under the same section.

The Report includes a definition of the indicators used to calculate Police Main Grant, including population. A copy of the most recent Report for 2024-25 has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and can be found online:

[Police Grant Report \(England and Wales\) 2024-25 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Police: Standards**Alex Baker:****[7647]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve standards in policing in Aldershot constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government has been clear on its commitment to raise standards in policing. This will include introducing mandatory professional standards on vetting and improving police suspension provisions. More information on the Government's plans will be set out in due course.

Politics and Government: Georgia**Nadia Whittome:****[8245]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has she made of the potential impact of the legislative package on Family Values and Protection of Minors being signed into law in Georgia on that country's safe state designation under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (Amendment of List of Safe States) Regulations 2024.

Seema Malhotra:

Our assessment of the situation in Georgia is set out in the relevant Country Policy and Information Notes, which are available on the Gov.Uk website. The latest update on sexual orientation and gender identity was issued in September 2024 following a review commissioned by and on behalf of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.

Section 80AA(4) of the Nationality, Immigration and Act 2002 also requires, in respect of designated countries, that the Secretary of State—

(a) must have regard to all the circumstances of the State (including its laws and how they are applied).

We will continue to monitor the situation, working closely with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

■ **Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust: Criminal Investigation**

Shaun Davies:

[\[6705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what funding was made available to West Mercia Police from the special grant to investigate maternity deaths and potential misconduct at Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Trust in each of the last three years; and what funding from that grant she plans to make available for the same purpose for the next three years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office has provided West Mercia Police with Special Grant funding of £1.9m in 2022-23, £1.9m in 2023-24, and has agreed to provide up to £1.8m in 2024-25, for Operation Lincoln.

The Department will consider requests from West Mercia Police for future years when received, in line with the annual Special Grant process.

■ **Spiking**

Colum Eastwood:

[\[7870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it is her policy to create a standalone criminal offence for drink spiking; and what steps she is taking to help tackle drink spiking.

Jess Phillips:

Spiking is an abhorrent crime and illegal in any form, whether through vape, food, drink or needle. The Government's manifesto and the King's Speech committed to strengthening spiking legislation to help the police better respond to this crime. We are currently working across Government to consider the best way to achieve that.

In addition, the Home Office is currently supporting a range of work to tackle spiking, including specific training for people working in the night-time economy, testing the efficacy of commercial drug test kits and supporting police intensification weeks to increase understanding and awareness of this crime.

■ **Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

Adam Jogee:

[\[6989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many times she has (a) met and (b) spoken to the Police, Crime and Fire Commissioner of Staffordshire since her appointment.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Meetings are regularly published in a quarterly transparency returns.

■ Surrogacy: Ukraine**Daisy Cooper:**[\[6528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of issuing emergency travel documents for surrogate babies of British nationals born in Ukraine.

Seema Malhotra:

His Majesty's Passport Office provides significant support to the commissioning parents of surrogate babies.

Where there are safety concerns, HM Passport Office works in conjunction with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to prioritise the processing of applications. Once a passport application has been made FCDO can consider issuing an Emergency Travel Document on a case by case basis where its existing exceptional circumstance criteria is met and checks have been satisfactorily completed.

■ Synthetic Cathinones**Dr Allison Gardner:**[\[7346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs have made on the review into synthetic cathinones.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drug's review on synthetic cathinones is scheduled for publication by December 2024.

■ Theft: Greater London**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[5906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help reduce pickpocketing in London.

Dame Diana Johnson:

In the last year of the previous government, we saw a 40% increase in snatch theft. As part of our Safer Streets mission, this government is determined to crack down on pickpocketing, snatch theft, robbery, and other crimes that make people feel unsafe in our communities.

This government is determined to tackle the scourge of the street crime. That starts with strengthening neighbourhood policing, and we will introduce a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee to provide a more visible presence in town centres, recruiting thousands of additional neighbourhood police officers, police community support officers and Special Constables, and giving every community a named local officer.

One way of preventing these crimes is to tackle the market for stolen goods, making items such as mobile phones less attractive to steal in the first place. This is why we have announced that we will be working with tech companies and law

enforcement to see what more can be done to break the business model of mobile phone thieves.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

Lee Anderson:

[\[6488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of people crossing the Channel have no documentation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

As long has been the case, the Home Office does not publish breakdowns of small boat arrivals by documentation status.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Homelessness**

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will discuss with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the (a) adequacy and (b) efficiency of consular support with processing (i) identity and (ii) travel documents for undocumented migrants who are homeless in the UK.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office provides consular assistance to British nationals abroad.

The Home Office provides the Homelessness Escalation Service for organisations supporting non-UK nationals experiencing homelessness. Local Authorities, homelessness charities and immigration legal advisors can use the service to obtain current status information and to escalate outstanding immigration applications highlighting an individual's vulnerability connected to their experience of homelessness.

If an undocumented migrant does not have permission to remain in the UK, and wishes to return home voluntarily, they can get help to return to their home country from the Voluntary Returns Service.

■ **Visas: Digital Technology**

Tim Farron:

[\[5970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether people will be able to continue to prove their immigration status with existing physical documents after 31 December 2024.

Tim Farron:

[\[5971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how long her Department plans to fund Migrant Help to support people with the rollout of e-visas.

Tim Farron:

[5972]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is using lessons learned from the rollout of the EU Settlement Scheme in the rollout of eVisas.

Seema Malhotra:

Legacy document holders who currently prove their rights using older forms of evidence of immigration status (such as ink stamps in passports) will still be able to prove their rights as they do today, using their legacy documents where these are permitted. However, we encourage those individuals to transition to an eVisa at www.gov.uk/eVisa, which offers a range of benefits to customers and status checkers.

Holders of Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) who have a valid immigration status and, for any reason, do not switch to an eVisa before their BRP expires, will be able to create a UKVI account quickly and easily, using their expired BRP if needed. They will also be able to use their expired BRP to generate a share code through the Right to Work and Right to Rent online services for a limited time. However, an expired BRP does not offer the full benefits of an eVisa, and we encourage them to create a UKVI account as soon as possible.

Migrant Help will initially be funded to support people in their transition to an eVisa for up to 12 months. We will monitor customer demand and keep our support offer under review.

We have learnt from the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and are building on the success of the scheme, particularly in relation to our support for vulnerable customers, such as providing grant funding to organisations to support vulnerable people through the transition to eVisas, and through the Assisted Digital service which provides UK-wide support to individuals who require assistance with IT-related aspects of creating a UKVI account. The UKVI Resolution Centre is also available to those creating their UKVI account, and those using the online immigration status services. We also have 'helper' and 'proxy' functionality in place for those who require assistance switching to, and navigating the online services.

We are currently delivering an extensive communications campaign in support of the transition to eVisas, including through direct communications to impacted individuals, wide-ranging stakeholder engagement, development of a range of communications materials for stakeholders to share and use, and proactive media engagement. From mid-October we will be launching a paid advertising campaign in support of eVisa transition, targeting those who are using physical immigration documents, and encouraging them to take action to switch to an eVisa.

We provide clear guidance and direct support for vulnerable, and less digitally confident customers to help them manage this change, with support available for them online, through the grant funded network, the Assisted Digital service and via the UKVI Resolution Centre.

Andy McDonald:

[6266]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's news story entitled eVisa transition: vulnerability support confirmed, published on 18 September 2024, whether she plans to provide financial support to smaller voluntary and community sector organisations.

Seema Malhotra:

On 18 September 2024 we announced grant funding for four organisations (Migrant Help, CA Scotland, Advice NI and Welsh Refugee Council) to provide UK-wide support for vulnerable individuals in their transition from physical immigration products to an eVisa. In the coming weeks, we will publish details on GOV.UK for further regional/community-based organisations spread across the UK. This represents an investment of up to £4m over the next 12 months.

Deirdre Costigan:

[6791]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of migration to eVisas on people with indefinite leave to remain.

Seema Malhotra:

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed on the first phase of the roll out of eVisas to EEA nationals on 9 November 2020, which built on the Policy Equality Statement (PES) for the EUSS which was produced in 2017 and published on the gov.uk website on 18 November 2020:

[Policy equality statement: EU Settlement Scheme \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\).](#)

A separate EIA considering equalities issues in relation to the use of digital only right to work and rent checks was published on gov.uk in June 2022:

[Digital only right to work and rent checks: equality impact assessment \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

We are also in the process of reviewing our eVisas EIA, setting out further analysis of the equalities issues in relation to the proposed prioritisation plan for roll out of eVisas, including people with indefinite leave to remain, and ceasing to issue physical documents. We plan to publish an up-to-date version of this EIA on gov.uk in a due course. We will work to ensure all those with Indefinite leave to remain are supported through the transition to eVisas.

■ Visas: Graduates

Christine Jardine:

[8216]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to retain the graduate visa route at the current eligibility salary threshold.

Seema Malhotra:

The Graduate route does not have a salary threshold for eligibility.

As set out in by the Home Secretary in her written statement on the 30th July, this Government values the economic and academic contribution that international students make to this country, including those here on the Graduate route.

■ Visas: Married People

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[6414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing spousal visa applications to be submitted prior to the wedding date.

Seema Malhotra:

Fiancés, fiancées or proposed civil partners can apply for a six-month Entry Clearance to enable a marriage or civil partnership to take place in the UK.

Once the ceremony has taken place, the spouse or civil partner will be eligible to apply for permission to stay in the UK, on a route to settlement, as a partner under the Family Immigration Rules.

■ Visas: Overseas Students

Sarah Owen: [\[6547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made with the Secretary of State for Education of the potential impact of changes to the eligibility of people with student visas to bring dependents on enrolment numbers in higher education settings.

Seema Malhotra:

A full economic Impact Assessment (IA) was produced relating to the potential impacts of changes to the eligibility of student visa holders to bring dependants. The IA is available at: [2023 changes to the student route and consequential changes to work routes: impact assessment \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/125442/2023_changes_to_the_student_route_and_consequential_changes_to_work_routes_impact_assessment.pdf)

Home Office also publish monthly statistics on visas issued (including those on study visas and their dependants). These statistics do not consider the extent to which the lower volumes relative to last year are attributable to the specific policy changes in question. The monthly statistics are available at: [Monthly monitoring of entry clearance visa applications - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monthly-monitoring-of-entry-clearance-visa-applications)

■ Visas: Ukraine

Paula Barker: [\[6622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that Ukrainians living in the UK are not separated from their families, in the context of changes to the Ukraine visa schemes in February 2024.

Seema Malhotra:

Ukrainian family members, including children, are not prevented from entering the UK. The Homes for Ukraine Scheme remains open to new applicants, their

applications must be sponsored by someone who is British, Irish or who has settled status.

Ukrainians who meet the eligibility criteria can also join family members through standard visa or family routes, which attract a fee.

Our Ukraine schemes are kept under continual review as we look to provide stability both for those we have welcomed to the UK and those who still need our sanctuary.

■ Youth Services: Huntingdon

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many new youth hubs will be located in Huntingdon constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to rolling out a new YF programme including a network of Young Futures Hubs which will bring together services to help improve the way young people can access the support they need.

We will be engaging with local communities, the police, charities, and other key partners to support the design of the hubs and explore options for their delivery. This will include considerations of the most suitable locations as well as how best to engage with those young people who would benefit most from their support.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Affordable Housing

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[6382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to Written Ministerial Statement of 30 July 2024 on Building the Homes We Need, HCWS48, what steps she plans to take to provide new build affordable housing through social rent; and what assessment she has made of the potential impact of a rise in the number of social rent homes on the availability of affordable housing.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[6386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 2 September 2024 to Question 900289 on Affordable Housing, whether her Department has made changes to the (a) tenure, (b) stock profile and (c) proportion of homes available for (i) social rent and (ii) other affordable housing types for new homes planned under the 2021-26 Affordable Housing Programme.

Matthew Pennycook:

Between 2013 and 2023, the number of Social Rent homes owned by registered providers of social housing fell by over 205,000. The Government's aspiration is to ensure that, in the first full financial year of this Parliament (2025-26), the number of Social Rent homes is rising rather than falling. We have therefore asked Homes

England and the Greater London Authority to maximise the number of Social Rent homes in allocating the remaining Affordable Homes Programme funding.

My department published an update on targets in the 2021-26 Programme on 30 July 2024. We have also proposed a number of changes to national planning policy that are designed to support the delivery of Social Rent homes. We will bring forward details of future Government investment in social and affordable housing at the Spending Review.

■ **Buildings: Solar Power**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to introduce legislation requiring mandatory installation of photovoltaic panels on new (a) houses, (b) commercial buildings and (c) logistic distribution hubs.

Rushanara Ali:

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. This will support our ambition that the 1.5 million homes we will build over the course of this parliament will be high quality, well designed and sustainable. That is why the Deputy Prime Minister and I are clear that rooftop solar should play an important role, where appropriate, as part of the future standards for homes and buildings.

■ **Celotex and Kingspan Group: Contracts**

Mr Clive Betts: [\[5875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to prevent products manufactured by (a) Kingspan and (b) Celotex from being used in Government-funded contracts.

Mr Clive Betts: [\[5876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to prevent products manufactured by (a) Kingspan and (b) Celotex being used by public bodies.

Rushanara Ali:

The Prime Minister has been clear that the government will write to all companies found by the Inquiry to have been part of these horrific failings, as the first step to stopping them being awarded government contracts. This process is being led by the Minister for the Cabinet Office. Our work to review the Inquiry report and the companies named in it as having contributed to the failures is ongoing.

Grenfell was a terrible tragedy that should never have happened. We must learn from these lessons and that is why government is considering the report's recommendations with the seriousness the tragedy deserves.

■ Commonhold and Leasehold: Reform

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[7625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department plans to publish draft legislation on leasehold and commonhold reform for broad consultation and additional parliamentary scrutiny.

Matthew Pennycook:

As set out in the King's Speech, the Government intend to publish draft legislation on leasehold and commonhold reform in this parliamentary session.

■ Community Assets

Munira Wilson:

[\[6545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to review legislation on Assets of Community Value.

Alex Norris:

Community spaces have a significant role to play in developing social networks, encouraging community participation, and promoting civic pride. The Assets of Community Value scheme in England provides communities with a route to protect cherished community assets, furthering social wellbeing and the interests of the community.

As part of the Government's commitment to introduce a new Community Right to Buy in the English Devolution Bill, we will consider what associated changes need to be made to the existing Assets of Community Value legislation.

■ Conveyancing

Anna Dixon:

[\[7220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2024 to Question 3887 on Conveyancing, what steps her Department is taking to help (a) speed up and (b) reduce the cost of conveyancing.

Chris Bloore:

[\[7628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reforming the residential conveyancing system to (a) speed up and (b) reduce costs to users.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [3887](#) on 10 September 2024.

■ Council Tax

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing council tax bands.

Jim McMahon:

Future decisions on council tax will be taken at the spending review in which we are fully engaged. Ahead of any decisions taken on the tax, the Government will carefully consider the impact on councils and taxpayers. The Government is committed to keeping taxes on working people as low as possible.

■ Council Tax: Single People**Priti Patel:****[6159]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many households receive a single person discount on their council tax liability; and what the total value was of that discount in the latest period for which data is available.

Jim McMahon:

The latest available data for October 2023 shows there were approximately 8.6 million households in receipt of a single person discount. This data is available here: [Council Taxbase 2023 in England](#). The Government does not collect data on the revenue foregone to provide the discount.

Sir Gavin Williamson:**[6198]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to maintain the single occupancy council tax discount.

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. The Government is committed to keeping taxes on working people as low as possible.

Melanie Onn:**[6311]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information her Department holds on the number and proportion of single-person council tax reduction recipients that are pensioners.

Jim McMahon:

The Government has not historically collected data on the individual characteristics of residents of households receiving a single person council tax discount.

Lee Anderson:**[6480]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people claimed the single person discount on council tax in (a) the UK (b) the East Midlands, (c) Mansfield and (d) Ashfield in the latest period for which data is available.

Jim McMahon:

The latest available data for October 2023 shows there were approximately 8.6 million households in receipt of a single person discount. This data is available here: [Council Taxbase 2023 in England](#). The most recent local authority level data on the

number of dwellings entitled to the single person discount in England, can be found here: [Council Taxbase: Local authority level data for 2023](#).

Mr Peter Bedford:

[7338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of people qualify for the single-person household council tax discount.

Jim McMahon:

The latest available data for October 2023 shows there were approximately 8.6 million households in receipt of a single person discount, this represents approximately a third of all households liable for council tax in England. This data is available here: [Council Taxbase 2023 in England](#).

■ Council Tax: Valuation

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[6402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the net increase in the number of dwellings in 2023-24 in England was in (a) the Valuation Office Agency's dwelling list and (b) dwellings registered with an Energy Performance Certificate.

Rushanara Ali:

The Valuation Office Agency publishes official statistics on the number of domestic properties in the Council Tax list on GOV.UK. The latest publication is available under '[Council Tax Stock of properties: Summary tables, 2024](#)'.

In England, there were 25,353,530 domestic properties in the Council Tax list in 2023, compared with 25,571,400 in 2024. This is a difference of 217,870, which is made up of 264,330 properties being added to the Council Tax list and 46,460 properties being deleted from the list.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government [publishes full statistics](#) for EPCs produced in England every quarter since 2009. In 2023/24 1,579,865 new EPCs were produced for dwellings. Records are not maintained for the net change in dwellings with EPCs.

■ Cultural Heritage: Environment Protection

Sir John Hayes:

[5860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will introduce new protections under the National Policy Planning Framework to protect historically significant landscapes.

Matthew Pennycook:

The National Planning Policy Framework already includes safeguards for a range of sites and landscapes that may be of historic significance, including those areas designated as National Parks, the Broads, National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Heritage Coasts, registered battlefields, grade

I and II* registered parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites and scheduled monuments. Our recent consultation on proposed reforms to the Framework retains these important protections.

■ Cycling and Walking: Infrastructure

James Naish: [\[6711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to encourage local planning authorities to (a) ring-fence and (b) use developer contributions to provide routes identified in local cycling and walking infrastructure plans.

Matthew Pennycook:

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued. Plans should also set out the contributions expected from development, such as that needed for transport and green infrastructure.

Any local authority that receives a contribution from development through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or section 106 planning obligations must prepare an Infrastructure Funding Statement. The Infrastructure Funding Statement should set out future spending priorities on infrastructure in line with up-to-date or emerging plan policies.

■ Development Plans: Greater London

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 10 September 2024, to Question 3830, on Development Plans: Greater London, if she will place in the Library of the House of Commons a copy of the minutes for the meeting.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government does not intend to place a copy of the minutes of the Deputy Prime Minister's July meeting with the Mayor of London in the House of Commons library as the discussions are considered confidential.

■ Elections

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[7513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which measures in the Electoral Integrity Programme have been implemented; and what her planned timetable is for implementing the remaining the measures.

Alex Norris:

All the measures pertaining to the Electoral Integrity Programme, stemming from the Elections Act 2022, have now been implemented. This is with exception of the

measures regarding the franchise for European citizens, which are in progress and are due to have completed implementation by February 2025.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to hold discussions with (a) the Parliamentary Parties Panel and (b) electoral administrators on electoral law.

Alex Norris:

Alongside work to deliver on our manifesto commitments, the Government is considering a range of policies and approaches to tackle the challenges in the current systems for electoral registration and conduct. We will continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission and electoral administrators, to help ensure that any proposed changes address the priorities of the sector. Ministerial meetings with partners in the electoral sector are already taking place.

■ **Elections: Proof of Identity**

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1159 on General Election 2024: Proof of Identity, what steps she has taken to tackle inconsistencies in voter ID rules.

Alex Norris:

As our manifesto made clear, the government will address the inconsistencies in the voter identification policy. We have already committed to adding the HM Armed Forces Veteran Card to the list of documents that are accepted at the polling station. We are continuing to assess and review the policy and if any further changes are found to be necessary or appropriate, we will bring forward proposals for them in due course.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her policy on lowering the voting age to 16 and to the Answer of 2 August 2024 to Question HL382 on Caffeine: Children, what steps she plans to take to help support 16 year-olds to verify their identity at polling stations.

Alex Norris:

The Government is committed to carefully and thoroughly reviewing the voter identification rules and evaluating how they impacted citizens during the General Election. Work is already underway on this evaluation and will include consideration of how 16 and 17 year olds will be able to verify their identification at polling stations in line with plans to extend the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds.

■ Elections: Proportional Representation

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[5974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a system of proportional representation for Parliamentary elections.

Alex Norris:

The Government has no plans to change the voting system for Parliamentary elections.

■ Empty Property

Jodie Gosling: [\[6686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing local authorities to (a) buy unoccupied housing in longstanding disrepair at a reduced rate and (b) raise council tax on long-term unoccupied housing to ensure properties are kept in the market in a suitable condition.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities have strong powers and incentives to tackle empty homes. They have the discretionary powers to charge additional council tax on properties which have been left unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for one or more years. The maximum premium that a council can apply increases, depending on the length of time that the property has been empty for, with a premium of up to 300% on homes left empty for over ten years.

Local authorities can also use powers to take over the management of long-term empty homes to bring them back into use in the private rented sector. Since April 2024, local authorities can apply for an Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) when a property has been empty for more than two years, subject to the production of evidence that the property has been causing a nuisance to the community and evidence of community support for their proposal. More information can be found [here](#).

■ Empty Property and Second Homes: Council Tax

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 September 2024 to Question 5229 on Empty Property and Second Homes: Council Tax, whether she plans to publish a response to the consultation; and what her planned timetable is for bringing forward (a) secondary legislation and (b) updated guidance to local billing authorities.

Jim McMahon:

Secondary legislation to introduce these regulations were laid before Parliament on 8 October and will come into effect from 1 April 2025. The Government intends to publish guidance prior to these regulations coming into effect.

Energy: Housing**Edward Morello:**[\[7319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to ensure new energy efficient housing targets do not negatively impact (a) green spaces and (b) the environment.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Future Homes Standard consultation was published in December 2023 and closed in March 2024. It set out proposals for improving the energy efficiency standards for new homes. The proposed standards should not materially affect the footprint or density of new homes so no negative impact on green spaces would therefore be expected. The proposals will also lead to a reduction in carbon emissions when compared to current standards for new homes, resulting in a positive environmental impact. We are reviewing proposals and feedback from the consultation and will publish the Government response in due course.

Farms: Tenants**Mark Pritchard:**[\[5966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of allowing tenants in rented properties on working farms to have pets on (a) farm safety and (b) biosecurity.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Renters' Rights Bill requires landlords not to unreasonably withhold consent when a tenant requests to have a pet in their home, with the tenant able to challenge a decision. The government will issue detailed guidance in due course to help landlords and tenants understand the new rules.

First Time Buyers**Andrew Cooper:**[\[7052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to support first-time buyer households in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire (c) and England.

Matthew Pennycook:

The affordability challenges facing prospective first-time buyers mean that too many people are now locked out of homeownership. In addition to increasing the supply of homes of all tenures, we have committed to introduce a permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme and to give first-time buyers the first chance to buy homes.

■ General Election 2024

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the level of intimidation experienced by candidates during the general election in 2024.

Alex Norris:

Intimidation and abuse of those participating in public life has no place in our society and cannot be tolerated.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Home Secretary have already hosted a roundtable to discuss the unacceptable intimidation and abuse directed towards candidates and campaigners during the recent General Election.

There is work going on across Government to understand what happened and why, and what more we can do to prevent this type of behaviour from taking place.

■ General Elections

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[7271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help improve voter turnout in national elections; and what assessment she has made of the impact of voter ID on the 2024 general election.

Alex Norris:

To encourage participation in our democracy, the Government will improve voter registration and address the inconsistencies in voter ID rules. We will be bringing forward firm proposals in due course.

In September the Electoral Commission published its interim report on voter ID at the 2024 UK Parliamentary General Election. The Elections Act 2022 included a requirement for the Secretary of State to publish an evaluation of the implementation and impact of the voter ID policy on the next local and next two UK Parliamentary General Elections. Work has already begun on the evaluation of the July 2024 election, and we expect the report in the spring of 2025. Both of these reports will inform the wider work officials are doing to thoroughly review voter ID.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Licensing

Andrew Cooper:

[\[7047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a licensing regime for short-term lets.

Matthew Pennycook:

While recognising the benefits that short-term lets can have for local economies, the Government appreciates that excessive concentrations in some areas of the country

can impact on the availability and affordability of homes to buy and rent as well as having a detrimental impact on local services.

The Government is committed to the introduction of a short-term let registration scheme and to abolishing the furnished holiday lets tax regime to remove the tax incentive that short-term let owners have over long-term landlords. In addition, we are considering what additional powers we might give local authorities to enable them to better manage excessive concentrations of such properties.

■ Homelessness

Grahame Morris: [\[7728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to limit the distance local authorities can relocate (a) people and (b) families when discharging a homelessness duty.

Grahame Morris: [\[7729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will establish a national oversight mechanism to (a) monitor and (b) review the practice of local authorities discharging homelessness duties out of area.

Grahame Morris: [\[7730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to require local authorities discharging a homelessness duties out of area to notify the receiving local authority of each relocation.

Grahame Morris: [\[7731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she is making additional resources available to receiving communities when families are placed out of area by a local authority seeking to prevent homelessness.

Grahame Morris: [\[7732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) protections and (b) support are available for families facing homelessness who wish to refuse an offer of accommodation located a significant distance from their home area.

Ben Goldsborough: [\[8036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to work with local authorities to reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation.

Rushanara Ali:

Homelessness levels are far too high and too many families are living in temporary accommodation. We will take the action needed to tackle this issue and develop a long-term, cross-government strategy, through working with Mayors, councils and key stakeholders, to end homelessness for good.

Homelessness legislation sets out that local authorities should try to place individuals within their own area, and when this is not possible, they should place the household as near as possible to the original local authority. The Government is clear that local authorities should, as far as possible, avoid placing households out of their borough. However, this is not always possible when there is a limited supply of suitable accommodation. If a local authority places a household into accommodation in another local area, they are required by law to notify the local authority of any placement, to ensure there is no disruption to education or employment.

■ Homelessness: Ukraine

Paula Barker:

[6623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department plans to publish the next round of submissions on homelessness duties owed to Ukrainians by each lower-tier local authority.

Rushanara Ali:

The Homelessness Pressures Management Information was last published on 3 October 2024. The publication included data submitted from local authorities in England on homelessness duties accepted for Ukrainian households, covering the period from 24 February 2022 until 31 August 2024 and can be found [here](#). We aim to publish these quarterly.

■ Housing Occupancy: Single People

Mark Garnier:

[6184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many single occupancy households there are in (a) England and (b) Wyre Forest constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

Data on the number of households receiving the single person council tax discount is collected by the Department as part of the annual Council Taxbase snapshot. The 2023 snapshot can be found [here](#). Data is only available for local authority areas not parliamentary constituencies.

■ Housing: Construction

Sir Julian Smith:

[6207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government, whether historical lead mining activities are considered when approving new housing targets.

Matthew Pennycook:

The proposed methodology to calculate local housing need figures for each local authority, is set out in the 'Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system' consultation documents. These can be found at gov.uk.

National planning policy makes clear that constraints on land availability, which could include risks arising from former activities such as mining, should be taken into account by local authorities when establishing a housing requirement for their area. Local authorities are expected to evidence and justify their approach through local plan consultation and examination.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[6398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of higher Section 106 affordable housing quotas on (a) the sale price of non-subsidised new build private sector homes in the same development and (b) overall house prices.

Matthew Pennycook:

As part of the consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, the Government is seeking views on implementing golden rules to ensure development in the Green Belt is in the public interest.

These rules include a target of 50% affordable housing on land released from the Green Belt for residential development. The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.

Alex Sobel:

[\[6436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to use modular housing to increase the amount of available housing stock.

Matthew Pennycook:

Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) can quickly deliver high-quality, energy efficient homes and they provide an important opportunity to improve productivity in the construction sector. MHCLG supports the use of all types of MMC, and we will share our approach to increase its use in housebuilding as part of the Government's wider housing strategy.

James Naish:

[\[6712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of routinely using S106 agreements to pay for new sewage treatment plants in order that large developers always make a direct contribution to upgrades of the water and sewerage network to support new housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

National planning policy sets out that local planning authorities should include policies in their Local Plan for making sufficient provision for water and sewerage infrastructure.

A developer can be required to enter into a section 106 agreement, as a requirement of obtaining planning permission, to make their development 'acceptable in planning terms'. The section 106 requirement might, for example, require a contribution

towards the provision of water and sewerage network upgrades needed due to the development.

Separately, developers also pay water companies for new connections to a water main, with water companies entitled to reclaim reasonable costs.

James Naish: [\[6720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Competition and Market Authority's publication entitled Housebuilding Market Study, published on 26 February 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the findings that (a) that some housebuilders may be sharing commercially sensitive information and (b) some estate management charges are (i) high and (ii) unclear to homebuyers.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government welcomes the Competition and Market Authority's final report following their year-long market study on housebuilding. Government will carefully consider the Authority's recommendations and respond in due course.

The Government is already clear that it is committed to bring the injustice of 'fleecehold' private estates and unfair costs to an end – we will consult on the best way to achieve this. We will also implement new protections for homeowners on private estates in the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024.

Nigel Farage: [\[6856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to ensure that housing targets do not negatively impact the delivery of local services for pre-existing communities (a) in Clacton constituency and (b) elsewhere.

Matthew Pennycook:

The National Planning Policy Framework sets an expectation that the provision of local services is to be taken into account when planning for development. The Government is also committed to strengthening the existing system of developer contributions to ensure that new developments provide appropriate affordable homes and infrastructure. Further details will be set out in due course.

James MacCleary: [\[7671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of giving local councils compulsory purchase powers for stalled development sites with planning permission.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities already have various compulsory purchase powers to acquire and develop land which could include stalled development sites with planning permission. The Government is keen for authorities to make greater use of their compulsory purchase powers to support the regeneration and growth of their areas where appropriate, provided there is a compelling case in the public interest. To assist local

authorities in using their powers, this Government has recently published updated guidance on the compulsory purchase process reforms introduced by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. This can be found at [here](#).

■ Housing: Disability

Mr Clive Betts: [\[5871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to introduce Part M category 2 of the Building Regulations for new build properties.

Mr Clive Betts: [\[5872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to increase the availability of dwellings suitable for younger people with disabilities.

Rushanara Ali:

We understand that accessibility in new homes, and accessibility standards for buildings in general, are important concerns. Housing is one of this Government's top priorities. Everyone deserves to live in a decent home in which they feel safe. We will set out our policies on accessible new build housing shortly.

■ Housing: Essex

Priti Patel: [\[6157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how her Department calculated revised housing targets affecting (a) Braintree District Council, (b) Colchester City Council and (c) Maldon District Council.

Matthew Pennycook:

The proposed methodology to calculate local housing need figures for each local authority, including Braintree District Council, Colchester City Council and Maldon District Council is set out in the 'Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system' consultation documents. These can be found at gov.uk.

■ Housing: Health

Andrew Cooper: [\[7658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to help reduce health inequalities through housing in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is taking steps to reduce health inequalities through housing reforms including extending 'Awaab's Law' to the private rented sector and introducing a new Decent Homes Standard to drive up the quality of rented housing. In addition, as part of the recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National

Planning Policy Framework, we sought views on changes aimed at increasing the provision of public service infrastructure across England, including hospitals, and addressing issues like childhood obesity. The consultation closed on 24 September and responses are being analysed with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.

■ Housing: Infrastructure

Anna Sabine:

[\[7233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to increase the minimum level of shared amenity space on new housing developments.

Matthew Pennycook:

The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments. This is supported by guidance in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code. Local planning authorities are responsible for applying this policy and guidance through their local plans and decisions on planning applications.

■ Housing: Temperature

Alex Mayer:

[\[6930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure that building regulations take into account the need for homes to be resilient to extreme (a) heat and (b) cold.

Rushanara Ali:

A new requirement was introduced as part of the Building Regulations in 2021 to reduce the risk of overheating in new residential buildings. The requirement came into effect in June 2022 and means that new residential buildings must now be designed in such a way as to reduce overheating. The Future Homes and Buildings Standard consultation was published in December 2023 and closed in March 2024. It sought views on whether the current overheating standards are appropriate or require amendment. We are reviewing proposals and feedback from the consultation and will publish the Government response in due course.

An uplift to the energy efficiency standards for new homes was also introduced in 2021. This uplift delivered a significant increase in fabric standards, including insulation standards, and came into effect in June 2022. New homes built to the 2021 standards will be warm, comfortable and resilient to extreme cold.

■ Insulation: Housing

James Naish:

[\[6729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to regulate the (a) sale and (b) installation of spray foam insulation.

Rushanara Ali:

We are aware of the issues some homeowners are facing in obtaining finance where spray foam insulation has been installed.

We will bring forward proposals for system wide reform to the construction products regulatory regime in due course.

■ Land Use: Property Development

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[6510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help tackle landbanking.

Matthew Pennycook:

The consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system that began on Tuesday 30 July includes proposals designed to support increased build out rates and promote mixed-tenure schemes that meet the housing needs of local people. In conjunction with the start of that consultation, the housebuilding industry made a public commitment to increase the pace at which homes are delivered and to get on and build where sites are viable and have implementable consent. The Government has also taken swift action to unblock stalled sites through the creation of New Homes Accelerator Task Force.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Anna Dixon:

[\[7194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what criteria her Department will use to determine which stage (a) one and (b) two levelling up bids will be allowed to proceed.

Alex Norris:

The Chancellor's July 'Public Spending: Inheritance' speech forecasted an overspend of £21.9 billion above limits set by the Treasury in the Spring. We understand that will have caused uncertainty about the status of some projects and the challenge that presents locally. We must, however, ensure that we are making responsible decisions on public spending. Decisions that have fallen on this government to take. In this context, the Chancellor has set out a path to confirming plans for this year and next at the forthcoming Budget on October 30th.

Local Government Finance

Priti Patel: [\[6158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the level of funding that her Department will provide to local authorities in each of the next five years.

Jim McMahon:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [524](#) on 26 July 2024.

Paula Barker: [\[6630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to end local authority competitive bidding.

Paula Barker: [\[6631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department is taking steps to give local authorities greater flexibility in respect to grant funding.

Jim McMahon:

The Government was elected on a manifesto that stressed a partnership approach with local authorities and an intention to stabilise the funding system, moving away from wasteful competition and towards multi-year funding settlements.

We want to have better join up across interconnected policy areas and investment programmes, reducing burdens for local authorities and fund bidders.

We have been working closely with local authorities and delivery partners to inform best practice in future design and recognise the importance of supporting local capacity and capability, realistic delivery timelines and working in partnership to design future delivery arrangements. As part of this, we are also committed to deepening existing combined authority devolution settlements and widening devolution to more areas, incentivised through new powers over transport, adult education and skills, housing and planning and employment support. We will also continue to offer support for combined authorities working on their local growth plans. Those are the principles we will seek to apply as we plan future local funding.

Paula Barker: [\[6632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate her Department has made of the local authority funding gap in the next two years.

Jim McMahon:

I refer the hon member to the answer to Question UIN [524](#) answered on 26 July 2024.

■ Local Government Pension Scheme: Offshore Industry

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[6384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of local authorities divesting their Local Government Pension Scheme assets from the oil and gas industry.

Jim McMahon:

Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) administering authorities are responsible for setting the investment strategy of their pension funds. Authorities must take investment decisions in the interests of their members and for the purpose of paying benefits.

■ Local Government Services

Paula Barker:

[\[6633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of trends of the level of demand on statutory services provided by local authorities since June 2010.

Jim McMahon:

Local authorities play a crucial role in the delivery of this Government's missions, from driving growth, to delivering opportunities for all. The Government is under no illusions about the scale of the pressures that local authorities are facing which is impacting the services councils can provide to local people. Resetting the relationship between national and local government and improving how local government is funded in this Parliament, are crucial in ensuring local people get the support and services they need and deserve.

■ Local Government: Devolution

Clive Jones:

[\[7094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to publish her Department's devolution framework for England.

Jim McMahon:

The devolution framework will be published alongside the English Devolution White Paper in due course.

Clive Jones:

[\[7095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of non-mayoral devolution agreements.

Jim McMahon:

The English Devolution White Paper will set an ambitious new framework for English devolution, moving power out of Westminster and back to those who know their areas best.

This Government believes that the benefits of devolution are best achieved through the establishment of combined authorities or combined county authorities supported by a mayor. We want every part of England to take its place on the Council of Nations and Regions, with strong and effective partnerships in place with councils and other partners to deliver the missions we have set out to transform the country. Non-mayoral devolution can however be an important step for areas to see early benefits from devolution in the short-term, including on adult skills, as they assess all options to unlock deeper devolution across England.

■ Local Government: Elections

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 10 September 2024 to Question 5232 on Local Government: Elections, whether her Department holds a list of (a) councils, (b) mayors and (c) combined authority mayors subject to elections in May 2025.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[7515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 September 2024 to Question 5232, what (a) council and (b) mayoral elections are (i) scheduled and (ii) expected, subject to the passage of secondary legislation, to take place in May (A) 2025 and (B) 2026.

David Simmonds: [\[7872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 September 2024 to Question 5232 on Local Government: Elections, if she will publish the (a) council and (b) mayoral elections that are (i) scheduled and (ii) expected to take place subject to the passage of the necessary secondary legislation in May (A) 2025 and (B) 2026.

Jim McMahon:

The department publishes our understanding of the years in which each council's elections will be held. That list can be found [here](#).

In accordance with legislation, councils are required to post notice of any election or by-election taking place which they administer, and this can be found on council websites.

■ Local Government: Pay

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of levels remuneration of local authority chief executives.

Jim McMahon:

This Government recognises the intense demands facing local authority chief executives, and is grateful for the excellent work they do. Local authorities are

independent employers, and decisions on local pay and remuneration should be taken by those who are directly accountable to local people.

■ **Local Government: Standards**

Mr Peter Bedford:

[\[7690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of arrangements for standards enforcement in local government.

Jim McMahon:

The Government is actively considering options to strengthen the standards regime for local government and provide councils with more effective means to address serious misconduct by elected members. We want to give local leaders the tools they need to establish and maintain a strong ethical culture within their authority, and give the people they serve the confidence that local democracy works for them.

Our intention is to engage with local authorities, sector representative bodies, and other key stakeholders in due course to ensure a wide range of views are heard.

■ **Local Plans**

Clive Jones:

[\[7096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has for local growth plans in areas (a) with and (b) without local devolution agreements; and how she expects such plans to align with the plans of (i) upper-tier local authorities and (ii) local economic partnerships.

Jim McMahon:

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

The Deputy Prime Minister has written to the 11 MCAs and the GLA to invite them to begin the LGP process.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Communication**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[6407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to Table 2 of HM Treasury's publication entitled Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25, CP 1133, published in July 2024, what plans her Department has to reduce spending on (a) communications and (b) Government Communications Service staff.

Alex Norris:

As stated in the HM Treasury report, all departments will stop non-essential spending on communications. This includes the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

A review of planned government communications and marketing has recently concluded and the department is now updating our campaign plans to ensure that they are effective and in line with government priorities.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Departmental Responsibilities**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[6395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 23 September 2024, to Question 2979, on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Departmental Responsibilities, if she will list the job title of each member of the Policy and Strategy Unit.

Alex Norris:

The Policy and Strategy Unit is comprised of two Deputy Directors, supported by a team of policy advisers and senior policy advisers. Staffing roles are in line with the approach taken for these central functions under the previous administration.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Flags**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[6385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2024 to Question 3824, on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Flags, whether she plans to amend the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 on flag flying.

Matthew Pennycook:

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

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Photography**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[6408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many photographers her Department has hired as (a) staff and (b) contractors since since 4 July 2024; from what dates; and what estimate she has made of the annual cost of those photographers.

Alex Norris:

As is the case already in other government departments, official photographers help to share the work of the department and ministers with the public. Photography and videography - for external use or on the department's corporate channels - can help to give the public and civil servants a greater sense of accessibility and transparency over the activities of government. Members of MHCLG's communications team

already demonstrate a broad range of written and digital / visual media skills to help communicate with the public, the media and stakeholders.

MHCLG does not currently employ a photographer on a part or full-time basis. The department has recently advertised a role within the Civil Service for a chief photographer (Grade 7).

We do not comment on individual staffing matters.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Appointments**

John Glen:

[\[6112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 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.

Alex Norris:

Since 4 July 2024, 4 public appointees to the Department and associated bodies have left their posts. 10 direct ministerial appointments have been made (to the New Towns Taskforce).

■ **Moorland: Fires**

Paul Davies:

[\[7286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to increase collaboration between local councils and fire services to help tackle moorland fires.

Jim McMahon:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government works closely with Local Resilience Forums, which include local councils and fire and rescue services to support local collaboration and preparation for a wide range of the resilience risks including fires.

Paul Davies:

[\[7288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department provides funding to local councils to enforce the ban on the use of barbecues and open fires on the moors during the summer.

Jim McMahon:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government provides no specific funding to local councils to enforce the ban on the use of barbecues and open fires on moorland. The majority of the Local Government Finance Settlement is unringfenced in acknowledgement that local areas know best how to prioritise spending within their communities.

■ Multiple Occupation

Gareth Snell: [\[6378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to remove permitted development rights for property owners seeking to convert properties from use class c3 to c4.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government will keep changes to permitted development rights under review.

■ New Homes Quality Board

Mr Clive Betts: [\[5874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) putting the New Homes Quality Board on a statutory footing, (b) requiring developers to be members of the Board and (c) providing buyers of new homes with a right of redress.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to improving upon existing means of redress for purchasers of new build homes. We are currently considering the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) recommendations in their recent Housebuilding Market Study, which included activating a statutory New Homes Ombudsman, and will publish our response in due course.

■ Permitted Development Rights

Mark Garnier: [\[6190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to publish a response to the consultation launched under the previous government on changes to various permitted development rights.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government will keep changes to permitted development rights under review.

■ Planning

Laura Trott: [\[7852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for publishing the revised National Planning Policy Framework.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government intends to respond to the consultation and publish revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework before the end of the year.

■ Private Rented Housing: Construction

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the total (a) funding under the Build to Rent Fund and (b) finance supported from the Private Rented Sector Housing Debt Guarantee Scheme was; and what estimate she has made of the number of additional dwellings supported by these schemes.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Build to Rent Fund provided over £606 million in debt financing to support the construction of 6,262 homes. The Fund closed in 2016, and all loans have now been repaid. The Private Rented Sector Guarantee Scheme has thus far supported the delivery of 7,660 Build to Rent homes, utilising c£1.5 billion of guarantees capacity.

We recognise that the Build to Rent sector plays an important role in driving up quality and delivering additional homes in the Private Rented Sector. We continue to offer support to new schemes alongside institutional investors and operators via the Levelling Up Home Building Fund.

■ Private Rented Housing: Evictions

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to issue hardship tests in the private rented sector before landlords can evict tenants.

Matthew Pennycook:

There are currently no plans to introduce hardship tests relating to eviction of tenants, outside of the existing 'undue hardship' test in the Housing Act 1988.

■ Private Rented Housing: Rents

Gregory Stafford: [\[7376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Renter's Rights Bill on tackling unaffordable requests for rent in advance.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government recognise that requests for large amounts of rent in advance can put financial strain on tenants and can exclude certain groups from renting all together. We want to ensure that the Renters' Rights Bill protects renters against such demands, and we will keep the matter under review as the Bill progresses.

■ Private Rented Housing: Repairs and Maintenance

Carla Denyer: [\[6877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of the ability of local authorities to (a) take

enforcement action against private sector landlords leaving private tenants with dangerous disrepair and (b) bring related prosecutions.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities have powers to tackle hazardous conditions in private rented housing, including being able to issue landlords with improvement notices. Non-compliance with local authority enforcement action is a criminal offence.

The Renters' Rights Bill, currently before Parliament, will strengthen these powers and support local authorities to enforce effectively. The Bill will introduce a new civil penalty of up to £7,000 where private landlords have failed to keep their properties free of dangerous hazards and applies a Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector for the first time. The Bill also introduces a new Private Rented Sector Database which will enable local authorities to quickly identify landlords and better target enforcement.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Repossession Orders**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[6403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 28 March 2024 to Question 19849 on Private Rented Housing: Registration, whether her Department the Ministry of Justice and HM Courts and Tribunal Service have a joint plan for improvements to the county court possession process.

Matthew Pennycook:

My department is working closely with the Ministry of Justice and HM Courts and Tribunal Service to ensure that the county courts are ready for the implementation of the Renters' Rights Bill.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Students**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[6388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has received representations on the potential effect of proposed private renters legislation on the student accommodation market, and what steps her Department has taken to support that market.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Renters' Rights Bill introduces a new mandatory ground which will allow landlords renting Houses of Multiple Occupation to full time students to seek possession ahead of each new academic year, facilitating the ongoing yearly cycle of short-term student tenancies while ensuring students can benefit from the increased security and flexibility our reforms will create. The department has engaged with a range of stakeholders in the student accommodation market and will continue to do so.

■ Property Development: Planning Permission

Sarah Green:

[\[7879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to Section 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the planning application notification requirements for ensuring that local residents are aware of proposals to build large developments in their area.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to ensuring that local residents are adequately informed about planning applications, particularly those involving large developments that may significantly impact their communities.

Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requires public notification of planning applications, including via site displays and notices in local newspapers for at least 21 days. In addition, we are exploring methods to improve community engagement, such as leveraging digital platforms and social media to reach a broader audience.

■ Property Management Companies

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[5873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to bring in (a) licences for and (b) registration of property managing agents.

Luke Murphy:

[\[7165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take in relation to the regulation of management agents of leasehold properties.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to ensuring that those living in the rented and leasehold sectors are protected from abuse and poor service at the hands of unscrupulous property agents. The Government will set out its position on the regulation of letting, managing and estate agents in due course.

■ Proxy Voting

Tom Hayes:

[\[7128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to allow people caring for a loved one with a medical emergency to be eligible to apply for an emergency proxy vote.

Alex Norris:

Alongside work to deliver on our manifesto commitments, the Government is considering a range of policies and approaches to tackle the challenges in the current systems for electoral registration and conduct. This will include considering the

current arrangements for proxy voting. If any changes are found to be necessary or appropriate, we will bring forward proposals for them in due course.

■ Public Houses

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 September 2024 to Question 4681 on Public Houses, what steps her Department is taking to help support community pubs.

Alex Norris:

Community pubs are a fantastic example of how community ownership can help keep local institutions alive and thriving. Our pubs are already protected by the planning system, and we want to further support community pubs with the introduction of Community Right to Buy through the English Devolution Bill. This will give communities the power to buy valued community assets, such as their local pub, if they go up for sale.

■ Refugees: Ukraine

Olivia Blake: [R] [\[8243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme will continue to provide thank you payments to people hosting displaced Ukrainians.

Olivia Blake: [R] [\[8244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take once the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme is introduced to a) incentivise the continuation of people hosting and b) reduce the risk of homelessness amongst displaced Ukrainians.

Rushanara Ali:

More than two years on, we continue to stand firm with the brave people who remain in Ukraine, and to warmly welcome those who need sanctuary in the UK.

We are greatly appreciative of the overwhelming generosity shown by sponsors in accommodating guests under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. It is thanks to this generosity that we have been able to welcome over 156,000 Ukrainians to the UK. We continue to encourage those who can offer support to come forward with offers of sponsorship.

We provide a tariff of £5,900 per Ukrainian arrival to councils. This is un-ringfenced, which allows councils to use the funding to support households as best suits the local area, including measures to support guests who have left sponsorship to access the private rented sector.

Local councils have a responsibility to support Ukrainians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including providing temporary accommodation where required to ensure no family is without a roof over their head.

■ Renewable Energy: Planning Permission

Josh MacAlister:

[\[7597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate her Department has made of in how many cases the Planning Inspectorate has found that a local planning authority has acted unreasonably in refusing a planning application for a clean energy project without justification since 2020.

Josh MacAlister:

[\[7598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made an estimate of the total costs awarded by the Planning Inspector to the appellant due to unreasonable behaviour of the planning authority in the determination of clean energy projects since 2020.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Planning Inspectorate does not hold information on whether a local planning authority has acted unreasonably in refusing a planning application for a clean energy project without justification. As such, we are unable to provide an estimate on the number of such cases.

In addition, when determining a planning appeal the Planning Inspector or Secretary of State can only address the principle of whether costs should be awarded in full or in part. The precise costs are settled subsequently between the parties, who are under no obligation to inform the Planning Inspectorate or the Secretary of State as to the outcome. As such, we are unable to provide an estimate of the total costs awarded in relation to such cases.

■ Renters' Rights Bill

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[6400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for the commencement of the Renters' Rights Bill and the passage of associated secondary legislation, including any planned differences for the application of (a) new and (b) existing tenancies.

Matthew Pennycook:

Following Royal Assent of the Renters' Rights Bill, the Government will implement the new system as soon as possible. The abolition of section 21 and the introduction of the new tenancy system will be applied to new and existing tenancies simultaneously. This approach will support tenants, landlords and agents to adjust to and understand the new rules, while making sure that tenants can benefit from the new system quickly. We will provide more details about our implementation plans and timetables during the passage of the Bill.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she made an assessment of the potential merits of publishing a regulatory impact assessment of the Renters' Rights Bill.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[7507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish a (a) regulatory impact assessment, (b) equality impact assessment, (c) family test assessment and (d) environmental principles assessment for the Renters' Rights Bill.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government submitted the Impact Assessment for the Renters' Rights Bill on 16 September 2024 to the Regulatory Policy Committee. The Government will publish the impact assessment in due course. In line with usual practice, the Government will always consider the impact of any policies when taking the legislation through Parliament.

■ Revenue Support Grant

Paula Barker:

[6634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will incorporate other streams of funding into the Revenue Support Grant.

Jim McMahon:

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer given to Question UIN [524](#) on 26 July 2024.

■ Right to Buy Scheme

Munira Wilson:

[6546]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a Community Right to Buy scheme.

Alex Norris:

The Government is committed to creating thriving high streets and community spaces. Through the English Devolution Bill, we will introduce a new Community Right to Buy to help local people to acquire valued community spaces if they come up for sale, keeping these assets in the hands of the community. These new powers will further empower communities to tackle the blight of high street vacancy, bringing more spaces back into use and rejuvenating local high streets across the country. We will provide more detail on the planned measures in due course.

■ Right to Buy Scheme: Housing Associations

Mary Kelly Foy:

[6509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Right to Buy for housing association tenants.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is currently reviewing the increased Right to Buy discounts that were introduced in 2012, with a view to better protecting existing social housing stock. The Government will also review the Right to Buy more widely, including

looking at eligibility criteria and protections for newly-built social housing and will launch a public consultation in the autumn. More information about the consultation and the position on extending the Right to Buy for housing association tenants will be made available in due course.

■ Sleeping Rough

Deirdre Costigan: [\[6788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to help local authorities reduce rough sleeping.

Rushanara Ali:

Homelessness and rough sleeping levels in England are far too high. This has a devastating impact on those affected and harms our communities.

We must address this and deliver long-term solutions. The Government is taking action by setting up a dedicated Inter-Ministerial Group which the Deputy Prime Minister will chair, bringing together ministers from across government to develop a long-term strategy to put us back on track to ending homelessness.

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

Deirdre Costigan: [\[6795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate her Department has made of how many people have been supported off the streets through the Rough Sleeping Initiative in each of the last three years.

Deirdre Costigan: [\[6796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Rushanara Ali:

We conducted an evaluation of the RSI in 2018 and a link to report can be found [here](#). We have also commissioned a systems wide evaluation of the homelessness and rough sleeping system and further information can be found [here](#). The aim of this evaluation is to assess the interaction between different interventions, understand what works, and identify the most effective points at which to prevent homelessness. MHCLG is due to publish an interim report in summer 2025, followed by a final report in spring 2027.

We will develop a new cross government strategy to put us back on track to ending homelessness and rough sleeping. As announced by the Chancellor on 29th July, spending plans for 2025-26 will be set alongside the Budget on 30th October .

■ Social Rented Housing: Energy

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of her Department's proposals for (a) higher quality standards, (b) cladding removal, (c) decarbonisation and energy efficiency requirements in the social housing sector on the financial capacity of housing associations to (i) build new social homes and (ii) purchase affordable homes from private developers.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the estimated cost to (a) councils and (b) housing associations is of requiring all social housing to be EPC 'C' compliant by 2030; and what (i) funding and (ii) loans her Department plans to provide to these organisations.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[6406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment has she made of the potential impact of requiring landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their properties to a EPC C rating by 2030 on the finances of (a) local authorities and (b) housing associations.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to working with social housing providers to ensure that homes are safe, decent, warm and free from damp and mould. We have committed to bringing forward the regulations necessary to introduce Awaab's Law in the Social Rented Sector this Autumn, and to consulting on and implementing a new Decent Homes Standard and Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards. We will set out the costs and impacts of the relevant requirements alongside each consultation.

The Government's Warm Homes Plan offers grants and low interest loans which support investment in insulation, low carbon heating and other improvements. Social landlords are responsible for improvements to their properties to ensure they meet the required standards.

As we set out in July, details of future government investment in social and affordable housing will be brought forwards at the Spending Review.

■ Social Services: Finance

Priti Patel: [\[6160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans she has for the adult social care precept in the next five years.

Jim McMahon:

Decisions on future local authority funding will be a matter for the Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged. Ahead of any decisions taken on the tax, the Government will carefully consider the impact on

councils and taxpayers. The Government is committed to keeping taxes on working people as low as possible.

■ **Solar Power: Planning Permission**

Jerome Mayhew:

[\[6473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is her policy that there is to be a presumption against planning permission for solar farms that are not nationally significant infrastructure projects on best and most versatile land.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government places great importance upon our agriculture and food production, and this is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework is clear that local planning authorities should recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is shown to be necessary, including ground mounted solar, the planning authority should seek to use poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

■ **Temporary Accommodation: Costs**

Antonia Bance:

[\[6735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of (a) section 21 evictions and (b) the provisions in the Renters' Rights Bill on (i) temporary accommodation costs and (ii) local authority finances.

Matthew Pennycook:

Once enacted, the Bill will ensure that local authorities owe a homelessness prevention duty to a tenant evicted under section 8 grounds. This will enable tenants to maintain access to support to prevent homelessness, in line with the principles of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. We will carry out a new burdens assessment and will fund local authorities for any additional costs.

■ **Tenants' Rights**

Antonia Bance:

[\[6734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to help ensure tenants are aware of new rights created through the Renters' Rights Bill.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government intends to publish accessible guidance so that tenants understand their rights and responsibilities under the new system. This will be supported by a communications campaign designed to raise awareness about the changes. We will also work with local authorities and advice providers like Shelter and Citizens Advice

to further raise awareness of the reforms and make sure adequate support is in place.

■ **Tenants: Pets**

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[7697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to ensure the clarity of guidance on what justifies a landlord refusing a pet request.

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[7698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to prevent discrimination against prospective tenants with pets.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Renters' Rights Bill requires landlords not to unreasonably withhold consent when a tenant requests to have a pet in their home, with the tenant able to challenge a decision. The government will issue detailed guidance in due course to help landlords and tenants understand the new rules.

■ **Thanet District Council: Finance**

Ms Polly Billington: [\[8310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made an estimate of how much funding to Thanet District Council has been cut since 2010 in (a) real terms and (b) as a percentage; and whether she has made an estimate of the potential current level of funding without the cuts.

Jim McMahon:

We understand that improving how local government is funded is crucial to enabling councils to deliver for local residents and ensuring we can deliver our missions, and we acknowledge the real pressures faced by councils in dealing with demand for vital services. We will provide councils with more stability and certainty through moving towards multi-year funding settlements and by ending wasteful competitive bidding. This will ensure councils can plan their finances for the future properly, delivering better value for money for taxpayers.

For 2024/25, the Local Government Finance Settlement was £64.7 billion. For Thanet Council, this made available up to £20.3 million, an increase of £1.1 million, or 5.9% on 2023-24.

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement. We want to hear from councils about the financial challenges they are facing and we are committed to improving the local government finance landscape in this Parliament.

JUSTICE**■ Children: Disability****Mohammad Yasin:**[\[6409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department plans to take steps to help ensure the parents and guardians of disabled children are able to access (a) Child Trust Funds and (b) Junior ISAs.

Heidi Alexander:

Where a young adult lacks mental capacity, including due to a disability, the law requires parents or a guardian to have legal authority to make decisions on their behalf about financial assets or property. This includes in relation to accessing funds held in a Child Trust Fund or a Junior ISA.

On 9 June 2023, the Ministry of Justice published the 'Making Financial Decisions for young people: parent and carer toolkit', explaining the process by which parents and guardians of disabled children are able to obtain legal authority if no other arrangements are in place. This can be done by making an application to the Court of Protection for an order authorising access to monies held in a Child Trust Fund or Junior ISA. The toolkit is available on GOV.UK.

We understand that concerns remain, and the Ministry of Justice is exploring what further can be done to help improve access to matured Child Trust Funds.

■ Children: Guardianship**Ms Stella Creasy:**[\[7764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many children for whom no living parent was identified were allocated a legal guardian in each of the last five years.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of special guardianship orders, however, information held centrally does not include whether the application was granted due to the child having no living parent. This information may be held on court records, but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate cost.

■ Convictions: Compensation**Kim Johnson:**[\[6599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of compensation arrangements for people wrongly convicted of crimes in the context of the Court of Appeal judgment in the case of Oliver Campbell and The King, reference [2024] EWCA Crim 1036.

Heidi Alexander:

The Government is unable to comment on individual cases. Anyone who has had their conviction quashed in an out of time appeal is able to apply for compensation

under the statutory Miscarriage of Justice Application Service (MOJAS). The Law Commission is undertaking a review of the criminal appeals process which includes MOJAS. I will be considering their findings once their review is complete.

■ Court of Protection

Kim Leadbeater: [\[6662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Court of Protection's communications; and whether she has had discussions with them on improving their application processes.

Heidi Alexander:

The central office for the Court of Protection installed a new telephone system on 29 April 2024. This has helped the court to monitor demand and move resource to address peak call times as well as using the interactive voice response technology to direct callers to the most appropriate place for help.

Additionally, an online form for Property and Affairs Deputyship cases has enabled the digital submission of application for both legal professionals and citizens. The uptake of this digital service is at nearly 90% and it has enabled the court to process applications more quickly and efficiently. His Majesty's Court Service is committed to continually improving this service and is looking for opportunities to expand the digital submission portal process to other types of application.

■ Courts: Psychology

James Naish: [\[6714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she will take steps to restrict the ability for psychologists not accredited by the Health and Care Professions Council to act as expert witnesses in all court settings.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Government is aware of concerns regarding unregulated experts, often using the title psychologist, being instructed in the family courts. We are working with the Family Procedure Rule Committee on this issue to make changes to the Family Procedure Rules and their associated Practice Directions to restrict the instruction of these experts.

In the criminal courts, the evidence of expert witnesses is governed by the law on admissibility. Expert evidence is only admissible if the witness is competent to give that opinion and the expert opinion is sufficiently reliable to be admitted. When determining the reliability of expert opinion, the court may take into account the validity of the methodology employed by the expert, the extent to which the opinion is based on material falling outside the expert's own field of expertise, and lack of an accreditation or other commitment to prescribed standards where that might be expected. The factors that courts should consider are clearly set out in Practice Directions.

In civil proceedings the role of experts is governed by Part 35 of the Civil Procedure Rules. The court's permission is required for expert evidence to be used. Before permission is granted the relevant party must confirm the field in which expert evidence is required, the issues which the expert will address and, where practicable, the name of the expert. Their report must state the expert's qualifications and confirm any question or issue which falls outside their expertise. While experts always owe a duty to exercise reasonable skill and care to those instructing them and to comply with any relevant professional code, they have an overriding duty to the court to help the court on matters within their experience and their evidence must be independent of the party instructing them. It is open to parties in civil disputes to challenge the qualifications or suitability of an expert witness if they have any concerns. The adversarial nature of civil litigation enables challenges and cross-examination to expert evidence.

■ Criminal Proceedings: Statistics

Andy Slaughter: [\[5949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly for October to December 2023, published on 28 March 2024, if her Department will make an assessment of the accuracy of the estimate of the outstanding caseload in the Crown Court.

Andy Slaughter: [\[5950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the delayed publication of the criminal court statistics due to an issue affecting the accuracy of the data, what steps her Department is taking to (a) mitigate against potential inaccuracies in that data that is used for criminal justice system planning or modelling and (b) ensure the accuracy of data used in making strategic decisions on sitting days.

Andy Slaughter: [\[5951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the statement on her Department's webpage entitled Criminal court statistics, which Criminal court statistics quarterly publication was the first to require work to assure the quality of source data.

Andy Slaughter: [\[5952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the issue affecting the quality of the data for the Criminal Court Statistics affects data on the number of Crown Court cases disposed of each month.

Andy Slaughter: [\[5953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department's data cleanse of the magistrates' court data will (a) help with listing, (b) benefit other court processes and (c) improve the accuracy of the statistics.

Andy Slaughter: [\[5954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will publish the Criminal Court Statistics datasets due to be published in (a) June, (b) September and (c) December 2024 by the end of 2024.

Andy Slaughter: [\[5955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will publish a breakdown of the magistrates' court backlog showing the number of (a) Single Justice Procedure cases and (b) cases that have to go to a hearing.

Heidi Alexander:

In June and September 2024, the Ministry of Justice made the decision to cancel publication of the quarterly Official Accredited statistics on the criminal courts, following concerns about the quality of criminal court performance data.

That initial work highlighted some necessary changes to court processing systems to enable robust and accurate data to be produced. These fixes do not affect the operation of the courts and are purely an issue for the data reporting.

Despite these data issues, we know that the Crown Court outstanding caseload has been increasing in the last 6 months, and remains one of the biggest pressures facing the criminal justice system.

These data fixes are being implemented alongside work to align the Ministry of Justice Official Accredited statistics and HMCTS management information methodologies. This will benefit users by providing greater transparency and coherence in court data.

Publishing accurate statistics for our criminal courts is vital for public confidence in the justice system. I recognise that the prolonged absence of timely and accurate data is an unsatisfactory position. This work is a departmental priority and, is underway to deliver an updated data series (including those missing quarters) as soon as possible when we are confident it meets the required level of accuracy. The Government looks forward to updating the House on the action we are taking soon.

■ Crown Court: Shrewsbury**Shaun Davies:** [\[6700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) longest, (b) shortest and (c) average time taken was between the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing and the first trial date at Shrewsbury Crown Court for people who had pleaded not guilty to charges of (i) sexual offences, (ii) violent domestic abuse, (iii) other types of domestic abuse and (iv) other violent offences at Shrewsbury Crown Court in each of the last five years for which data is available.

Heidi Alexander:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Family Courts: Statistics

Andy Slaughter:

[5957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what her planned timetable is for publishing family court data series that are paused due to the roll out of Core Case Data.

Heidi Alexander:

The work required to amalgamate data on family public law cases across the legacy system and the reform system Core Case Data before publication has now been completed. Most of the family court statistics have been reinstated. However, selected data series remain paused, pending further work to engineer and validate the data. We are working at pace to process the data required for these data series and will publish these as soon as possible.

■ Horizon IT System: Convictions

Jerome Mayhew:

[6474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many full-time civil servants are working on informing postmasters and former postmasters that their conviction has been quashed under the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act 2024.

Heidi Alexander:

The Horizon scandal was an unprecedented miscarriage of justice and the Government is working to notify all postmasters whose convictions have been quashed as quickly as possible. This work is carried out through a specially trained casework team who assess each case and verify that a conviction has been quashed by the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Act 2024. The team must assess a wide variety of data sources including records from the Police National Computer, Post Office Limited, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, His Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Criminal Cases Review Commission. As some of these convictions are decades old, it can take time to retrieve crucial pieces of data such as court records which adds to the time taken to verify a conviction in scope of the Act.

As of 8 October 2024, the Ministry of Justice has 22 civil servants working on the process of informing individuals who have had a conviction quashed by the Act. This number includes the dedicated Post Office convictions casework team as well as policy advisers, legal advisers, analysts and managerial oversight. The process to provide financial redress to postmasters is undertaken separately by the Department for Business and Trade with a separate team of civil servants, once a conviction has been overturned.

■ Magistrates' Courts: Shropshire

Shaun Davies:

[6697]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse for moving magistrates court remand hearings from Shropshire Magistrates

Court in Telford; and if she will hold discussions with His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service on reinstating remand hearings at that court.

Heidi Alexander:

The decision to centralise remand hearings in the West Mercia area was a judicial decision taken by the local Judicial Business Group in 2017 following full public consultation.

The decision was based on remand court volumes prevailing at the time, and enabled other courts in the area to improve efficiency and trial timeliness to the benefit of victims and witnesses.

The position has recently been reviewed and based on current workload volumes, the Judicial Business Group has agreed to return Shropshire remand cases back to Telford Magistrates Court.

Implementation of this decision is underway.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Civil Servants**

John Glen:

[\[6113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people, other than special advisers, have been appointed to civil service posts in her 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.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Ministry of Justice recruit on merit and on the basis of fair and open competition, as outlined in the Civil Service Commission's [Recruitment Principles](#).

The Ministry of Justice holds all the information requested. However, in line with statistical guidance and GDPR, we cannot release the data about individual appointments as this could lead to the identification of individuals, given the small sample sizes involved.

I can confirm forty-three contracts were signed for roles in the Ministry of Justice (HQ, HMPPS, HMCTS, LAA, CICA and OPG) between the 5 July 2024 - 6 October 2024 inclusive. These contracts were issued as Exceptions, outside of fair and open competition.

Twenty-seven appointments were made under Exception 1 – Temporary Appointments. These appointments were made where either the urgency of the need or the short duration of the role made a full competition impracticable or disproportionate.

Six of the appointments were made under Exception 10 - Conversion to permanency. These appointments were for the conversion to permanency of suitable candidates appointed under Exceptions 1 and 2. For example, to convert roles to permanency following appointment through Life Chance Recruitment Schemes such as Going Forward into Employment.

Ten of the appointments were made under Exception 5 – Former Civil Servants. These appointments were made to re-appoint former, experienced, civil servants who were previously appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.

The salary bands provided below incorporate both the national and London pay scales.

Eight individuals were appointed at the Administrative Officer pay grade - £22,940 - £27,000.

Six individuals were appointed at the Executive Officer pay grade - £27,223 - £32,760.

Seven individuals were appointed at the Higher Executive Officer pay grade - £32,827 - £40,403.

Twelve individuals were appointed at the Grade 7 pay grade - £54,358 - £66,670.

John Glen:

[\[6114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what information his Department holds on the number of people that have been appointed to posts in her Department, other than special advisers, who have (a) worked for and (b) been seconded to (i) the Labour party and (ii) the office of a Labour hon. Member since 4 July 2024.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Ministry of Justice does not hold the requested information in a central location. HR policies outline the Ministry of Justice's stance on political activity, with declaration requirements varying by grade.

■ Ministry of Justice: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Government Car Service offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocations of these vehicles to its ministerial cadre/officials, as under previous administrations.

The Ministry of Justice is currently allocated 5 vehicles including allocated and shared vehicles.

For security reasons, specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

The average cost to a Department for a single DPC (Department Pool Car) in 2024/25 financial year is £108K per annum.

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[7025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what her Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Government Car Service offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles.

The arrangements relating to the using of vehicles in the Government Car Service is set out in the Civil Service Management Code.

There has been no change in this policy since the general election.

■ Ministry of Justice: Public Appointments

John Glen: [\[6115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Since 4 July 2024:

i. (A and B) Departments do not routinely record and collect the reasons why appointees leave their positions, so departments are not in a position to answer this part of the question. Additionally, the reasons why an appointee has left their role is the appointee's personal information and identifiable and would elicit GDPR considerations.

ii. Since 4 July 2024, 152 public appointments have been made. 144 of these are members of the Independent Monitoring Boards (139) and Lay Observers (5) and are exempt from publication. Details of the other 8 public appointments have been published on GOV.UK.

■ Offenders: Deportation

Neil O'Brien: [\[6455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether there are circumstances where a victim cannot call for a foreign national offender to be deported in a victim impact statement.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Whether a deportation order for a foreign national offender is made is ultimately a decision for the Home Secretary. Any foreign national offender convicted of a crime who receives a custodial sentence in the UK is referred to the Home Office at the

earliest opportunity for deportation consideration following sentencing. There is no formal mechanism to seek Victim Personal Statements to support deportation decisions. However, decision makers may take account of evidence such as the judge's sentencing remarks, to consider the impact on the victim.

Judges may recommend deportation when passing a sentence, and will take into account, so far as they consider appropriate, a Victim Personal Statement when determining a sentence.

Victim Personal Statements allow victims to explain in their own words how a crime has affected them. However, they should not include opinions on how offenders should be sentenced, including calling for a foreign national offender to be deported, as the appropriate sentence is rightly a matter for the court to determine.

■ Offenders: Education and Rehabilitation

Caroline Voaden:

[\[7133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to help ensure the (a) rehabilitation and (b) education of offenders who took part in violent disorder during summer 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Government is committed to reducing reoffending by giving offenders leaving prison the tools to rehabilitate and move away from crime.

Offenders involved in this summer's violent disorder and given prison sentences will receive an education assessment on reception to prison. Prison staff and probation practitioners will work to create a sentence plan to ensure the right support is on offer during their time in prison and on release.

As well as the opportunity to improve English and mathematics (if needed) and to undertake vocational training, HMPPS offer a range of behavioural programmes and other interventions that may be considered for offenders convicted of violent offences as part of this summer's disorder. These include programmes to improve relationships, thinking skills and healthy identities. Eligibility is determined based on assessed risk and need.

Where individuals involved in this summer's disorder have substance misuse issues we will work to tackle these. To achieve this, 80 prisons have an Incentivised Substance-Free Living unit, where prisoners are regularly tested and receive incentives, and we have dedicated staff to tackle drugs in custody and support continuity of care. In the community we are diverting offenders into treatment at the earliest opportunity. This includes more offenders sentenced to Drug Rehabilitation Requirements, a form of community sentence which includes a requirement to engage in treatment.

■ Oliver Campbell

Kim Johnson: [\[6597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the Court of Appeal judgment in the case of Oliver Campbell and The King, reference [2024] EWCA Crim 1036.

Kim Johnson: [\[6598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will take steps to refer the Court of Appeal judgment in the case of Oliver Campbell and The King, reference [2024] EWCA Crim 1036, to the Law Commission for its review of the appeal process in England and Wales.

Heidi Alexander:

Criminal justice policies have advanced in the 33 years since Mr Campbell's conviction, reflecting improved understanding of vulnerabilities. Robust processes to support defendants are now in place and regularly reviewed, for example guidance for judges on relevant adjustments and the use of intermediaries.

The Law Commission are preparing the preliminary findings of their review of the criminal appeals process, and I anticipate these shortly.

■ Prison Officers

Grahame Morris: [\[7419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to recruit more prison officers.

Grahame Morris: [\[7420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether (a) public and (b) private prisons require prison officers to have a minimum level of experience.

Grahame Morris: [\[7422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to increase cumulative prison officer experience.

Grahame Morris: [\[7423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison officers have (a) joined and (b) left service in each of the last five years.

Grahame Morris: [\[7424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what incentives are in place to retain experienced prison officers.

Grahame Morris: [\[7425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison officers in supervisory roles have less than one year's experience.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We have inherited a prison system crisis. For far too long, our hardworking staff have had to face the brunt of prison overcrowding, which has damaged morale and put the safety and security of staff at risk. This is one of the reasons why we have taken difficult but necessary action to rescue the prison system from the point of collapse. We know that sufficient and skilled frontline staffing is fundamental to delivering safe, secure, and rehabilitative prison regimes.

On recruitment, nationally we are currently above target staffing levels for prison officers, although challenges remain in some sites with a high number of vacancies. Recruitment efforts will continue at all sites with a current or projected future need, and we have a number of targeted recruitment interventions that can be deployed where needed.

There are no specific expectations in terms of experience for a new prison officer, but all new joiners have to pass an assessment process, and complete at least 10 weeks' training prior to starting their roles.

The loss of staff post-Covid has meant that we have significant numbers of prison officers who have recently been recruited. Due to this large intake of new staff, many colleagues lack experience – with over 40% of Band 3-5 prison officers having less than 3 years of experience. We are focused on retaining our dedicated staff, but we know it takes time to build confidence, capability, and the jailcraft skills that are essential to improve the system. HMPPS have in place over 150 New Colleague Mentors across the estate to provide support for all new staff and improve the onboarding process. HMPPS also provides colleagues with its 'Career Pathways Framework'. This equips staff with information on career options and the variety of job roles available in HMPPS, as well as learning and development programmes.

On prison officer joiners and leavers, data can be found in Tab 8 of the quarterly HMPPS workforce statistics publication, with Tables 1 and 2 showing the number of joiners and leavers in each year to the end of March over the last 5 years, as well as the latest data in the year to the end of June. We have not included Bands 4 and 5 in the joiner data, as we recruit these grades through promotion, apart from re-instatements.

Table 1 – Prison Officer joiners**TIME SERIES - 12 MONTHS TO END OF EACH YEAR**

Grade	31-Mar-2019	31-Mar-2020	31-Mar-2021	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2023	31-Mar-2024	30-Jun-2024
Bands 3-4 / Prison Officer (incl. specialists)	4,738	2,301	2,409	3,842	4,312	4,818	4,819

Table 2 – Prison Officer leavers**TIME SERIES - 12 MONTHS TO END OF EACH YEAR**

Grade	31-Mar-2019	31-Mar-2020	31-Mar-2021	31-Mar-2022	31-Mar-2023	31-Mar-2024	30-Jun-2024
Band 5 / Custodial Managers	65	91	78	91	97	103	104
Band 4 / Supervising Officer	138	165	88	155	156	138	138
Bands 3-4 / Prison Officer (incl. specialists)	2,437	2,596	1,950	3,141	3,078	2,907	2,926

To provide the number of prison officers in supervisory roles with less than one year's experience, we have provided data on Band 4 Supervising Officers, whose role includes overseeing the daily regime of a wing or area of the prison. Tab 4 of the quarterly HMPPS workforce statistics publication gives data on staff length of service for the main operational grades, including Band 3-5 officers. On 30 June 2024 there were four 'Band 4 / Supervising Officer' prison officers in post who had less than one year's experience. The length of service is calculated from the most recent hire date within HMPPS, not from them starting a specific role. It should be noted that if these members of staff were previously employed by HMPPS, left and rejoined, only their latest service would be counted.

■ Prison Sentences

Clive Lewis:

[\[6319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences on (a) rehabilitation and (b) recidivism rates.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

At its peak in 2012, there were over 6,000 offenders serving an Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentence in custody. As of 30 June 2024, this had reduced to 2,734, of which 1,132 had never been released. As of 31 March 2024, there were 3,000 individuals serving an IPP sentence on licence in the community. For those in the community the Parole Board would have assessed that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public for that person to be in prison.

From April 2016 to March 2021 the annual proportion of IPP sentenced individuals who reoffend each year is between 5.4% and 15.8%. The most recent published data is available online: [Proven reoffending statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/proven-reoffending-statistics).

The Government is determined to make further progress towards a safe and sustainable release for those serving the IPP sentence, but not in a way that impacts public protection. We believe that it is right that these sentences were abolished and, in opposition, we supported changes made in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 to the IPP licence period and the introduction of a statutory requirement for the Government to publish an IPP annual report on the steps taken to support rehabilitation and progress towards release from prison or licence termination. Most of these changes will commence on 1 November 2024 and all will be implemented by 1 February 2025.

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service continues to provide additional support to those still in custody, including improved access to mental health support and rehabilitation programmes for eligible and suitable IPP prisoners to provide them with vital skills aimed at securing future release and employment.

■ Prisoners' Release: Domestic Abuse

Paula Barker:

[\[6629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to help protect victims of domestic abuse and violence who are affected by the early release of some prisoners.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Due to acute prison capacity pressure, the Government has had no option but to introduce a change that will allow prisoners serving an eligible standard determinate sentence (SDS) to be released after serving 40% rather than 50% of that sentence in custody.

Victims and survivors can be assured that probation will continue business as usual processes to build appropriate risk management plans to support the safe release of prisoners. We also have important safeguards in place for the early release scheme and have made sure that changes won't apply to offences that can occur most frequently in the context of domestic abuse including stalking, coercive or controlling behaviour, and non-fatal strangulation.

Victims and survivors who are eligible for and have opted into the Victim Contact Scheme or the Victim Notification Scheme continue to get information and updates about developments on their case. We have been working closely with the victim support sector so that frontline services have the information they need to support victims and survivors that may be impacted.

All offenders released will be subject to robust licence conditions and risk management plans, monitored by the probation service. There are clear expectations in place for probation staff managing cases where there is evidence of domestic abuse. While on licence, offenders will be subject to conditions including those

deemed necessary to protect the victim and wider public, such as exclusion zones, location monitoring, residence at a specified place or disclosing details of any new relationship. Offenders must comply with these conditions and attend supervision. If they fail to comply, they can be recalled to continue serving their sentence in prison.

■ Prisoners' Release: Gender Based Violence and Sexual Offences

Priti Patel: **[6183]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the number of offenders released as a result of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (Requisite and Minimum Custodial Periods) Order 2024 that have previous convictions for (a) sexual offences and (b) offences involving violence against women and girls.

Alex Davies-Jones:

Certain offences have been excluded from the change to automatic release points for eligible standard determinate sentences under the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (Requisite and Minimum Custodial Periods) Order 2024. This includes sex offences irrespective of sentence length; serious violent offences with a sentence of four years or more; specified offences linked to domestic abuse irrespective of sentence length (including stalking, coercive or controlling behaviour and non-fatal strangulation); as well as offences concerning national security. Every excluded offence retains the previous release point: this is not changing. No sex offender will serve a single day less for those offences under this scheme.

The law applies to sentences not prisoners. There are some people who have served the entirety of their prison sentence for a previous sexual offence, and are now serving a subsequent sentence for a different crime. They may see the sentence for that other crime reduced to 40%.

As set out in the Statutory Instrument to Amend the Standard Determinate Sentence Automatic Release Point Impact Assessment published on 17 July 2024 (available at the link below), prison population and release figures are monitored and published as part of the Offender Management Statistics.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2024/117/pdfs/ukia_20240117_en.pdf.

Data on SDS40 releases forms a subset of data intended for future publication.

■ Prisoners' Release: Restraining Orders

Paula Barker: **[6628]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reason each prisoner who was released under the revised terms of the early release scheme and had previously breached a restraining order was released.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Certain offences are excluded from the SDS40 change. Exclusions included the Breach of Restraining Order (BoRO) offence under Section 363 of the Sentencing Act 2020. This offence replaced an older offence in Section 5 of the Protection from

Harassment Act 1997, which was repealed on the commencement of the Sentencing Act 2020 on 1 December 2020. At that point the new Sentencing Act offence should have been used.

However, our assurance work uncovered that since December 2020, offenders have been charged and sentenced under this repealed offence. This means the 1997 Act was being used incorrectly and this created an anomaly.

We took rapid action, and all 37 offenders have been returned to prison. Every victim affected and currently in the Victim Contact Scheme or Victim Notification scheme has been contacted.

All prisoners in custody with this offence recorded against them have been reviewed to ensure there are no further releases in error.

■ Prisoners: Albania

Sir Christopher Chope:

[8101]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Albanian nationals (a) have been sentenced to imprisonment in the last 12 months, (b) are in prison, (c) have been released in the last 12 months and (d) have been deported to Albania in the last 12 months.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Nationality data held by courts is not held centrally by the Ministry of Justice. We are therefore unable to provide information on how many Albanian nationals have been sentenced to imprisonment at court in the last 12 months. We have instead provided information on sentenced prison admissions for Albanian nationals between April 2023 and March 2024 (the latest 12 months published period). This information has been provided in the data attached.

The nationality of foreign national offenders in prison is published quarterly in table 1_Q_12 of Offender Management Statistics, with the latest data (30 June 2024) available from:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a1167cce1fd0da7b592c8d/Prison-population-30-June-2024.ods>. As of 30 June 2024, there were 1,227 Albania nationals in HMPPS custody. We have provided information on prisoner releases of Albanian nationals between April 2023 and March 2024 (the latest 12 months published period). This information has been provided in the data attached. Please note, not all these were released into the UK community: the number of prisoner releases includes those who were deported to Albania directly from prison, having completed their UK custodial sentence, and those who were transferred from prison to Albania to serve their prison sentence there.

Information on deportations is a matter for the Home Office.

Foreign nationals who commit crimes should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced, and where appropriate the Government will pursue their deportation and ensure the rules are respected and enforced. This will help to manage prison

pressures, keep the public safe and reduce crime. The Government have already begun delivering a major surge in immigration enforcement and returns activity to remove people with no right to be in the UK, with 3,000 people already being returned since the new government came into power.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-10-14 PQ 8101 Table.xlsx]

■ **Prisoners: Foreign Nationals**

Lee Anderson:

[6485]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many foreign-born criminals (a) are in prison and (b) were released under the revised terms of the early release scheme since 10 September 2024 in (i) Ashfield constituency and (ii) Nottinghamshire.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Information on the number of Foreign Nationals in prisons can be found in Table 1_Q_11 here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a1167cce1fd0da7b592c8d/Prison-population-30-June-2024.ods>.

Data on SDS40 releases at the local level forms a subset of data intended for future publication. Therefore, data on foreign nationals released under SDS40 in the Ashfield Constituency and Nottinghamshire is not available. The number of prison places projected to be saved nationally by SDS40 releases are set out in the Impact Assessment (between 4,600 and 5,900 prison places for the male estate).

Rupert Lowe:

[6946]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the annual cost is of foreign national prisoners in each of the last three years; and how many foreign national prisoners there are.

Rupert Lowe:

[6948]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) nationality and (b) class of crime is of foreign national offenders (i) in prison and (ii) deported this year.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

There were 10,435 foreign national prisoners held in custody on 30 June 2024; representing 12% of the total prison population. We do not hold annual running cost data for foreign national prisoners. We publish costs per prison place via Prison and Probation Performance Statistics at: [costs-per-place-per-prisoner-2022-2023-summary.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a1167cce1fd0da7b592c8d/Prison-population-30-June-2024.ods).

The information requested on the nationality of foreign national offenders in prison is published quarterly in table 1_Q_12 of Offender Management Statistics, with the latest data (30 June 2024) available from:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a1167cce1fd0da7b592c8d/Prison-population-30-June-2024.ods>

Information on the offence group of foreign national offenders in prison on 30 June 2024 can be found in the attached table.

Information on deportations is a matter for the Home Office. Foreign national offenders who commit crime should be in no doubt that the law will be enforced and, we will work with the Home Office to pursue their deportation.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [2024-10-14 PQ 6946 6948 table.xlsx]

■ Special Educational Needs: Tribunals

Victoria Collins:

[7070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing the anonymised outcomes of tribunal cases related to SEND support.

Heidi Alexander:

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

Judgments of the Special Education Needs and Disability jurisdiction of the Health, Education and Social Care 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.

■ Tribunals

Deirdre Costigan:

[6775]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to reduce the backlog of tribunal cases.

Heidi Alexander:

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

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

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

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

■ Upper Tribunal: Management

Andy Slaughter: [\[5956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what her planned timetable is for (a) completing the migration of the Upper Tribunal Immigration and Asylum Chamber to new case management systems and (b) publishing complete datasets for that tribunal's workload.

Heidi Alexander:

A project to deploy a new case management system to multiple jurisdictions including all four chambers of the Upper Tribunal, including the Immigration and Asylum Chamber (UTIAC) was completed in May 2022.

The planned timetable for publishing datasets based on the UTIAC work types is as follows:

Judicial Review – data relating to judicial review is currently published on a quarterly basis.

Appeals – in order to publish data relating to appeals (challenging decisions of the First-tier Tribunal), further substantial technical work is required to pull the raw data from the new case management system into our secure and robust data platform and transform it into meaningful jurisdiction specific information for publication. This work is planned for 2025.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ City Deals and Local Growth Deals: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister: [\[8398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of reinstating the Causeway City and Growth deal.

Hilary Benn:

The Government has inherited a £22 billion black hole in the public finances and, as a result, the Treasury is having to consider a range of measures to address this through the spending review.

Since the announcement that the Causeway Coast and Glens and Mid South West deals have been paused, I have met with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and many other interested parties to discuss the potential of both deals for encouraging economic growth.

■ InterTrade UK

Robin Swann: [\[8394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what the (a) contact details, (b) office address, (c) staffing complement and (d) operating budget of Intertrade UK is; and whether minutes of that body's meetings are published.

Hilary Benn:

This Government is committed to implementing the Windsor Framework and taking all steps necessary to protect the UK internal market. To that end, I confirmed the appointment of Baroness Foster as Chair of Intertrade UK on 19 September. The body is in the process of being established and more details of how it will operate to facilitate and boost trade across the UK will be announced in due course.

Local Growth Deals: Northern Ireland**Sorcha Eastwood:**[\[7629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking to progress funding for the Mid South West and Causeway Coast and Glens growth deals; and for what reason those projects have been paused.

Hilary Benn:

I understand the enormous importance of the City and Growth Deals in Northern Ireland for economic growth.

However, we are facing a £22 billion black hole in the public finances. Many of the City and Growth Deals have decades' worth of funding attached so it is right that we consider any remaining deals that haven't been signed yet in the round at the Spending Review, as we are doing with other long-term funding programmes. In Northern Ireland, this includes both the Mid South West and the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deals.

My officials and I continue to work closely with the four council areas, their officials and the Department of Finance to develop a compelling case for the Deals, in the run up to the Autumn Budget, and I recently met representatives of the Deals to discuss the matter.

The Chancellor and Chief Secretary to the Treasury will provide certainty over the remaining Deals following phase 1 of the Spending Review which will conclude on 30 October.

Northern Ireland Office: Civil Servants**John Glen:**[\[6135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 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.

Hilary Benn:

Every person appointed to a civil service post within the Northern Ireland Office since 4 July 2024, has been recruited via fair and open competition.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Official Cars**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[7012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[7013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what his Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Hilary Benn:

Ministers and officials in the Northern Ireland Office do not use the Government Car Service.

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland**Alex Burghart:** [\[7835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October 2024 to Question 5643 on Terrorism: Northern Ireland, how many requests for public inquiries he is considering.

Hilary Benn:

I have recently considered several requests for public inquiries and decided to ask all the families involved to meet with the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) to hear how the independent Commission would approach any investigation. The Government will consider any further requests on a case-by-case basis.

■ Windsor Framework**Alex Burghart:** [\[8213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to his Department's publication entitled *Safeguarding the Union*, published on 31 January 2024, what progress his Department has made on the implementation of the measures set out in paragraph 43.

Hilary Benn:

The Government is committed to taking all steps necessary to protect the UK internal market. We continue to make significant progress on measures set out in paragraph 43 of the *Safeguarding the Union* Command Paper. Recent progress includes confirmation of the appointment of Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee as Chair of Intertrade UK; the establishment of the Independent Monitoring Panel; and statutory

guidance to public authorities on how they should ensure they have special regard to Northern Ireland's place in the UK internal market.

Robin Swann:

[\[8393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what the (a) contact details, (b) office address, (c) staffing complement and (d) operating budget of the Windsor Framework Independent Monitoring Panel is; and whether minutes of that Panel's meetings are published.

Hilary Benn:

This Government is committed to implementing the Windsor Framework and taking all steps necessary to protect the UK internal market. In support of that, I confirmed the appointment of Anna Jerzewska, Aidan Reilly and Alastair Hamilton as the Windsor Framework Independent Monitoring Panel on 19 September.

The Panel will report to Government on the basis set out in the *Safeguarding the Union* command paper. The arrangements for the Panel are in the process of being put in place and, consistent with their status, Panellists will not be employees of the UK Government. They will be supported by a secretariat function.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Carolyn Harris:

[\[7817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to prevent children being exposed to pornography.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to keeping children safe online. Our priority is the effective implementation of the Online Safety Act so that children benefit from its wide-reaching protections.

The Act requires that all in scope services that allow pornography use highly effective age assurance to prevent children from accessing it, including services that host user-generated content, and services which publish pornography. Ofcom has robust enforcement powers available against companies who fail to fulfil their duties.

■ Animal Experiments

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to implement the Non-Animal Methods strategy.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to supporting the uptake and development of alternative methods to the use of animals in science. The Labour Manifesto includes

a commitment to “partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing”, which is a long-term goal.

We recognise that any work to phase out animal testing must be science-led and in lock step with partners. We are currently engaging with partners from sectors with interests in animal science as to how we will take this commitment forward.

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he is taking steps to ensure that the (a) end-to-end process and (b) regulatory landscape for pre-clinical animal testing is better understood by the public.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to supporting the uptake and development of alternative methods to the use of animals in science.

Non Government Organisations such as The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI), the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) and Understanding Animal Research provide excellent public facing resources to support the public to better understand animal testing in drug development and regulation, and the significant ongoing efforts to reduce it. We will continue to engage with these organisations through our government agencies to support this outreach.

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to progress the approval of existing unapproved non-animal methods of pharmaceutical testing via the Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

Feryal Clark:

The Government has committed to partnering with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the requirements for phasing out of animal testing.

It is not yet possible to replace all animal use due to the complexity of biological systems and regulatory requirements for their use. The Government is engaging with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) on how to accelerate the science-led adoption of alternatives to the use of animals for drug development and testing. These will need to be incorporated into international regulatory guidelines which the MHRA adhere to.

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking with international partners to change International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use policy to allow results from non-animal methods of pharmaceutical testing to be used to support drug safety through pre-clinical trials.

Feryal Clark:

The Government has committed to work towards phasing out of animal testing, including supporting the development and testing of new medicines.

The Government is working with pharmaceutical industry partners and through our medicines regulatory agency (MHRA) to understand the international drivers and challenges to integrating non-animal methods into regulatory safety testing. We are engaging with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) who represent the UK at the International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use on how to accelerate the acceptance of data generated in non-animal methods for drug safety decision making.

Ben Obese-Jecty:[\[6827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will publish a detailed timeline of the steps he intends to take to phase-out animal testing.

Feryal Clark:

The Government has committed to partnering with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the requirements for phasing out of animal testing and we are currently engaging with the sector as to how to take this commitment forward. It is not yet possible to replace all animal use due to the complexity of biological systems and regulatory requirements for their use. Any work to phase out animal testing must be science-led, in lock step with partners, so we will not be setting arbitrary timelines for reducing their use.

■ Animal Experiments: Finance**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[6824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to secure external funding for the further development of non-animal methods of pharmaceutical testing.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to supporting the development and uptake of alternative methods to the use of animals in science and we are engaging with the pharmaceutical industry and regulatory authorities on how to take this commitment forward.

The Government invests significantly through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) in the development and adoption of non-animal approaches. The NC3Rs receives additional funding from the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) for specific programmes and substantial in-kind support from companies for their CRACK IT innovation programme.

■ Artificial Intelligence

Saqib Bhatti: [\[7860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when he will publish a consultation on the potential merits of bringing forward an Artificial Intelligence Bill.

Feryal Clark:

As set out in the King's Speech, the Government will establish legislation to ensure the safe development of AI models by introducing targeted requirements on companies developing the most powerful AI systems. This legislation will build on the voluntary commitments secured at the Seoul and Bletchley AI Safety Summits and will strengthen the role of the AI Safety Institute. As part of the development of this legislation, the Government will launch a full public consultation shortly, working with industry, AI experts, academics, and civil society to hone our proposals before presenting them to Parliament.

Saqib Bhatti: [\[7861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what areas of discussion have been submitted by parties attending the AI Action Summit in November 2024.

Feryal Clark:

We are looking forward to working with France as they organise the AI Action Summit, taking place on 10 and 11 February 2025. France have outlined there are five tracks for the Summit: Trust in AI, Global Governance, Innovation, Public Interest and Future of Work. Each track has a working group which we are a part of, and we look forward to contributing to the summit across these themes. We will share more details about France's plans for the summit, including on specific areas of discussion and agenda, as and when they become available.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Safety

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[7272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to promote the safe use of artificial intelligence.

Feryal Clark:

The Government wants to see AI adopted widely to realise its potential productivity benefits, and regulatory clarity will help drive this adoption. That is why we committed in our manifesto to introduce binding regulations on the handful of companies developing the most powerful AI systems. We also intend to put the AI Safety Institute on a statutory footing. The AISI conducts research and model evaluations to assess the capabilities of frontier AI systems and works with developers, and international partners, to enhance the safety of models.

■ Bioengineering: Databases

Andrew Griffith:

[\[8251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions on national security considerations relating to biological data with (a) Genomics England, (b) UK Biobank and (c) NIHR Bioresource.

Feryal Clark:

Through the delivery of the UK Biological Security Strategy, the Government is committed ensuring the UK is resilient to a spectrum of biological threats, as well as being a world leader in innovation. As part of this Strategy, the Government is undertaking a programme of work to assess how we can minimise the risks from biological data to protect our burgeoning bioeconomy and build confidence in sharing personal data to improve health outcomes in the UK and across the world.

The Government is actively engaging with Genomics England, UK Biobank, NIHR Bioresource and Our Future Health to build the security and resilience of our genome banks.

■ Broadband

Andrew Cooper:

[\[7053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of households in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England that do not have (i) broadband and (ii) mobile internet access.

Chris Bryant:

According to the independent website ThinkBroadband.com, 0.3% of premises in the Mid Cheshire constituency, 0.7% in Cheshire and 0.6% in England overall do not have access to broadband speeds in excess of the legal Universal Service Obligation (USO) of 10Mbps.

Ofcom publishes mobile coverage data for premises through its Connected Nations Reports and does not distinguish between households and other premises.

Ofcom's most recent coverage reporting reports that 127,447 (0.5%) premises across England do not have indoor 4G mobile coverage from any mobile network operator (MNO). This falls to 10,382 (0.04%) premises for 4G outdoor coverage.

Ofcom data does not enable us to make an assessment of the number of premises in Cheshire that do not have coverage from any MNO.

■ Broadband and Mobile Phones: Rural Areas

Edward Morello:

[\[7325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the distribution of improved (a) broadband and (b) mobile signal strength in rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

Government is committed to achieving nationwide gigabit broadband, removing barriers to commercial deployment and, where necessary, providing subsidy for hard-to-reach premises through Project Gigabit. According to the independent website ThinkBroadband, 85% of UK premises have access to gigabit-capable connections.

Government wants rural areas to benefit from mobile connectivity. The Shared Rural Network is improving coverage in rural areas, with 94.9% of the UK landmass having 4G coverage from at least one operator.

Our ambition is for all populated areas to have high-quality standalone 5G by 2030. We are committed to having the right policy and regulatory framework to support this.

I am aware that people's experience on the ground does not always match Ofcom's version of mobile signal, and I recently wrote to Ofcom, asking them to set out steps to improve their reporting.

■ Broadband: North East Somerset and Hanham**Dan Norris:**[\[5852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help improve broadband coverage in North East Somerset and Hanham constituency.

Chris Bryant:

According to the independent website ThinkBroadband.com, over 98% of premises in the North East Somerset and Hanham constituency have access to superfast broadband speeds (≥ 30 Mbps) and over 86% can access a gigabit-capable (>1000 Mbps) connection.

Remaining premises that are not expected to receive an upgrade through suppliers' commercial rollout are being considered for support through Project Gigabit. Under a framework agreement with Openreach, we plan to procure a contract to deliver fast, reliable broadband to eligible premises in the area.

Dan Norris:[\[5853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help support (a) residents and (b) businesses without a broadband connection ahead of the proposed public switched telephone network switch-off in North East Somerset and Hanham constituency.

Chris Bryant:

The government is focused on ensuring that the industry-led switch-off of the public switched telephone network (PSTN) will cause minimum inconvenience to residents and businesses and is working with the industry to ensure safe and secure transition. A customer's PSTN landline will not be switched off unless an alternative connection is available, and since Voice over internet Protocol landline only requires a minimum stable connection, landline-only customers can order it without purchasing a broadband connection.

The Department will shortly publish a definition of customers who will require additional support from their communication providers during the PSTN switch-off. This includes landline-dependent customers. The government has also published guidance on how residential and business consumers can prepare for the PSTN switch-off. The link for guidance is: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-transition-from-analogue-to-digital-landlines>

■ **Broadband: West Dorset**

Edward Morello:

[7323]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help improve broadband connection in (a) West Dorset constituency and (b) other rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

According to the independent website ThinkBroadband.com, over 96% of premises in the West Dorset constituency have access to superfast broadband speeds (≥ 30 Mbps) and 53% can access a gigabit-capable (>1000 Mbps) connection.

To improve this further, Wessex Internet is delivering a £33.5 million contract under Project Gigabit, to bring gigabit-capable broadband to over 21,000 more premises across Dorset and South Somerset, including in West Dorset.

Overall, 36 Project Gigabit contracts, with a total value of over £1.9 billion, have been signed to date, to bring gigabit-capable broadband to over 1 million rural homes and businesses.

■ **Cancer: Screening**

Victoria Collins:

[7072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the development of (a) a breath test to identify pancreatic cancer and (b) technologies to aid early detection of all cancers.

Feryal Clark:

The project to develop a breath test to identify pancreatic cancer is funded via the NIHR i4i/OLS: Early Cancer Diagnosis Clinical Validation and Evaluation Call. This £11 million programme funds 6 projects that aim to develop technologies to aid early detection of cancer. This is one strand of the Office for Life Sciences' (OLS) Cancer Programme, which supports the development of technologies that enable earlier, more effective cancer diagnosis and improved treatment. OLS is a joint Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Department for Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT) unit, ensuring both departments are involved in this work.

■ Children: Social Media**Tom Hayes:** [\[7118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to give parents the right to access a deceased child's social media accounts without a court order.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is committed to protecting children online and supporting families who have endured unimaginable losses.

The Online Safety Act contains measures that seek to address challenges faced by bereaved parents when engaging with online services following the death of a child, including provisions to ensure that online services are transparent to bereaved parents about data disclosure, and have a dedicated helpline for bereaved parents relating to requests for information relevant to the death of a child.

■ Data Processing: Copyright**Sir John Whittingdale:** [\[7710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to introduce a broadened copyright exception for text and data mining.

Feryal Clark:

No decision has been made on whether to legislate on copyright in relation to text and data mining.

The Government is committed to supporting the growth of the creative industries and AI sectors while recognising the value of human-centred creativity. Whilst clarity is needed, this is a complex topic and we must take the time to hear stakeholder views and give them careful consideration.

The Minister for Creative Industries, Arts, and Tourism and I held roundtables with the creative, media and AI sectors last month and our departments continue to engage with those stakeholders to inform our approach.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Directors**John Glen:** [\[6108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the salary is of the Director General for Digital Centre Design.

Feryal Clark:

Director General salaries are published as part of standard transparency publications on the Gov.uk website. The next publication will be published in due course.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhurst:

[\[7010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Feryal Clark:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles to its ministerial cadre/officials, as under previous administrations.

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology is currently allocated 5 vehicles including allocated and shared vehicles.

For security reasons specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued.

The average cost to a Department for a single DPC (Department Pool Car) in 2024/25 financial year is £108K per annum.

■ Digital Technology: Disadvantaged

Andrew Cooper:

[\[7064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to tackle digital exclusion in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

Chris Bryant:

Although the previous government did not update its digital inclusion strategy for ten years, digital inclusion is a priority for the new government, so that everyone has the access, skills, support and confidence to participate in a modern digital society, whatever their circumstances. Work is ongoing to develop our approach to tackling digital exclusion, and we will be working closely with the third sector and local authorities, many of whom have already implemented highly successful programmes, to ensure interventions are collaborative, targeted and effective.

■ Digital Technology: Public Services

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[6592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding has been allocated to ensuring public services are accessible digitally.

Feryal Clark:

The [Service Standard](#) and the [Technology Code of Practice](#) require government teams to make sure that services are accessible to all users, including disabled

people, people with other legally protected characteristics, people who do not have access to the internet or lack the skills and confidence to use the internet.

Accessibility auditing and research with disabled users are expected to be included within the funding to build and run every government service.

The new Digital Centre will drive greater inclusion and accessibility to government services.

■ **Genomics: China**

Andrew Griffith: [\[8253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the Answer of 25 April 2024 to Question 22294 on Genomics: China, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the cross-departmental programme of work to minimise the risks of biological data.

Feryal Clark:

Through the delivery of the UK Biological Security Strategy, the Government is committed ensuring the UK is resilient to a spectrum of biological threats, as well as being a world leader in innovation. As part of this Strategy, the Government is undertaking a programme of work to assess how we can minimise the risks from biological data to protect our burgeoning bioeconomy and build confidence in sharing personal data to improve health outcomes in the UK and across the world.

I am actively engaging with relevant Cabinet colleagues on this issue, through the relevant national security structures.

■ **Higher Education: Research**

Saqib Bhatti: [\[7863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to amend the Research Excellence Framework.

Feryal Clark:

The next Research Excellence Framework (REF) is currently being developed by Research England and the three Devolved higher education funding bodies, in collaboration with the higher education sector.

Since the funding bodies initial proposals for REF 2029 were issued in June 2023 plans for the REF have been amended in response to feedback from universities and other stakeholders. This development process will continue until final guidance is set in 2026.

■ **ICT: Edinburgh**

Andrew Griffith: [\[8252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with the University of Edinburgh following the cancellation of the exascale supercomputer project.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to building compute infrastructure that delivers growth and opportunity for people across the UK. My Department and I regularly engage with a range of organisations across the science and research sector, including the University of Edinburgh.

■ Innovation: Regulation**Andrew Griffith:**[\[8249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the cost is of establishing the Regulatory Innovation Office.

Feryal Clark:

The Regulatory Innovation Office (RIO) is the Government's key tool for advancing regulatory innovation. The Government will continue to evaluate timelines, costs, legal considerations, and objectives to ensure the RIO aligns with our transformative goals and delivers effective regulatory solutions.

Andrew Griffith:[\[8250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to ensure that regulatory decisions taken by the Regulatory Innovation Office will occur in a timely manner.

Feryal Clark:

The launch of the Regulatory Innovation Office (RIO), a key manifesto commitment, is a big step forward in bringing the UK's most promising new technologies to the public faster and safely while kickstarting economic growth. The RIO is committed to ensuring timely regulatory decisions by working closely with regulators and other government departments to unblock regulatory reforms related to technologies and innovation.

■ Internet: Antisemitism**David Pinto-Duschinsky:**[\[7391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent estimate he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the number and proportion of antisemitic attacks associated with small forums spreading online hate.

Feryal Clark:

The Online Safety Act (OSA) establishes Ofcom as the UK online safety regulator. The OSA gives online platforms new duties where there are risks of their services being used to carry out certain priority offences, including posting illegal antisemitic content which stirs up hatred.

Ofcom will set out steps in codes of practice that different platforms can take to fulfil these duties. Ofcom must consult on proposed steps. For these consultations, it publishes evidence about in-scope harms. For example, in November 2023, it

published research into these matters for [its consultation on](#) its OSA 'illegal content duties' proposals.

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/illegal-and-harmful-content/protecting-people-from-illegal-content-online>

David Pinto-Duschinsky: [\[7392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using powers under Schedule 11 of the Online Safety Act to extend category 1 regulation to online forums to help tackle antisemitic hate speech online.

Feryal Clark:

The Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology will make Regulations pertaining to Schedule 11 of the Online Safety Act as soon as reasonably practicable.

Under the Act, all user-to-user services – including online forums - will be required to proactively tackle illegal hate speech, such as illegal antisemitic abuse. If such a service is likely to be accessed by children, they will also be required to protect children from encountering specific types of legal but harmful content. This includes legal content which is abusive or incites hate on the basis of race or religion.

■ Internet: Children

Saqib Bhatti: [\[6594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps to increase online safety for children.

Feryal Clark:

The government is committed to keeping children safe online and we will continue to work with campaigners, charities, industry, and the regulator to achieve this goal. Our priority is the quick and effective implementation of the Online Safety Act to ensure that children benefit from the wide-reaching protections of the Act.

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[7241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what further steps he plans to take to help ensure the safety of children on (a) social media apps and (b) other online platforms, in the context of the use of virtual private networks by criminals to target vulnerable young people.

Feryal Clark:

The Online Safety Act makes search and user-to-user services, including social media services, responsible for their users' safety on their platforms. The Act contains strong protections for children, safeguarding them from harmful and illegal activities online, even when these are proliferated by users using virtual private networks.

The regulatory regime is designed to be tech-neutral, allowing Ofcom to revise its codes and guidance as new risks emerge.

■ Internet: Disinformation

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[6595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help tackle online state-sponsored harmful content.

Feryal Clark:

Under the Online Safety Act, companies will be forced to take action against illegal content online. The Foreign Interference Offence, a priority offence in the Act, will require companies to tackle a wide range of state-linked interference online, and platforms will be faced with enforcement action from Ofcom in case of non-compliance.

The department engages regularly with social media platforms to discuss state sponsored activity online. This includes flagging content that violates platforms' terms of service for swift review and working with them to ensure their terms of service are fit for purpose.

■ Internet: Rural Areas

Edward Morello:

[\[7324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of poor internet access on rural communities.

Chris Bryant:

Poor internet access can have a devastating impact on rural and urban communities alike, which is why the government is determined to improve access and tackle digital exclusion. Digital connectivity is an important driver of economic growth. In 2022, productivity in rural areas was 86% of the average for England, a gap which improved internet access could reduce.

The Government is committed to improving broadband access in rural areas.

Government's £5 billion programme, Project Gigabit, is delivering gigabit capable connectivity for millions of rural homes.

■ Internet: Safety

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[6593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will work with technology companies to increase online safety.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the internet, and social media in particular, is safe for UK users, especially children. Whilst technology companies have a key role in accelerating innovation, investment and productivity across the UK, they must also accept their responsibility to keep people safe on their platforms. I engage frequently with those companies and I am committed to working with them as we continue to implement the Online Safety Act.

■ Mobile Phones**Blair McDougall:** [\[6799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to fill gaps in mobile telephone coverage ahead of the phasing out of landlines by service providers.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is committed to improving mobile coverage across the UK. The Shared Rural Network will increase 4G geographic coverage throughout the UK to 95% by the end of 2025.

In September, Ofcom reported that 94.9% of the UK landmass now has 4G coverage from at least one mobile operator, with over 78% having 4G coverage from all four.

Non-standalone 5G is available outside 92% of UK premises from at least one mobile operator. Our ambition is for all populated areas to have high-quality standalone 5G by 2030.

Landlines are not being removed. It would be more accurate to say that providers are moving from the old and failing analogue network - the Public Switched Telephone Network - to Voice over Internet Protocol technology. We are focused on ensuring that this industry-led transition causes minimum inconvenience to residents and businesses.

■ Mobile Phones: North East Somerset and Hanham**Dan Norris:** [\[5851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help improve mobile phone coverage in North East Somerset and Hanham constituency.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is committed to improving UK mobile coverage. Ofcom's reporting shows that 92% of the then constituency of North East Somerset had 4G geographic coverage from all four mobile operators, and non-standalone 5G is available from at least one mobile operator outside 94% of premises. I am aware that Ofcom's data does not always reflect consumers' experience at a local level, and I am intent on ensuring Ofcom takes all necessary steps to improve its accuracy.

Our ambition is for all populated areas to have high-quality standalone 5G by 2030, and we are committed to ensuring we have the right policy and regulatory framework to support investment and competition.

■ Mobile Phones: Shipley**Anna Dixon:** [\[7211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help improve mobile phone coverage in Shipley constituency.

Chris Bryant:

The Government is committed to improving mobile coverage across the UK. Ofcom's recent coverage reporting shows that 99% of Shipley has 4G geographic coverage from all four mobile operators. Non-standalone 5G is available from at least one mobile operator outside 99% of premises.

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

Our ambition is for all populated areas to have high-quality standalone 5G by 2030, and we are committed to ensuring we have the right policy and regulatory framework to support investment and competition.

■ National Security Online Information Team**Rupert Lowe:**[\[6947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2024 to Question 3443 on National Security Online Information Team, what (a) topics and (b) events are being monitored by the National Security Online Information Team.

Feryal Clark:

NSOIT leads the operational response to information risks to UK audiences. Its ministerially agreed remit is to focus on public safety and national security risks. This includes mis- and disinformation arising from events such as the public unrest which occurred over the summer as well as ongoing risks to the UK's core values and democratic processes from foreign states' interference.

■ Pornography Review**Rebecca Smith:**[\[7248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent estimate he has made of when the Independent Pornography Review will be published.

Feryal Clark:

The Independent Pornography Review will assess the effectiveness of current pornography legislation, regulation, and enforcement.

The government expects the review to present its final report by the end of the year.

■ Project Gigabit: Rural Areas**Sarah Dyke:**[\[7887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much and what proportion of the Project Gigabit fund has been allocated to rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

The latest published data shows that between April 2022 and March 2023, 90% of premises benefiting from publicly-subsidised broadband rollout, including Project Gigabit, were rural.

Almost £2 billion of contracts have been signed to connect over a million more premises with gigabit-capable broadband. These are premises that would otherwise not be reached by suppliers' commercial rollout, and fall predominantly in rural areas.

Research: Economic Growth**Adam Jogee:**[\[6993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the role of research and development investment in promoting economic growth.

Feryal Clark:

The Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Exchequer have regular discussions on a range of issues. Kickstarting economic growth is a key mission of this Government, with research and development (R&D) investment playing a central role in this.

Research: Finance**Adam Jogee:**[\[6990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the steps being taken to support the long-term sustainability of research funding in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) the United Kingdom.

Feryal Clark:

The Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Exchequer have regular discussions on a range of issues.

The Government is determined to work with the sector to transition to sustainable research funding models. Universities will also need to take their own steps to ensure they are working as efficiently as possible and, where necessary, make difficult choices.

Adam Jogee:[\[6991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to introduce 10-year funding settlements for research institutions.

Feryal Clark:

The Government has committed to setting ten-year budgets for certain R&D activities, where long-term investment will better support the ability to form partnerships with industry, build and develop skills and talent, and foster international collaborations to allow us to stay at the forefront of global innovation. Decisions on ten-year budgets will be made in due course.

■ Research: Motor Neurone Disease

Frank McNally:

[\[7044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to provide additional funding for motor neurone disease research in Scotland.

Feryal Clark:

Funding has been distributed to 92 charities across the UK supporting 1200 doctoral students and early career researchers including over £330,000 to MND Scotland. MND research has benefited more generally from over £1.6 million of funding across the UK.

The Medical Research Council has awarded £1.9 million to MND projects led by Scottish research organisations, including researchers at various career stages.

Frank McNally:

[\[7045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when he next intends to meet with (a) Scottish Government ministers and officials, and (b) representatives from Scottish charities, universities and industry to discuss the ongoing priorities for motor neurone disease research in Scotland.

Feryal Clark:

The Secretary of State has had positive early engagement with Scottish Government Ministers and looks forward to working further on their shared priorities for Scotland. The Minister for Science, Research and Innovation also met with Scottish Government Ministers on 10th October to discuss opportunities for shared investment opportunities across science and research.

The UK life sciences sector benefits from a diversity of medical research charity funders and officials meet with medical research charities across the UK on a quarterly basis through the DSIT Medical Research Charities Forum.

■ Research: Publishing

Adam Thompson:

[\[6710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the report by UK Day One entitled Reform Academic Publishing to Unblock Innovation, published on 5 September 2024, if he will make an assessment of (a) the potential merits of requiring the publication of all taxpayer-funded research as preprints before they are submitted to academic journals and (b) the value for money of UKRI's policy on open access block grants.

Feryal Clark:

The UKRI open access policy aims to make the results of publicly funded research immediately available so they can be accessed and built upon. UKRI encourages preprints across research disciplines and reserves the right to require preprints where necessary.

UKRI Open Access Block Grant Awards support institutions in meeting its policy requirements. Awards cover article publishing charges (APCs) only under certain value for money terms as well as the sharing of papers via repositories and improvements to digital research infrastructures. UKRI monitors progress on open access, as well as how best to increase the accessibility of the research it funds.

■ Research: Universities

Adam Jogee: [\[6992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to ensure universities receive an adequate level of research funding.

Feryal Clark:

University research is funded by UKRI through the dual support approach which balances strategic institutional research funding allocated by Research England with grant funding awarded by Research Councils for individuals and programmes within Higher Education Providers.

The allocations for 24-25 Research England budget have confirmed the level of quality related (QR) research funding as set out in SR21 allocations and the maintenance of the balance of dual support.

Government also encourages universities to collaborate with businesses and charitable research funders both through QR funds that reward this, and through knowledge exchange programmes to develop partnerships with these other funders.

■ Roads: Tolls

Helen Whately: [\[6357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether (a) UK Research and Innovation and (b) its associated bodies has funded research into pay per mile road charging in the last five years.

Feryal Clark:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) have not funded any specific projects on pay per-mile road charging.

■ Social Media: Fraud and Hacking

Kate Osamor: [\[6333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help ensure that social media companies provide adequate support to customers who are the subject of hacking and fraud.

Feryal Clark:

As fraud offences are 'priority offences' under the Online Safety Act (OSA), all user-to-user services in scope must prevent illegal fraudulent content from appearing on their platforms and swiftly remove if it does. They must also effectively mitigate the risk of their service being used to facilitate fraud.

The OSA also requires in-scope platforms to provide accessible complaints and appeals procedures for their users. Additionally, those services over the designated threshold (Category 1 services) must uphold their terms of service.

■ **Telecommunications Cables: Copper**

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[6410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to support utility companies in (a) removing and (b) recycling redundant copper cables following infrastructure upgrades.

Chris Bryant:

The Government hopes to see as much as possible of the copper network reused for other purposes. For example, the Government welcomes the recent commercial deal between BT Group and a recycling company to repurpose legacy copper cables that are being replaced by its new full fibre network. Copper is a valuable material and the Government expects the network providers to make the best use of it in line with their in-house policies, but does not plan to intervene in this emerging market.

■ **Telecommunications: Industry**

Clive Jones:

[\[7089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to support the telecommunications industry in (a) Berkshire and (b) the UK.

Chris Bryant:

This government is committed to supporting the telecommunications industry.

We aim to deliver nationwide gigabit connectivity by 2030 and foster a competitive and business-friendly environment. Today, 85% of UK premises and over 90% of premises in Berkshire can access gigabit-capable networks. Our ambition is for all populated areas to have high-quality standalone 5G by 2030. We are committed to ensuring we have the right policy and regulatory framework to support investment and competition. We have invested £36 million to establish 5G Innovation Regions to drive adoption and investment.

Up to £100 million in funding is being provided for future telecoms technologies.

■ **Telephone Systems: Power Failures**

Blair McDougall:

[\[6800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take with providers to help ensure the resilience of the telephone network, in the context of trends in the number of power cuts.

Chris Bryant:

Although most power cuts are brief, the impact they can have on the telephone network is significant, particularly in rural communities. We are working closely with

the regulator, communications providers and the power sector to improve resilience and minimise disruption to the public and businesses as much as possible.

Communications providers have statutory responsibilities to take all appropriate and proportionate steps to minimise disruption to services and must ensure at least one back-up form of communication is available for contacting emergency services for a minimum of one hour during a power outage. On 6 September 2024, Ofcom published detailed resilience guidelines specifying the measures that providers are expected to meet throughout their networks, including resilience to power cuts, and set out the analysis they are completing to consider whether additional resilience is required for mobile services.

SCOTLAND

■ City Region Deals: Clackmannanshire and Stirling

Chris Kane:

[\[8330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on promoting innovation and skills through the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal.

Ian Murray:

Since coming into office, I have had several meetings with the Scottish Government, including the Deputy First Minister. We have discussed a range of key issues including economic growth across all of Scotland, which is the priority mission of this UK Government.

The jointly funded City Region and Growth Deals programme, including the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal, is a fundamental element to the economic growth plan.

The UK Government commitment to the deal is for £45.1m, the Scottish Government have also committed £45.1m and with partner contributions this make it a £214m Deal.

The UK Government commitment covered investment in the following: Clackmannanshire Fund, National Aquaculture Technology Innovation Hub, Scotland's International Environment Centre, the transfer of MoD land at Forthside, the National Tartan Centre and skills and employability provision in Alloa.

■ City Region Deals: Scotland

Chris Kane:

[\[8331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the progress of City Deals projects in Scotland.

Ian Murray:

Since coming into office, I have had several meetings with the Scottish Government, including the Deputy First Minister. Economic growth is the key mission of this

Government and one that I am absolutely committed to delivering in partnership with the Scottish Government. City Region and Growth Deals are a fundamental part of this mission.

Since coming into office, the UK Government and Scottish Government have jointly agreed the £100 million Falkirk and Grangemouth Growth Deal.

■ **Scotland Office: Paternity Leave**

Shaun Davies:

[\[7915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in his Department was in each of the last three years.

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 hold the information you have requested.

■ **Scottish Government**

Kenneth Stevenson:

[\[8028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, when he last met with the Scottish Government; and what issues were discussed at this meeting.

Ian Murray:

I have had a number of discussions with Scottish Government Ministers since my appointment, as have many of my Ministerial colleagues, including the Prime Minister.

My most recent meeting was with the Deputy First Minister, on Tuesday 1 October, who I am meeting regularly. We have discussed a range of issues such as our joint plan to secure the industrial future of the Grangemouth site, following confirmation of Petroineos' decision to close the oil refinery next year.

This Government is committed to working with the Scottish Government. By working collaboratively together, we will deliver the change that the people of Scotland expect.

TRANSPORT

■ **A47: Norfolk**

Rupert Lowe:

[\[6944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will meet the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth to discuss (a) safety concerns about and (b) dualling of the Acle Straight on the A47.

Lilian Greenwood:

In the first instance, I would encourage the honourable member to meet with colleagues from National Highways to discuss their work to improve safety on the Acle Straight section of the A47 in Suffolk. There are currently no plans to dual the Acle Straight.

Active Travel England: Research

Helen Whately: [6351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) full title, (b) estimated cost of production and (c) organisation responsible is for each item of external research that Active Travel England has commissioned but has yet to publish.

Simon Lightwood:

Executive agencies regularly commission research and once published it is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) or on the commissioned organisation's website.

Active Travel: Greater London

Deirdre Costigan: [6761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing funding to London boroughs to support the management of micromobility services.

Simon Lightwood:

Government remains committed to supporting London and the transport network on which it depends. Transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and TfL. We are working with the Mayor on funding for transport in the capital, and it is for the Mayor to assess the merits of capital projects and make decisions on investment.

Airports: Construction

Alex Mayer: [6919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the cumulative environmental impact of airport expansion plans when considering the expansion of individual airports.

Mike Kane:

Guidance on the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulation 2017 and for undertaking cumulative effects assessments in the context of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) under the Planning Act 2008 can be found on GOV.UK.

Bicycles: Sales

Cat Smith: [6303]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an estimate of the average economic benefit of buying a bicycle to (a) an individual and (b) society.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department has not made an estimate of the economic value of buying a bicycle. A report by Transport for Quality of Life, titled 'The UK cycle industry: current economic and employment benefits and its decarbonisation-driven growth potential' published in 2023, suggests an annual economic benefit of £1,800 per cyclist.

Bicycles: Voucher Schemes**Cat Smith:**[\[6302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the report entitled The cycling opportunity, published by Sustrans on 11 September 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department welcomes the findings of this research and will consider its recommendations carefully as we develop our future plans for active travel.

Bus Services**Dan Norris:**[\[5845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of which initiatives in Bus Service Improvement Plans create the highest levels of modal shift.

Simon Lightwood:

It is too early in the lifetime of the Bus Service Improvement Plans programme to fully understand which initiatives have had the most impact.

The Department for Transport has commissioned an evaluation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan Programme, a £1.1 billion tranche of funding that has been allocated to 34 Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) across England. The work will answer questions around how effectively the plans were delivered, the scheme's impact on bus usage, and its value for money. It will also include an assessment of the scheme's impact on increasing passenger numbers.

Bus Services: Concessions**Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[7342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many pensioners qualify for free bus passes.

Simon Lightwood:

Concessionary travel is a devolved policy area, and legislation and assessment of eligibility with regarding concessionary travel in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for the appropriate devolved administration.

In England, the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provides free off-peak bus travel to those with eligible disabilities and those of state pension age. The Office for National Statistics mid-year estimates for 2021 show that around

9.9 million people in England were aged 66 and above and therefore eligible for an ENCTS bus pass.

■ **Bus Services: Fares**

James Cartlidge: [\[7493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has for the £2 bus fare cap beyond December 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

Delivering reliable and affordable public transport services for passengers is one of the government's top priorities as we know how important this is for passengers and for local growth. The Department for Transport is looking at the future of the £2 fare cap as a matter of urgency and is considering the most appropriate and affordable approach for the future of the scheme.

Dame Caroline Dinenge: [\[7741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to maintain the £2 bus fare cap after 31 December 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

Delivering reliable and affordable public transport services for passengers is one of the government's top priorities as we know how important this is for passengers and for local growth. The Department for Transport is looking at the future of the £2 fare cap as a matter of urgency and is considering the most appropriate and affordable approach for the future of the scheme.

■ **Bus Services: Hertfordshire**

Daisy Cooper: [\[6536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has received representations from Hertfordshire County Council to request funding to (a) assess the viability of and (b) introduce bus franchising in Hertfordshire.

Simon Lightwood:

The government is determined to deliver better bus services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions. It has set out a plan to achieve this, based on giving local leaders the tools they need to ensure bus services reflect the needs of the communities they serve.

As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, ensuring networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them. The Bill will increase powers available to local leaders to choose the model that works best in their area, whether that be franchising, high-quality partnerships with private operators or local authority ownership.

The Department for Transport is engaging with all local transport authorities as part of this process, and we will continue to engage with them over the coming months as we deliver on our reforms.

■ **Bus Services: Huntingdon**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many settlements in Huntingdon constituency do not have a daily bus service.

Simon Lightwood:

At present, the majority of bus services in England outside London are provided on a commercial basis by private operators. The government does not hold information on individual bus routes. The government is determined to deliver better bus services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions. It has set out a plan to achieve this, based on giving local leaders the tools they need to ensure bus services reflect the needs of the communities they serve.

As announced in the King's Speech, the government will introduce a Buses Bill to put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England. We also plan to empower local transport authorities through reforming bus funding. By giving local leaders more control and flexibility over bus funding they can plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities. The Department will work closely with local leaders and bus operators to deliver on these ambitions.

■ **Bus Services: Rural Areas**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring franchising plans to guarantee the consideration during the planning phase of bus services to villages that do not receive any.

Simon Lightwood:

The government is determined to deliver better bus services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions. It has set out a plan to achieve this, based on giving local leaders the tools they need to ensure bus services reflect the needs of the communities they serve, including those in rural or isolated areas.

As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, ensuring networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them. The Bill will increase powers available to local leaders to choose the model that works best in their area, whether that be franchising, high-quality partnerships with private operators or local authority ownership.

Anna Sabine:

[7231]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to (a) increase access to and (b) otherwise improve bus routes in rural areas.

Simon Lightwood:

The government knows that Britain needs a modern transport network to help kickstart economic growth. Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities. As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, ensuring networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them, including in rural areas.

The Bill will increase powers available to local leaders to choose the model that works best in their area, whether that be franchising, high-quality partnerships with private operators or local authority ownership. The Department is currently working to consider and determine the exact scope of the Buses Bill.

We also plan to empower local transport authorities through reforming bus funding. By giving local leaders more control and flexibility over bus funding so they can plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities. The Department will work closely with local leaders and bus operators to deliver on the government's ambitions.

■ **Bus Services: South Suffolk**

James Cartlidge:

[7494]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will estimate the number of passengers in South Suffolk constituency for whom the £2 bus fare cap has been applied.

Simon Lightwood:

The £2 fare cap was launched by the Department for Transport (DfT) on 1 January 2023.

The DfT published an interim report in September 2023 setting out emerging trends in key outcomes from the first two months of the scheme. The report is available on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2-bus-fare-cap/2-bus-fare-cap-evaluation-interim-report-february-2023>.

Patronage in Suffolk appears to be continuing to recover following the COVID-19 pandemic. DfT does not collect patronage data lower than local transport authority level and is unable to make an assessment of bus usage for South Suffolk.

■ **Bus Services: Tickets**

Alex Mayer:

[6925]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to expand the Unicard rail ticketing hub to include buses.

Simon Lightwood:

While Unicard's technology has multi-modal capabilities, its current contract is for the provision of ticketing on Transport for Wales rail, only. The Department is currently working with Transport for West Midlands and the UK's major bus operators to develop a national, contactless ticketing solution for bus and tram services initially, with the functionality to integrate other modes, including rail, in the future.

Buses: Greater London**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[8237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number and proportion of buses operating in London that were made in the UK.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department does not hold information on the number or proportion of buses operating in London that were made in the UK.

Cycleways: Employment**James MacCleary:**[\[7186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the availability of cycling infrastructure on employment levels.

Simon Lightwood:

Investment in cycling is crucial to supporting the economy, with recent evidence indicating that 3.6%, or over a million people, usually cycle to work and contributes about £5.4 billion to the British economy annually, with £4.1 billion resulting from reductions in mortality, pollution and congestion. The average benefit-cost ratio for Active Travel Fund 4 estimated that for every £1 of investment in active travel infrastructure schemes, there would be a return £2.40 of economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Building on this evidence, Active Travel England is delivering a national active travel evaluation that will seek to include a proportionate assessment of the impact of active travel investment on employment.

Department for Transport: Civil Servants**John Glen:**[\[6116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people, other than special advisers, have been appointed to civil service posts in her 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.

Mike Kane:

Our records are dated as from 1 July 2024.

Of the exception decisions that are delegated to the Department for Transport, 5 have been made since 1 July 2024. The information requested on these appointments is provided in the table below:

(A) JOB TITLE	(B) SALARY BAND	(C) EXCEPTION
Marine Office Dedicated Oral Examiner (Surveyor)	SEO	Exception 5 – Former civil servant
Data Protection Compliance Support Officer Apprentice	EO	Exception 2 – Support for government employment programme
Driving Examiner	EO	Exception 5 – Former civil servant
Driving Examiner	EO	Exception 5 – Former civil servant
UK Search and Rescue Second Generation	SCS 1	Exception 1 – temporary appointment

John Glen:

[\[6117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on the number of people that have been appointed to posts in her Department, other than special advisers, who have (a) worked for and (b) been seconded to (i) the Labour party and (ii) the office of a Labour hon. Member since 4 July 2024.

Mike Kane:

Of the appointments made to the Department for Transport where an exception to the recruitment principles have applied, none involved people who have (a) worked for and (b) been seconded to (i) the Labour party and (ii) the office of a Labour Honourable Member since 4 July 2024.

■ Department for Transport: Food

Sir John Hayes:

[\[5869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy for her Department to prioritise the (a) procurement and (b) purchase of British produced (i) food and (ii) drink.

Mike Kane:

The Department for Transport complies with the relevant legal and regulatory framework when procuring food and drinks for use in its canteens and restaurants. Contracts include a requirement to comply with the mandatory standards of the Government Buying Standard (GBS) for food and catering services.

■ Department for Transport: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Mike Kane:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles to its ministerial cadre/officials.

The Department for Transport is currently allocated 1 x Hybrid Land rover Discovery Sport, 2 x Electric Jaguar I-Pace and 1 x Hybrid Ford Mondeo. These vehicles were not purchased in the 2024-25 financial year and were provided from the existing fleet. Cabinet Office is responsible for the management of the Government Car Service.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles to its ministerial cadre/officials. Cabinet Office is responsible for the management of the Government Car Service.

■ Department for Transport: Paternity Leave

Shaun Davies:

[\[7905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in her Department was in each of the last three years.

Mike Kane:

Below is the average length of paternity leave, in working days, for each of the last 3 calendar years.

CALENDAR YEAR	WORKING DAYS
2021	9.83
2022	9.50
2023	9.39

■ Department for Transport: Public Appointments

John Glen: [\[6118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

Mike Kane:

No Direct Ministerial Appointments or other Public Appointments to the Department for Transport and associated bodies (Public Bodies) have been removed from their posts or asked to resign since 4 July 2024.

The following appointments have been announced since 4 July 2024:

Direct Ministerial Appointments

- Shadow Great British Railways, Chair.

Public Appointments

- Office of the Traffic Commissioners, Traffic Commissioner North-West
- Network Rail (NR), Acting Chair.

■ Department for Transport: Republic of Ireland

Andrew Rosindell: [\[5920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has met with her Irish counterpart.

Mike Kane:

The Secretary of State has met with her Irish counterpart.

■ Department for Transport: Research

Helen Whately: [\[6349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) full title, (b) estimated cost of production and (c) organisation responsible is for each item of external research that her Department has commissioned but has yet to publish.

Mike Kane:

Details of all Government contracts, including research contracts, are published on Contracts Finder, and FTS, for contracts awarded from Jan 2021 over a certain threshold.

Helen Whately: [\[6352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when she plans to publish her Department's areas of research interest for 2024.

Mike Kane:

We expect to publish the Department's Areas of Research Interest in early 2025, taking the appropriate time to engage with the research community and the wider transport sector.

Doncaster Sheffield Airport**Sarah Champion:**[\[7458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority on reinstating the airspace for Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

Mike Kane:

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is proactively engaging with relevant parties on how Doncaster Sheffield Airport can secure the airspace it needs.

My officials are in regular discussions with the City of Doncaster Council and the CAA to stay up to date with developments.

Driverless Vehicles: China**James Wild:**[\[6566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the security risk of (a) connected and (b) autonomous vehicles manufactured using Chinese (i) software and (ii) hardware.

Lilian Greenwood:

- Connected and Automated Vehicles offer benefits to motorists and pedestrians through safer and more enjoyable driving, but these new technologies pose new risks. The Government takes national security very seriously and continues to actively look at threats associated with Connected and Automated Vehicles.
- The Department for Transport works closely with the transport sector and the National Cyber Security Centre, as well as other Government departments to understand and respond to cyber vulnerabilities associated with all Connected Vehicles, including Automated Vehicles.

Driving Tests: Greater London**Nesil Caliskan:**[\[8348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the capacity of DVLA test centres in (a) London and (b) Barking constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The table below shows the number of tests available and the current average waiting time at Barking driving test centre (DTC), and other London DTCs near the Barking constituency, as of 7 October 2024.

DRIVING TEST CENTRE (DTC)	AVERAGE CAR PRACTICAL DRIVING TEST WAITING TIME (SEPT 2024)	BOOKED TESTS	TESTS AVAILABLE IN 24 WEEK BOOKING WINDOW
Barking	20.2	2,556	169
Hornchurch	24	1,441	54
Goodmayes	24	7,056	381
Wanstead	24	2,696	132
National	19	571,047	89,349

The average waiting time in the wider London area (DTCs inside the M25) is 22.9 weeks.

■ East Anglia Rail Franchise

Priti Patel:

[\[6166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has for the future of the East Anglia railway franchise.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government has been clear that all passenger railway services delivered by private sector companies under National Rail Contracts will be brought into public ownership by the end of this Parliament as current contracts end, train operating companies reach their contractual break point, or if contractual conditions for termination are met.

■ East West Rail Line

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to have discussions with representatives from the private sector on an Oxford to Cambridge train connection.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department engages with a wide range of stakeholders regarding East-West Rail and the East West Rail Company continues to explore opportunities for the delivery of enhancements through using third party funding and financing options.

■ Electric Bicycles

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring dockless e-bikes to park in dedicated bays.

Simon Lightwood:

As you will appreciate, the new Government is still in its early stages, and I am carefully considering next steps for dockless e-bikes.

Many lessons have been learned from the e-scooter trials so far, in addition to learning from the many shared mobility schemes in the UK and international schemes like those in Paris. The Government recognises that dockless shared mobility, if managed incorrectly can lead to cycles, e-cycles, and e-scooters littered across roads and pavements, having disproportionate impacts on our most vulnerable road users.

■ Electric Bicycles and Electric Scooters: Greater London**Deirdre Costigan:**[\[6760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to grant London boroughs legal powers to regulate (a) the use, (b) parking and (c) fleet management of rental (i) e-bikes and (ii) e-scooters.

Simon Lightwood:

As you will appreciate, the new Government is still in its early stages, and I am carefully considering next steps for micromobility, including rental e-bikes and e-scooters.

The Government remains committed to gathering further evidence to inform future legislation.

■ Electric Bicycles: Hire Services**Deirdre Costigan:**[\[6756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will bring forward proposals to regulate the management of dockless rental e-bikes.

Simon Lightwood:

As you will appreciate, the new Government is still in its early stages, and I am carefully considering next steps and potential policy solutions for micromobility, including dockless rental e-bikes.

■ Electric Scooters**Deirdre Costigan:**[\[6757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to legalise all e-scooters.

Simon Lightwood:

As you will appreciate, the new Government is still in its early stages, and I am carefully considering next steps and potential policy solutions for e-scooters.

Until any changes are brought forward and come into effect, private e-scooters remain illegal to use on public roads, cycle lanes and pavements, and rental e-scooters can only be used in national rental e-scooter trial areas.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Nadia Whittome:** [\[6652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to increase the availability of electric vehicle charge points for people who do not have off street parking.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to making EV charging infrastructure more affordable and accessible, particularly for those without off-street parking. The Local EV Infrastructure Fund is supporting local authorities in England to install tens of thousands of EV chargepoints. In addition, the Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Grant is supporting flat owners, renters, and those with on-street parking to install chargepoints on domestic premises.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate she has made of the number of publicly available roadside electric vehicle chargers that will be required for the phase-out of the sale of internal combustion engine vehicles in Huntingdon constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

Huntingdon has 81 publicly available chargepoints as of 1 July 2024. The number of future public chargers required in a local area is dependent on a number of factors, such as electric vehicle (EV) uptake, levels of off-street parking and types of charging option. Local authorities play a key role in ensuring an area has a clear EV charging strategy.

The Government is supporting local authorities through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund. Through the fund, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, which includes Huntingdon, has been allocated £5,437,000 capital funding to transform the availability of charging for drivers without off-street parking.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were also allocated almost £542,000 in capability funding to secure dedicated in-house expertise to plan and procure the delivery of local chargepoints across their area.

Mr Richard Holden: [\[7565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish advice for local transport authorities on best practice for on-street charging.

Lilian Greenwood:

To support best practice in local charging infrastructure strategy and delivery, including on-street, the Government has funded local authority electric vehicle (EV) officers and a dedicated EV infrastructure training course. These officers receive expert advice and guidance through a central support body and can access extensive information via a regularly updated online EV knowledge repository. The Government will continue to publish further guidance for local authorities on EV charging as required.

■ Electric Vehicles: Costs

Tom Hayes:

[\[7102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department is taking steps with the motor industry to improve the affordability of electric vehicles.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is reducing the upfront cost for zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) by providing plug-in vehicle grants for vans, trucks, motorcycles, taxis and wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Drivers of ZEVs also benefit from favourable tax rates, such as generous company car tax incentives. They are also exempt from vehicle excise duty (VED) until April 2025, after which electric vehicles will continue to have preferential first year rates of VED in comparison to the most polluting vehicles.

The Department has regular engagement with representatives from the automotive industry to discuss the transition to zero emission vehicles.

■ Euston Station: Passengers

Alex Mayer:

[\[6923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with Network Rail on crowd management improvements to Euston station required by the Office of Road and Rail.

Simon Lightwood:

Network Rail is responsible for the safe operation and management of major railway stations and is regulated by the Office of Rail and Road. Ministers and officials routinely engage with Network Rail to hold it to account for matters within its control and drive improvements for passengers.

■ Fares: North of England

Anna Dixon:

[\[7195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help lower ticket prices across the north of England.

Simon Lightwood:

Affordability is one of our key objectives – so that prices are kept, wherever possible, at a point that works for both passengers and taxpayers. We are committed to reviewing the overcomplicated fares system with a view to simplifying it and will explore the options for expanding ticketing innovations like digital pay as you go, and digital season tickets across the network.

■ Freight

Clive Jones: [\[7093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to update the document entitled Future of Freight: a long-term plan.

Lilian Greenwood:

The cross-modal freight sector is vital for the UK's economic prosperity, security, and well-being. An efficient logistics sector supports all other sectors of the economy and facilitates international trade through import, export, and market access.

We do not plan to update the previous 'Future of Freight: a long-term plan' document, but the Government is committed to working with the sector and will set out its concrete next steps in this area as soon as possible.

■ Heathrow Airport: Railways

Clive Jones: [\[7092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of a western rail link to Heathrow Airport.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government is considering its position on future rail investment in the context of our critical missions and the availability of public finances.

■ High Speed 2 Line

Sarah Green: [\[7881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress her Department has made on establishing an independent inquiry into HS2.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is currently reviewing the position it has inherited on HS2 and wider rail infrastructure and will set out more detailed plans in due course.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Compensation

Adam Jogee: [\[6968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to ensure that people in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency are paid the HS2 compensation that they are owed.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is committed to ensuring that anyone owed compensation, whether in Newcastle-under-Lyme or anywhere along the HS2 route, should receive it as soon as possible once it falls due. I will continue to impress upon HS2 Ltd the necessity of working closely with claimants and their agents to ensure that claims are properly evidenced and then paid promptly.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Compulsory Purchase

Andrew Cooper:

[7048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many residential properties in Mid Cheshire constituency have been purchased in preparation for HS2 Phase 2b; and what proportion of those properties have been void for longer than six months.

Lilian Greenwood:

HS2 Ltd currently holds 51 residential properties on the Managed Portfolio in the Mid Cheshire constituency, of which 31 are let and 20 are vacant. 9 of these properties have been vacant for 6 months or more. The majority of vacant properties in Mid Cheshire are currently being actively marketed or prepared for letting, though only where such expenditure provides value for money to the taxpayer.

Sarah Bool:

[7381]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans that HS2 Limited will offer land subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order that has not been used by the project back to its previous owner under the Crichel Down rules.

Lilian Greenwood:

Land and property assets that have been acquired for HS2 via Compulsory Purchase Order or Statutory Blight, and that are no longer required, will be sold subject to the Crichel Down Rules.

These require Government departments, under certain circumstances, to offer back surplus land to the former owner or the former owner's successors at the current market value.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Construction

James Wild:

[6567]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) contractors and (b) sub-contractors are involved in the main civil works phase of the HS2 programme.

Lilian Greenwood:

HS2 Ltd publish details of their main civil works contracts, and multiple other contractors, on their Contract Opportunities Table (<https://www.hs2.org.uk/supply-chain/direct-contract-opportunities/>); this table can be found on the supply chain section of the HS2 website. In addition to this, HS2 Ltd publish details of subcontracts, for which there are likely to be onward opportunities in the supply chain, through their Indirect Opportunities Table (<https://www.hs2.org.uk/supply-chain/indirect-contract-opportunities/>).

■ High Speed Two: Cost Effectiveness

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[7695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to ensure HS2 Ltd delivers value for money.

Lilian Greenwood:

We are carefully reviewing the position the government has inherited on rail infrastructure, including how to best support economic growth as well as addressing delivery and capacity challenges. We are looking at ways to improve HS2 Ltd's delivery and HMG oversight, whilst working with the incoming HS2 Ltd CEO to ensure HS2 is delivered to schedule and at the lowest reasonable cost, and we will set out detailed plans in due course.

■ Housing Estates: Unadopted Roads**Ms Julie Minns:**[\[7939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of (a) the adequacy of the process and (b) potential barriers for the adoption of roads in new housing estates by Local Authorities.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department has published comprehensive guidance, last updated in August 2022, to help local authorities make informed decisions about how new and existing roads can be adopted by highway authorities so that they become maintainable at public expense, pursuant to the 1980 Highways Act (as amended). The guidance should also be of interest to planning authorities, local highway authorities, developers, people living in private streets, and people planning to purchase property.

Once adopted, a road remains publicly maintainable by the highway authority, so it is right that roads are constructed by the developer to an appropriate standard. The biggest potential barrier is roads that have not been completed to the appropriate standard required by the highway authority for adoption.

It is important that developers submit details that are in accordance with both the approved highway layout (from the planning application) and technical specifications in relation to the construction of the roads. Until that time all the required maintenance and safety issues are the responsibility of the developer or owner.

■ Level Crossings**Mr Lee Dillon:**[\[7270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance her Department issues on the amount of time a level crossing may be down each day; and what assessment she has made of the potential impact of delays caused by crossings being down on (a) commuters, (b) the local economy and (c) the environment.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), in its capacity as the independent safety regulator for Britain's railways, works closely with the rail industry to improve level crossing safety, including by issuing guidance on managing level crossings and minimising risks so far as is reasonably practicable. The law requires railway businesses to manage level crossing risk effectively using their own safety

management systems on a case-by-case basis, and ORR provides assurance that they are doing so. This involves ensuring that duty holders work with local authorities to understand the needs of local communities and impacts of operational decisions. The department does not, however, have a formal role in this process.

■ **M54: M6**

Shaun Davies:

[\[6694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her planned timetable is for funding the (a) M54 and (b) M6 North link road.

Lilian Greenwood:

A review of the Department's capital spend portfolio has been commissioned, this will inform the Department's new long-term strategy for transport, developing a modern and integrated network with people at its heart and ensuring that transport infrastructure can be delivered efficiently and on time. Assurances cannot be provided on individual projects, including the M54 to M6 Link Road, until the review is concluded.

■ **Minibuses: Inspections**

Sarah Edwards:

[\[6672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many roadside inspections of Permit 19 Minibuses have been undertaken in each of the last ten years.

Simon Lightwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) does not record if any minibuses it inspects at the side of the road are subject to a section 19 permit. Roadside inspections of minibuses could be completed by DVSA, local Police or local authorities.

■ **Motorways: Solar Power**

Shaun Davies:

[\[7599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the installation of solar panels as part of the motorway network; and which Government department or agency would provide (a) consent, (b) investment and (c) retain revenue concerns.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways, who are responsible for operating, maintaining, and improving the Strategic Road Network, which includes motorways and trunk 'A' roads, is actively exploring renewable energy generation as part of its Net Zero Highways plan.

Multiple trials and studies have been conducted, including solar panels on signs and structures on the Strategic Road Network. National Highways have also considered larger ground-mounted solar farms on non-operational estates, small scale

Renewable Energy Generation on the Strategic Road Network, Renewable Energy Generation at depots and solar car ports at depots and motorway service areas.

Feasibility studies to retrofit solar panels on existing motorway structures has shown that it does not represent value for money. The most economically viable option identified is rooftop solar generation at depots where most of the generation is consumed on-site and acts to offset the use of electricity from the grid.

On the issue of consent, rooftop solar generation in depots does not require planning permission, however, it is expected that any installations on the Strategic Road Network would be subject to consent using powers within the Highways Act 1980. Any installations on National Highways' non-operational estates would be subject to consent by the relevant Local Planning Authority.

The Department provides investment to National Highways for such activities under the Road Investment Strategy funding. Any revenue from energy generation initiatives will help reduce National Highways' operational expenditure.

■ National Highways: Research

Helen Whately: [\[6350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) full title, (b) estimated cost of production and (c) organisation responsible is for each item of external research that Highways England has commissioned but has yet to publish.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport does not hold complete information on this.

■ Network Rail

Grahame Morris: [\[6031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the (a) governance and (b) oversight structure of the Network Rail board.

Grahame Morris: [\[6032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the separation between Network Rail's (a) executive (b) non-executive functions.

Simon Lightwood:

In line with the Network Rail Framework Agreement, an external independent Board Effectiveness Review of Network Rail took place earlier this year, the findings report was shared with the Network Rail Board in September and subsequently with the Department for Transport.

■ **Orwell Bridge: Closures**

James Cartlidge:

[\[6339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the economic impact of (a) part and (b) full closures of the Orwell Bridge, Suffolk.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways has not conducted specific economic impact assessments for either partial or full closures of the Orwell Bridge. The decision to close the bridge, whether due to unplanned events or for planned maintenance, prioritises safety. Such closures are essential to ensure the safety of drivers, National Highways workers, the emergency services, and to keep the bridge safe and serviceable. These closures are also integral to the essential maintenance schedule for the transport network.

■ **Orwell Bridge: Repairs and Maintenance**

James Cartlidge:

[\[6340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her planned timetable is for funding remedial work on the Orwell Bridge, Suffolk; and if she will take steps to accelerate the provision of that funding.

Lilian Greenwood:

The replacement of all 4 bridge joints on Orwell Bridge had been included within a scheme of planned works scheduled for construction starting in 2027. Due to the recent failure of one of the two westbound joints, National Highways is accelerating the replacement of both joints on the westbound carriageway to start within the current financial year. National Highways is in the process of developing the proposal for replacing the 2 eastbound joints as part of the planned scheme of works.

James Cartlidge:

[\[6341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of maintenance works on the Orwell Bridge being scheduled as part of Highways England's Significant Structures Scheme on traffic flows in that area.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways recognises the importance of the Orwell Bridge and the impact its closure will have for residents and the local economy. The planning for the replacement of the bridge's bearings is currently at the preliminary design phase, part of which includes National Highways undertaking a series of studies to look at the impact of the works on the road users, as well as reviewing potential options for traffic management and their impact on the local community. This is in addition to environmental assessments and impact on traffic on the river if necessary.

■ Pedestrian Areas: Greater London**Deirdre Costigan:** [\[6758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will provide additional funding to Transport for London for the resurfacing of pavements on the borough principal road network (a) in London and (b) in the London Borough of Ealing.

Deirdre Costigan: [\[6759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with Transport for London on ensuring maintaining pavements on the borough principal road network.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department is working with the Mayor of London on funding for transport in the capital. However, transport in London is devolved to the Mayor and TfL, and it is for the Mayor and TfL to assess the merits of projects and make decisions on investment.

■ Ports: Infrastructure**Stephen Flynn:** [\[6467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she plans to hold with Scottish port operators on the proportion of the planned £1.8 billion funding for port infrastructure that will be provided to Scottish ports to support energy transition.

Stephen Flynn: [\[6468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that its proposed £1.8 billion funding for port infrastructure will lead to (a) economic growth and (b) job creation.

Stephen Flynn: [\[6469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether a proportion of the Government's £1.8 billion planned investment in port infrastructure will be allocated to the deployment of shore power schemes in Scottish ports.

Mike Kane:

This government has announced the creation of a £7.3bn National Wealth Fund, for which investment in ports and supply chains has been identified as a priority. HM Treasury and the UK Infrastructure Bank are leading on the setting up of the NWF and agreeing details of its operation such as funding criteria, process, and allocation. The Fund is intended to be UK wide. Key missions for the UK government and this Department are kickstarting economic growth, creating opportunity for all, and driving forward the UK's green energy transition.

■ Ports: Job Creation**Clive Jones:** [\[7091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase job creation in ports.

Mike Kane:

Our mission to drive growth in the economy will bring with it increasing trade in high-value goods, and our mission to become a clean energy superpower will boost jobs within and around ports engaged in helping to deliver offshore wind and other clean energy development. Investment in ports and supply chains has been identified as a priority area for the newly established National Wealth Fund (NWF), which has allocated £7.3 billion of additional capitalisation to the UK Infrastructure Bank.

Public Transport: Climate Change**Mary Glendon:**[\[6236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to increase the climate resilience of public transport systems.

Lilian Greenwood:

The cross-government third National Adaptation Programme sets out plans to tackle the effects of climate change. For transport, this means working closely with transport infrastructure operators to take meaningful and measurable action to address risks posed by our changing climate.

The Department for Transport has plans in place to adapt to and address the risks of climate change. The Department consulted in April 2024 on a draft strategy to enhance climate change adaptation planning and action across the transport sector. The responses to this consultation are being considered.

Public Transport: Finance**Grahame Morris:**[\[6028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much capital expenditure her Department has planned for public transport projects in each of the next five years; and which projects she plans to provide funding for.

Mike Kane:

This Government will set out its fiscal plans as part of the ongoing Spending Review which will conclude in the Spring. We will share more information when we are able to do so.

Dame Caroline Dinéage:[\[7743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing five-year funding settlements for (a) local transport and (b) bus service improvement plans.

Simon Lightwood:

This government is committed to providing greater stability to local government by giving councils multi-year funding settlements and ending wasteful competitive bidding.

Improving bus services is a key part of this Government's growth mission, and the government has set out plans to deliver better services, grow passenger numbers

and drive opportunity to under-served regions. This plan includes reforming bus funding by giving local leaders more control and flexibility over bus funding and allowing them to plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities.

■ Rail Supply Group

Grahame Morris: [\[6033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the cost to the public purse was of supporting the Rail Supply Group in (a) 2021, (b) 2022 and (c) 2023.

Grahame Morris: [\[6034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the value for money of supporting the Rail Supply Group.

Simon Lightwood:

The Rail Supply Group (RSG) provides a forum for government and the rail industry to discuss overarching rail supply chain issues and to lead targeted work to address government and industry priorities. Industry members give their time for free, but the group has received limited funding from the Department for Transport (since financial year 2022/23), the Department for Business and Trade, Network Rail, industry members and the Rail Industry Association to support the group's activities. The Department for Transport provided £75,000 in grant-funding, via the Rail Delivery Group, to RSG for the financial year 2022/23.

■ Railway Stations: Access

Priti Patel: [\[6165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has for further funding under the Access for All scheme; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allocating such funding to provide step-free access at Marks Tey railway station.

Simon Lightwood:

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.

Siân Berry: [\[7276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to improve (a) step-free and (b) disabled access at railway stations; whether the Access for All funding scheme will continue; and what her planned timeline is to tackle access issues within the rail network.

Simon Lightwood:

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.

■ Railway Stations: Urban Areas

Helen Morgan:

[\[7882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many urban areas in England with populations of over 17,000 do not have a railway station.

Simon Lightwood:

It is estimated that there are approximately 80 'built up areas' with a population of 20,000 or more that do not contain operational railway stations within England.

Some large cities and towns consist of several built up areas, and whilst a specific built up area may not contain a station, there may be one or more stations within close proximity in a neighbouring built up area.

■ Railway Stations: West Midlands

Helen Morgan:

[\[7883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many urban areas in the West Midlands with populations of over 17,000 do not have a railway station.

Simon Lightwood:

It is estimated that there are approximately 12 'built up areas' with a population of 20,000 or more that do not contain operational railway stations within the West Midlands region.

Some large cities and towns consist of several built up areas, and whilst a specific built up area may not contain a station, there may be one or more stations within close proximity in a neighbouring built up area.

■ Railways: Access

Alistair Strathern:

[\[7891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to increase the rate of implementation of step free access on the rail network.

Simon Lightwood:

Since 2006, the Access for All (AfA) programme has delivered step free access at more than 250 stations across Great Britain. 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: Concessions

Llinos Medi:

[\[6802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a discounted Railcard for (a) workers in the NHS and (b) other key workers.

Simon Lightwood:

Affordability of rail travel is one of our key objectives. However, any concessions made to rail fares policy must balance benefits for certain groups against the impacts on taxpayers. Currently there are no plans for offering a discounted railcard for NHS and other key workers.

■ **Railways: East Midlands****Mike Reader:**[\[7686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will review the re-opening of the Northampton to Market Harborough railway line.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government believes that local transport authorities and local leaders are best placed to prioritise and take forward transport projects which are most appropriate for the areas they serve, particularly where they will support economic growth, job creation, more and better housing, and, ultimately, demonstrate a good business case. I would encourage him to continue to engage with local stakeholders further on this.

■ **Railways: Educational Visits****Paula Barker:**[\[6621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing rail discounts for schools purchasing tickets for excursions.

Simon Lightwood:

All Department for Transport contracted operators offer some form of group discount, with some offering substantial savings for groups of 10 or more people. In addition, many train operators participate in the GroupSave offer which offers 1/3 off Off-Peak tickets for a group of three to nine people travelling together. More detail can be found on the National Rail and local train operator websites.

■ **Railways: Labour Turnover****Manuela Perteghella:**[\[R\] \[6898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to increase staff retainment in rail services.

Simon Lightwood:

We are working with operators to support recruitment and retention and ensure they have the staff they need to robustly deliver their timetables. We will deliver the biggest overhaul of our railways in a generation.

■ Railways: Passengers

Grahame Morris: [\[6029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to (a) commission and (b) update rail passenger (i) growth and (ii) demand forecasts.

Simon Lightwood:

In line with our published guidance, the Department has developed and maintains a number of possible rail demand forecasts in both the medium and long term which we update at regular intervals. As part of this, the Department considers and includes a wide range of evidence.

■ Railways: Private Prosecutions

Deirdre Costigan: [\[8291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Justice on the use of courts by train operating companies to pursue private prosecutions for the misapplication of railcards on fares under £12.

Deirdre Costigan: [\[8292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will issue guidance to train operating companies on the use of private prosecutions for contraventions of conditions of carriage.

Simon Lightwood:

We expect operators to ensure their policy on ticketing is clear and fair for passengers at all times and have instructed an urgent review of the cases in question, with a view to resolving them.

Ticketing has become far too complicated, which is why we plan to simplify it as part of the biggest overhaul of our railways in a generation.

■ Railways: Season Tickets

Daisy Cooper: [\[6529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of enabling rail users to buy a discounted season ticket using a (a) young person's and (b) 26 to 30 railcard.

Simon Lightwood:

Affordability of rail travel is one of our key objectives. However, any concessions made to rail fares policy must balance benefits for certain groups against the impacts on taxpayers. Season tickets already provide a discount compared to single, return and day tickets.

■ Railways: South West**Dan Norris:** [\[5844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of railway engineering works on the economy in the South West in December 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

Network Rail's programme of railway upgrades in December is crucial to ensure its Western route continues to run reliably and safely. Economic impact assessments are not routinely undertaken for major engineering work, however, where work is likely to result in disruption the planning assumption is that it is undertaken when the railway is least used.

■ Railways: WiFi**Tom Gordon:** [\[6679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help improve the availability of wi-fi on the rail network.

Simon Lightwood:

I have asked my officials to explore the feasibility of a range of technology options to improve passenger connectivity on the rail network. The Department is also measuring the strength of mobile signals along the rail network to fully understand where interventions are needed.

James Naish: [\[6732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to improve wi-fi connectivity on the rail network.

Simon Lightwood:

I have asked my officials to explore the feasibility of a range of technology options to improve passenger connectivity on the rail network. The Department is also measuring the strength of mobile signals along the rail network to fully understand where interventions are needed.

■ Roads: Flood Control**Alex Mayer:** [\[7966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with National Highways on the effectiveness of using balancing ponds and drains to help prevent flooding on highways.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways have not made an assessment on the effectiveness of using balancing ponds and drains in the prevention of highway flooding. Balancing ponds are used on the network to manage the risk of downstream flooding and drainage is

designed to remove surface water from roads as quickly as possible and to minimise flood risk for receiving environments.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Anna Sabine:

[\[7230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps National Highways takes with other road agencies to help ensure there is minimal disruption when there are roadworks.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways work in collaboration with Local Highway Authorities (LHA) to minimise disruption to motorists during roadworks, this includes seeking agreement from LHAs for suitable diversion routes.

For longer-term works, National Highways engage with LHAs as well as other key parties to ensure that stakeholders directly affected by roadworks are consulted and their views considered in plans, and if necessary, diversion routes revised.

During major closures, National Highways' National Traffic Operations Centre will use its network of electronic roadside variable message signs (VMS) to tell motorists of any adverse impact. Using this strategic information signing, National Highways will endeavour to keep traffic upon its own network so as not to overwhelm local roads.

■ Shrewsbury-Wolverhampton Railway Line

Shaun Davies:

[\[6708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve the Birmingham to Shrewsbury (via Telford) railway line.

Simon Lightwood:

Midlands Connect, the sub-national transport body which researches, develops and progresses transport projects in the Midlands, are refreshing the Business Case for line speed improvements to this route. My officials are in regular contact with Midlands Connect to support them in this work, and I expect to receive a Business Case later this year.

■ Stockport Station

Navendu Mishra:

[\[6578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of Avanti West Coast's management of Stockport railway station.

Lilian Greenwood:

Avanti West Coast (AWC) is responsible for the day-to-day management of Stockport Station, which includes staffing, facilities management and cleaning. The Department meets with AWC regularly to discuss these responsibilities and to ensure any issues are addressed as soon as possible for passengers.

Responsibility for repairs to the structure of the property lies with the station's landlord, Network Rail. AWC works with Network Rail seeking improvements on behalf of passengers where this is required.

Operators are also required to achieve customer experience targets across a range of measures, including at stations. These standards are regularly and independently inspected via the Service Quality Regime and there are accountability and financial consequences for failure.

■ Tankers: Pollution Control

Steve Darling:

[\[6747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to introduce mandatory insurance cover and compliance with IMO heavy fuel standards for oil tankers entering UK territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone.

Mike Kane:

The government has implemented, and enforces, a range of mandatory environmental measures related to the use and carriage of oil, including heavy fuel oil, by sea. International standards are primarily set out in the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), to which the UK is a signatory. Annex I of MARPOL makes provision for the prevention of pollution by oil from ships and includes mandatory requirements such as construction standards for oil tankers, limitations on size and arrangement of cargo tanks, fuel and cargo tank protection, damage stability requirements and a robust survey and certification regime. Compliance with these requirements is enforced by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) through surveys of UK registered ships and Port State Control inspections of non-UK ships when in UK ports. Non-compliance is managed through the detention of ships, prohibition notices and, where necessary, prosecution.

The MCA provides the UK's representation to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and is actively involved in the development of environmental measures related to the use and carriage of heavy fuel oil in ships. In addition, the government has introduced provisions, known as ambulatory reference provisions, within the relevant merchant shipping legislation which aim to ensure that the UK stays up to date with the implementation of international environmental standard and is able to enforce those standards.

With regard to insurance, within certain tonnage limitations, UK ships and ships coming to or from the UK must have certificates to prove that they have the relevant compulsory civil liability insurance against oil pollution and liability insurance for the locating, marking and removing of wrecks in the event that the ship causes a pollution incident or is wrecked. Insurers must meet the UK's criteria to provide appropriate cover and be approved by the MCA before a compulsory insurance certificate can be issued.

■ Taxis: Electric Vehicles

Mr James Frith: [\[6424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to help ensure taxi drivers can access affordable loans to support the transition from petrol and diesel cars to electric vehicles.

Mr James Frith: [\[6425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she is taking steps to help taxi drivers wanting to transition to cleaner-fuel vehicles.

Lilian Greenwood:

Since its introduction in 2017, the Plug-in Taxi Grant (PiTG) has provided more than £70m to support the purchase of over 11,000 zero emission cabs. The grant is currently funded until at least the end of this financial year.

■ Taxis: Licensing

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[7978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has to launch a consultation on cross-border working in the private hire vehicle industry.

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, including cross-border working. The Government is considering how to improve the current regulatory position, whilst still enabling the sector to deliver safe and accessible services that meet a wide range of passenger needs.

■ Telford Central Station: Passengers

Shaun Davies: [\[6702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many passengers used Telford Central train station in each year since 1994.

Simon Lightwood:

The station usage data is compiled by ORR and historic results going back to 1997 are publicly available through the following link: [Estimates of station usage | ORR Data Portal](#), specifically under [Table 1410 - Passenger entries and exits and interchanges by station](#) (ods).

■ Tolls: Research

Helen Whately: [\[6353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has sponsored people through (a) fellowships, (b) internships and (c) PhDs in relation to (i) pay per mile road charging and (ii) equivalent schemes.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport has not sponsored people through internships, fellowships and PhDs specifically in relation to pay per mile road charging or equivalent schemes.

■ Train Operating Companies: Contracts

Grahame Morris: [\[6030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes by train operating companies managed by DfT OLR Holdings Ltd to contracts with rail suppliers on (a) cost risk and (b) performance.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department expects all train operators to manage suppliers appropriately and deliver reliable services for passengers while minimising costs for taxpayers, whether they are in the private or public sector.

■ Transport: Finance

Grahame Morris: [\[6026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 30 July 2024 on Transport infrastructure review, when she plans to publish the results of the internal review of the her Department's capital spend portfolio.

Mike Kane:

As this is an internal review, there are currently no plans to publish the results.

■ Transport: Macclesfield

Tim Roca: [\[8067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to support Cheshire East council improve local transport across Macclesfield constituency.

Tim Roca: [\[8068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to help Cheshire East Council scrutinise the performance of local bus companies.

Simon Lightwood:

Improving local transport services is a key part of this government's growth mission, and the government has set out plans to deliver better bus services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions.

As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this session. This will put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, including in Cheshire East, to ensure networks meet the needs of the communities who rely on them.

The Bill will increase powers available to local leaders to choose the model that works best in their area, whether that be franchising, high-quality partnerships with

private operators or local authority ownership. Government will continue working closely with local leaders and bus operators to deliver on the government's ambitions.

■ Transport: Madeley

Adam Jogee:

[\[6976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will meet the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme to discuss the adequacy of the (a) bus network and (b) existing transport infrastructure in Madeley.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government is committed to delivering better buses for passengers throughout England, and I would be happy to meet to discuss local bus services in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

■ Transport: North of England

Sir Gavin Williamson:

[\[6200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether funding allocated for ticketless travel in the Network North plan is now being used to implement the scheme.

Simon Lightwood:

This government remains committed to improving the passenger experience and improving the railways. We are already working with local authorities to improve ticketing in the West Midlands and Greater Manchester. The previous Government made a number of funding commitments in the Network North Command Paper, and these will be examined closely in the coming months.

■ Transport: Public Bodies

Alex Mayer:

[\[7962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the cost to the public purse is of each sub-national transport body.

Simon Lightwood:

In Financial Year 23/24, the grant provided to each Sub-national Transport Body from the Department for Transport was as follows:

Summary of Payments to Sub National Transport Bodies for FY23/24

TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH	£7,210,000
Midlands Connect	£5,000,000
Transport for the South East	£1,725,000
England's Economic Heartland	£1,350,000
Transport East	£762,000

TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH	£7,210,000
Western Gateway	£605,000
Peninsula Transport	£585,000
TOTAL	£17,237,000

■ Transport: South Cotswolds

Dr Roz Savage: [\[7380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to take steps to help Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Council reduce transport poverty in South Cotswolds constituency.

Simon Lightwood:

This Government is committed to improving transport provision across the country. We recognise the challenges people face in accessing transport, particularly in rural areas like the South Cotswolds. This is why we are working at pace to deliver our five key strategic transport priorities, which include the transforming of infrastructure to tackle regional inequality and the delivery of better integrated transport networks. DfT officials will continue to meet regularly with the councils in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire to discuss their aspirations for transport provision and provide support to address their concerns.

■ Transport: Urban Areas

Grahame Morris: [\[6027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the recommendations in the Urban Transport Group's report entitled The rail and urban transport review, published on 21 August 2024.

Simon Lightwood:

The expert-led rail and urban transport review provided a comprehensive assessment of the challenges and opportunities we face in delivering transport infrastructure in Britain. The government welcomes this report and is reviewing its recommendations.

■ Travel: Concessions

Anna Dixon: [\[7216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the requirement for individuals with lifelong conditions to re-apply for disability travel cards.

Simon Lightwood:

The Disabled Persons Railcard offers discounts of a third off most rail fares for people with a disability that makes travelling by train difficult. As with other railcards, Disabled Persons Railcards can be purchased with either a one or three-year validity.

The terms and conditions for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) are set out in legislation. This includes a requirement that the maximum expiry date that can be set on ENCTS passes is five years.

■ Witham Station: Repairs and Maintenance**Priti Patel:**[\[6164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to provide funding for the renovation of Witham railway station.

Simon Lightwood:

Funding decisions on station renovations such as Witham will be taken in due course, as part of departmental planning for 2025/26 and beyond. At this time, there are no timescales for when delivery of a Witham upgrade scheme might be possible.

TREASURY**■ Banking Hubs: Cambridgeshire****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[6812\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2024 to Question 4779 on Banking Hubs, what the timeline is for the roll-out of the new banking hubs; and whether (a) Cash Access UK and (b) LINK are considering St Ives in Cambridgeshire as the location of a hub.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government is working closely with industry to roll out 350 banking hubs across the UK. The UK banking sector has committed to deliver these hubs by the end of this parliament. Currently, over 80 banking hubs are already open and Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, expect 100 hubs to be open by Christmas.

The specific location of these hubs is determined independently by LINK, the operator of the UK's largest ATM network. Criteria that LINK consider include whether another bank branch remains nearby, local population, number of cash-accepting businesses and the financial vulnerability of the community.

■ Banking Hubs: Rural Areas**Paul Davies:**[\[7281\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the importance of banking hubs in rural areas.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and is committed to championing sufficient access for all as a priority. This is why the Government is working closely with industry to ensure that 350 banking hubs are delivered across the UK. The UK banking sector has committed to deliver these hubs by the end of this parliament. Over 80 banking hubs are already open and Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, expect 100 hubs to be open by Christmas.

The specific location of these hubs is determined independently by LINK, the operator of the UK's largest ATM network. Criteria that LINK considers includes whether another bank branch remains nearby, local population, number of cash-accepting businesses and the financial vulnerability of the community.

An alternative option for accessing face-to-face banking services in rural areas is via the Post Office. The Post Office Banking Framework allows personal and business customers to withdraw and deposit cash, cash cheques, and check their balance at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

■ Banking Hubs: West Dorset

Edward Morello: [\[7329\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department plans to identify locations for banking hubs in West Dorset constituency.

Edward Morello: [\[7330\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress she has made on a timetable for the creation of banking hubs in rural areas.

Edward Morello: [\[7331\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of bank closures in West Dorset constituency on (a) pensioners and (b) owners of small businesses.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government understands the importance of face-to-face banking to communities and high streets and is committed to championing sufficient access for all as a priority. This is why the Government is working closely with industry to roll out 350 banking hubs across the UK. The UK banking sector has committed to deliver these hubs by the end of this parliament.

Currently, over 80 banking hubs are already open and Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, expect 100 hubs to be open by Christmas. These hubs will provide small businesses and individuals who need face-to-face support with critical cash and in-person banking services.

The locations of these hubs is determined independently by LINK, the operator of the UK's largest ATM network. Criteria that LINK consider include whether another bank branch remains nearby, local population, number of cash-accepting businesses and

the financial vulnerability of the community. LINK has recommended a banking hub in Sherborne in response to the closure of the Lloyds Bank branch there.

Regarding branch closures in West Dorset, FCA guidance expects firms to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and put in place alternatives where reasonable. As well as banking hubs, alternative options to access everyday banking services can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking and via the Post Office.

■ **Business Rates and Council Tax: Valuation**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[8196\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of asking the Valuation Office Agency to develop an automated valuation model for calculating (a) council tax and (b) business rates valuations in England.

James Murray:

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) provides the independent and expert valuations that underpin the business rates and council tax systems. Following the passing of the 2023 Non-Domestic Ratings Act, business rates revaluations will now be conducted every three years, with the next taking place in 2026. There has also been significant investment in the VOA in the last five years through, upgrading the VOA's IT infrastructure and digital capabilities for valuations across both the council tax and business rates systems.

■ **Business: Money**

Melanie Onn:

[\[6310\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure that full tax receipts are being obtained from cash-only businesses.

James Murray:

Cash continues to be used by many people across the UK and is a legitimate means of paying for goods and services. It is the choice of a business whether to accept or decline any form of payment and is based on factors such as customer preference and cost.

Like all other businesses, those which only or primarily accept cash must ensure they meet their legal obligations regarding tax, including that they register for and pay the right taxes at the right time.

Most taxpayers pay what they owe, but a small minority fail to register with HMRC or only declare a portion of their earnings. This small minority deprive our vital public services of funding, affect fair competition between businesses, and place unfair burdens on everyone else. The Government is committed to creating a level playing field for all by ensuring that everyone pays the right amount of tax at the right time. Closing the tax gap and making sure that more of the tax that is owed is correctly

paid is one of the Government's top priorities for HMRC. It is vital these revenues are collected to fund our essential public services.

HMRC is making it increasingly difficult for businesses to hide their earnings and have an extensive range of powers, including information gathering powers, that help build a picture of risk and identify those who are trying to abuse the system. HMRC's approach to tax evasion aims to tackle current non-compliance and change future behaviours. Their activities include national campaigns and specialist task forces that incorporate intensive bursts of activity in targeted high risk trade sectors and locations across the UK. This includes providing customer education highlighting the importance of keeping accurate records.

■ Capital Gains Tax

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7644\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people who pay income tax via PAYE also paid capital gains tax across (a) basic, (b) higher rate and (c) additional rate taxpayers in the most recent year for which figures are available.

James Murray:

HMRC does not routinely produce estimates of how many capital gains taxpayers are in each PAYE-specific Income Tax band. A reliable estimate would only be available at disproportionate cost.

HMRC does produce estimates of the number of capital gains taxpayers split by total taxable income as part of its annual accredited official statistics. These are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/capital-gains-tax-statistics>

Table 3 shows the estimated number of individual taxpayers by size of gain and taxable income.

■ Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage: Business Rates

Clive Jones:

[\[7083\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will consider including carbon capture, utilisation and storage and hydrogen infrastructure in the green plant and machinery exemption from business rates.

James Murray:

On 4 October 2024 the government announced funding of up to £21.7 billion over 25 years in two ground-breaking CCUS projects in Teesside and Merseyside. These green energy clusters are set to secure the UK's leadership in clean technology and create thousands of jobs.

The exception for green plant and machinery is available for qualifying plant and machinery that is used in onsite renewable energy generation and storage.

Further information on the eligibility criteria can be found in the regulations. The Valuation for Rating (Plant and Machinery) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 (legislation.gov.uk)

The government keeps the tax system under review.

■ **Cash Dispensing: West Dorset**

Edward Morello: **[7328]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to increase access to cash in West Dorset constituency.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government recognises that cash continues to be used by millions of people across the UK and is committed to protecting access to cash for individuals and businesses. This includes taking forward a new regulatory regime to protect access to cash.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has recently assumed regulatory responsibility for access to cash, and its new rules went live on 18 September. Under these rules, following a request from a local community or the closure of a cash access facility, firms that have been designated by government to be subject to the FCA's regime are required to undertake an assessment of a community's cash access needs and to put in place a new service if necessary.

Further information about submitting a cash access request can be found at the following link: <https://www.link.co.uk/helping-you-access-cash/request-access-to-cash>

■ **Childcare: Eligibility**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: **[6364]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of basing eligibility for Free Childcare For Working Parents on household rather than individual income.

Darren Jones:

Eligibility is assessed on a per person rather than per household basis because the application is made by the individual, it aligns to the existing boundary in the tax system and means there is no incentive for the lower earner in the household to reduce their income in order to be eligible. The eligibility criteria are kept under review.

■ **Church Schools: VAT**

Sir Christopher Chope: **[8099]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made on the potential impact of VAT on private school fees on Christian schools.

James Murray:

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

A technical note setting out the details of the policy has been published online here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools(opens%20in%20a%20new%20tab)).

Draft VAT legislation was also published alongside this technical note, forming a technical consultation, which closed on 15 September. As part of this technical consultation, the Government engaged with a broad range of stakeholders.

Whilst developing these policies, the Government has carefully considered the impact that they will have on pupils and their families across both the state and private sector, as well as the impact they will have on state and private schools. Following scrutiny of the Government's costings by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), details of the Government's assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes will be published at the Budget on 30 October in a Tax Information and Impact Note.

■ Covid Counter-fraud Commissioner**Clive Jones:****[7084]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many civil servants will support the Covid Counter-Fraud Commissioner.

Darren Jones:

The Commissioner will be supported by a small team of experts from HM Treasury, the Public Sector Fraud Authority, the Government Commercial Function and the Department of Health and Social Care. The Commissioner will have access to experts and resources across HMT, PSFA and DHSC. The Commissioner will come up with a workplan and will be supported with the resources necessary to deliver the workplan.

■ Covid Counter-Fraud Commissioner**Clive Jones:****[7085]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate she has made of when the Covid Counter-Fraud Commissioner will be appointed.

Darren Jones:

The job advert closed on 30th September and shortlisted candidates will be interviewed.

■ Defibrillators: VAT

Adam Jogee:

[\[6978\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of removing VAT from defibrillator sales in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme, (b) Staffordshire and (c) England.

James Murray:

The Government currently provides VAT reliefs to aid the purchase of defibrillators. For example, when an AED is purchased with funds provided by a charity and then donated to an eligible body no VAT is charged. Furthermore, all state schools in England have been fitted with AEDs. VAT is the UK's second largest tax forecast to raise £176 billion in 2024/25, and taxation is a vital source of revenue which helps to fund public services. Tax breaks reduce this revenue and must represent value for money for the tax payer. Evidence suggests that businesses only partially pass on any VAT reliefs to the consumer.

■ Developing Countries: Debts Written Off

Andy McDonald:

[\[6262\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to require private lenders to agree debt cancellation for lower income countries.

Darren Jones:

The Government is committed to tackling unsustainable debt. Private lenders have an important part to play and alongside our partners in the G20 and Paris Club, we expect private creditors to participate in debt restructurings on comparable terms. This is a fundamental principle of the G20 Common Framework and we welcome recent agreements reached by bondholders of Zambia and Ghana.

At this stage, the Government is not pursuing a legislative approach that would force private or other lenders to participate in debt restructurings. The Government is focused on delivering a market-based (contractual) approach to private sector participation, to promote more efficient restructurings, reduce the ability for creditors to hold out, and increase transparency.

■ Dyscalculia

Claire Hazelgrove:

[\[7256\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) tax and (b) pay slip processes for individuals with dyscalculia.

James Murray:

As tax and pay slip processes cover a significant range of HMRC activity, HMRC have not been able to provide a specific impact assessment for individuals with dyscalculia.

[The HMRC Charter](#) and [Principles of support](#) set out HMRC's commitments to identifying and supporting all customers who need extra help. The need for extra help can cover a range of circumstances which could include individuals with dyscalculia.

■ Economic Situation: Rain

Alex Mayer: [\[6926\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of rainfall levels in September 2024 on (a) Government spending and (b) the local economy in each of the 10 English counties that have had the highest levels of rainfall.

Tulip Siddiq:

Economic stability is a priority for this government. The COBR Unit in the Cabinet Office operates a well-established arrangement for monitoring near-term civil contingency-type risks, including severe weather, for the purpose of ensuring the Government is prepared to respond as appropriate to the challenges they may bring.

This Government is committed to protecting communities across the country from the dangers of flooding. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has launched a *Flood Resilience Taskforce* to provide oversight of national and local flood resilience and preparedness ahead of and after the winter flood season, and the Secretary of State chaired its first meeting in September.

■ Forth Green Freeport and Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport

Dr Scott Arthur: [\[7130\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many customs sites were being used by businesses at (a) Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport and (b) Forth Green Freeport in the latest period for which data is available.

James Murray:

The previous government announced new Green Freeports at Inverness and Cromarty Firth, and Forth. Both Green Freeports are in the process of establishing their first customs sites. Tax sites were designated in both Green Freeports earlier this year.

■ Fuels: Excise Duties

Priti Patel: [\[6150\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of increasing fuel duty by between one and 25 pence per litre by each one penny increment on (a) revenues to the Exchequer, (b) costs to businesses and (c) household finances.

Priti Patel: [\[6151\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what modelling assumptions her Department has made of the rate of fuel duty in each of the next five financial years.

Priti Patel:

[6152]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what modelling assumptions her Department has made of revenue to the Exchequer arising from fuel duty in each of the next five financial years.

James Murray:

Fuel duty applies to petrol, diesel and other fuels for road and non-road uses, such as construction. The Government carefully considers the impact of fuel duty on households and businesses, with decisions on rates made at fiscal events.

Full forecasts for fuel duty revenue, certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), will be published at Budget on 30 October.

HMRC regularly publish statistics relating to the direct effects of illustrative tax changes, including fuel duty. The most recent version of this publication can be found on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/direct-effects-of-illustrative-tax-changes>.

Helen Whately:

[6359]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will increase fuel duty rates.

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.

Nick Timothy:

[6739]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the zero emissions vehicle mandate on fuel duty revenues between (a) 2025 and 2030, (b) 2030 and 2040 and (c) 2040 and 2050.

James Murray:

The Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate requires 80% of all new cars to be zero emission by 2030. There will be no sales of new pure combustion engine cars from 2030 under the Government's plans, and more details on specific 2030-35 requirements for both cars and vans will be set out shortly.

The shift to zero emission electric vehicles (EVs) is crucial for decarbonising the transport sector and tackling climate change, while injecting billions of pounds worth of investment into our economy and creating high skilled jobs.

As this shift progresses, fuel duty revenues will start to decline, as set out by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) in their September 2024 Fiscal Risks and Sustainability report and November 2023 Economic and Fiscal Outlook. Full forecasts for fuel duty revenue over the next five years, certified by the OBR, will be published at Budget on 30 October.

■ Further Education: VAT

Damian Hinds: [\[6003\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether students at post 16 special colleges who have an Education, Health and Care plan will be exempt from VAT on college fees.

Damian Hinds: [\[6004\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether health and social care charges for students at special schools and colleges will be exempt from VAT.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6845\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much of the projected revenue raised by introducing VAT on independent school fees will be allocated to (a) special education and (b) social, emotional and mental health needs.

James Murray:

The removal of the VAT exemption for private school fees will not impact pupils with the most acute additional needs, where these can only be met in private schools. Local Authorities (LAs) fund pupils' places in private schools where their needs can only be met in a private institution. In England, where attendance at that private institution is required by a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), LAs will be able to reclaim the VAT on the fees from HMRC. This includes at post-16 special colleges.

Where a single fee is paid for students at special schools or colleges to cover all aspects of the service they provide (including health and social care), the VAT status of that fee will be determined by whether the predominant element of the supply is education. HMRC will publish further guidance to assist schools before the Budget.

The Government will confirm the introduction of these tax policy changes at Budget, at which point the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) will certify the Government's costings for these measures. We expect the changes to raise significant amounts of revenue, securing additional funding to help deliver the Government's commitments relating to education and young people.

■ Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[5747\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Pursuant to the Answer of 4 September 2024, to Question 2625, on Prime Minister: Public Expenditure, what the monetary value is of the 2% administrative savings that each individual government department and public body will be expected to make; and in which financial years those savings will fall.

Darren Jones:

As part of the tough measures the Chancellor is taking to address the £22bn inheritance, departments were asked to reduce their admin budgets by 2%, saving £225 million across departments. 2024-25 administration budgets are set out in 2024 Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis (PESA).

■ Holiday Accommodation: Taxation

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[6552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of terminating the furnished holiday lettings tax regime on the tourism sector.

James Murray:

The Government will abolish the Furnished Holiday Lets (FHLs) tax regime from April 2025. This will equalise the tax treatment of FHL and non-FHL landlords' income and gains.

The Government wants to support visitor accommodation alongside housing for longer-term residents to rent or buy. Achieving this balance is crucial in supporting the tourism sector, and many of the people that who work in the sector need access to local housing.

Nick Timothy:

[\[6742\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to implement the proposed changes in the tax treatment of furnished holiday lettings in the next financial year.

James Murray:

The Government will abolish the Furnished Holiday Lets (FHLs) tax regime from April 2025. This will equalise the tax treatment of FHL and non-FHL landlords' income and gains.

■ Housing: Taxation

Shaun Davies:

[\[6706\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a levy on foreign ownership of residential properties.

James Murray:

Non-UK residents purchasing residential property in England or Northern Ireland currently pay a 2 percentage point Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) surcharge on top of the standard residential SDLT rates.

The Government keeps all tax policy under review and would have to consider the merits of any new taxes in the round as part of a fiscal event. The Chancellor will set out her Budget on the 30th October.

■ Ian Corfield

John Glen: [6103]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what process was followed in the recruitment of Ian Corfield to the role of Director of Investment.

John Glen: [6104]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the salary of Mr Ian Corfield was in his role as Director of Investment.

James Murray:

Ian Corfield was appointed via Exception to the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles. The Department followed the established process to make the appointment and was granted the required approval from the Civil Service Commission. Ian Corfield was appointed on a short-term basis to carry out urgent work in support of the new government's International Investment Summit in October. A full recruitment process could not have been completed in the time available.

Ian Corfield was appointed to the role of Director of Investment at the SCS2 pay band minimum in line with HMT policy on appointing external candidates into the Civil Service. He has since been appointed, unpaid, as a direct ministerial appointment.

■ Individual Savings Accounts

Rebecca Paul: [7245]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to adjust the upper limit on house purchases using a Lifetime ISA in line with inflation.

Ben Coleman: [7371]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will (a) increase the Lifetime ISA property value limit and (b) reduce the early access penalty for Lifetime ISAs at the next Budget.

Ben Coleman: [7372]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will commission research into the potential impact of the (a) property price limit and (b) exit penalty on first-time buyers who wish to use Lifetime ISAs to buy a property.

Tulip Siddiq:

Data from the latest [UK House Price Index](#) demonstrates that the average price paid by first-time buyers remains below the LISA property price cap in all regions of the UK.

Any unauthorised withdrawals are subject to a 25% withdrawal charge. This recoups the Government bonus, any interest or growth arising from it, and a proportion of the

individual's initial savings. HMRC is currently undertaking social research on the LISA with existing account holders and those who are eligible but have not opened a LISA.

HMRC commits to publishing all research in their Annual Report and Accounts. The findings from all strands of research on the LISA will be published in due course.

The Government keeps all aspects of savings tax policy under review.

■ **Local Government Finance: Devolution**

Angus MacDonald:

[7395]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had discussions with the devolved Administrations on the adequacy of fiscal support for local councils across the UK, in the context of (a) recent trends in levels of demand for services, (b) the impacts of inflation and (c) increases in energy costs; and what steps her Department is taking to ensure that local authorities receive adequate funding for the provision of their services.

Darren Jones:

Funding for local councils is a devolved responsibility and it is for the Devolved Governments to decide on their level of funding.

I met with all Devolved Government Finance Ministers in Belfast on 3rd October at a meeting of the Finance: Interministerial Standing committee. We discussed our approach to resetting relations, driving economic growth and delivering the vital public services on which our citizens depend.

The Chancellor has also met with the First Ministers and Finance Ministers from the Devolved Governments over the summer to hear their priorities.

■ **Local Growth Deals: North Antrim**

Jim Allister:

[8090]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funding for the Bushmills area as part of the Causeway Coast and Glens growth deal.

Darren Jones:

We are continuing to work closely with all Deal partners to understand the benefits of the City and Growth Deals programme, including the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal.

Many of the City and Growth Deals have decades' worth of funding attached so it is right that we consider any remaining deals that haven't been signed yet in the round at the Spending Review, as we will have to do with many other long-term funding programmes.

We will provide certainty over the remaining Deals following phase 1 of the Spending Review which will conclude on 30 October.

■ Motor Insurance: Racial Discrimination

Anna Dixon:

[\[7217\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had discussion with the Financial Conduct Authority on the racial disparity in motor insurance premiums identified in the Citizens Advice report, Discriminatory pricing: exploring the ethnicity penalty in the insurance market, published in March 2022.

Tulip Siddiq:

Treasury Ministers and officials have regular meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors on an ongoing basis.

Under the Equality Act 2010 insurers cannot use race as a risk factor when determining the price of insurance. The Government is also determined that insurers should treat their customers fairly and firms are required to do so under the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) rules.

The FCA's rules requires firms to ensure their products offer fair value (i.e. the price a consumer pays for an insurance product or service to be reasonable compared to the overall benefits they can expect to receive). The FCA has powers to act against firms that fail to comply.

■ Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payment

Vikki Slade:

[\[7333\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing (a) Pension Credit and (b) the personal allowances of pensioners to mitigate the potential impact of the removal of Winter Fuel Allowance.

Darren Jones:

The standard minimum income guarantee for a single person and couples in Pension Credit rises in line with average earnings to ensure that it maintains its relative value over time to ensure that Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit) will continue to provide a safety net for those who find themselves without an adequate income in retirement.

The government wants to ensure that individuals receive the support that they are eligible for, and we have already seen a greater than 152% increase in Pension Credit claims since the July Statement.

The previous government announced the Personal Allowance (PA) would be maintained at its current level of £12,570 until April 2028. The PA—the amount of income someone can earn before paying income tax—is currently set high enough to ensure that those pensioners whose sole income is the new State Pension or basic State Pension, and who have not deferred and do not receive protected payments, do not have to pay any income tax.

■ Pension Credit: Eligibility

Nick Timothy:

[\[6737\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will ensure data held by HMRC to help identify people eligible for Pension Credit is made available to local authorities.

James Murray:

His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is subject to a strict duty of confidentiality and may only disclose information it holds where the law allows.

There are a number of exceptions to this duty which allow HMRC to share information. These include sharing information where a statutory information sharing gateway provides for it.

HMRC and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) work closely to deliver information to Local Authorities (LAs) to enable them to administer a number of benefits and payments.

Where there is a legal basis for LAs to receive or re-use HMRC information shared with them via DWP for the purpose of identifying those eligible for benefits, including Pension Credit, HMRC will work with DWP to support such requests.

■ Pensions: Fraud

Lee Anderson:

[\[6494\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to protect pension contributions paid into (a) NEST and (b) Government pension schemes against fraud.

Darren Jones:

This Government is committed to providing better outcomes to members of pension schemes, which includes preventing them from losing their hard-earned savings to fraud. Where there is a transfer of a pension measures are in place that give trustees of all pensions schemes the ability to block or delay the transfer if there are circumstances in the transfer process that indicates there could be a scam involved

Nest is independent of Government and operates under the Nest Order which provides the legislative framework. As an authorised Master Trust, Nest is required to operate under broader pensions legislation and the relevant protections that apply. The Trustee has a fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of Nest members and Nest has its own policy and processes in place to ensure members pots are protected.

Most statutory Public Service Pension Schemes are unfunded, and there is thus a limited opportunity for the misappropriation of pension contributions or scheme funds. Government departments and scheme administrators responsible for individual Public Service Pension Schemes are required to manage fraud risks, in line with guidance set out in Managing Public Money.

■ Premium Bonds

Alex Mayer: [\[6920\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of all purchases of premium bonds made in the last financial year were under the value of (a) £100, (b) £1000 and (c) £10,000.

Tulip Siddiq:

According to National Savings and Investments (NS&I), in the 2023/24 there were:

- 4,520,011 Premium Bonds sales under the value of £100, which equates to 32.3% of all Premium Bonds sales.
- 10,344,803 Premium Bonds sales under the value of £1,000, which equates to 74.0% of all Premium Bonds sales.
- 12,991,219 Premium Bonds sales of under £10,000, which equates to 97.4% of all Premium Bonds sales.

This does not include the value of any prizes that were reinvested into Premium Bonds.

Further information on investments received in 2023/24, across NS&I's products, can be found in its latest Annual Reports and Accounts published earlier [this year](#).

■ Private Education: VAT

Damian Hinds: [\[5975\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue to the Exchequer was raised from (a) VAT, (b) business rates, (c) employer contributions to the teachers' pension scheme and (d) any other source paid by the independent school sector in the 2023-24 financial year; and what estimate her Department has made of the revenue that will be raised in the (i) 2025-26 and (ii) 2026-27 financial year.

Damian Hinds: [\[5989\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has received legal advice on the compatibility of plans to charge VAT on independent school fees with Articles (a) 2 and (b) 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Damian Hinds: [\[5991\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate her Department has made of the annual cost to HM Revenue and Customs of reimbursing VAT to local councils for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Alex Sobel: [\[6432\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when private schools should become VAT registered.

James Murray:

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

Any fees paid from 29 July 2024 relating to the term starting in January 2025 onwards will be subject to VAT. Private schools that are not currently registered for VAT will be able to register after 30 October. Further guidance can be found on the GOV.UK website here: [Charging and reclaiming VAT on goods and services related to private school fees - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charging-and-reclaiming-vat-on-goods-and-services-related-to-private-school-fees)

The Government's forecast of the revenue raised from these changes will be scrutinized by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility before being published at Budget on 30 October. Details of the Government's assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes will also be published at Budget in the usual way.

The Government has considered the policy's interaction with Human Rights law, and is confident that it is compatible with the UK's obligations under the Human Rights Act.

Damian Hinds:[\[5976\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2809 on Private Education: Taxation, whether the tax information and impact note will include an assessment of the potential impact of this policy on different religious faiths.

Damian Hinds:[\[6008\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether charged-for education provided in (a) church premises and (b) other dual-use locations that are charitably exempt will be liable for (i) VAT and (ii) business rates.

Damian Hinds:[\[6009\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what criteria her Department plans to use to classify schools as English language schools for the purposes of determining an exemption from VAT.

Damian Hinds:[\[6010\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it is her policy that bi-lingual schools will be exempt for paying (a) VAT and (b) business rates.

Damian Hinds:[\[6011\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it is her policy that independent schools part-funded by overseas governments will be exempt from paying VAT.

Alex Burghart:

[6418]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will give further education corporations the same VAT status as Multi Academy Trusts and 16 to 19 Free Schools.

James Murray:

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

Any fees paid from 29 July 2024 relating to the term starting in January 2025 onwards will be subject to VAT. Furthermore, where a school in England has charitable status, the Government will legislate to remove their eligibility to business rates charitable rate relief. This is intended to take effect from April 2025, subject to Parliamentary passage.

This includes independent schools, part-funded by overseas governments, bi-lingual schools, and faith schools. The final policy design will be confirmed at the Budget.

A technical note setting out the details, alongside draft VAT legislation, was published in July and is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools>.

Business rates are administered by local government. Therefore, local authorities are responsible for determining eligibility for reliefs, including with respect to dual-use locations. Charitable rates relief is available to properties deemed to be 'wholly or mainly' used for charitable purposes. Certain properties are exempt from business rates including buildings that are places of public religious worship and buildings used for the training and/or welfare of disabled persons. The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is responsible for determining whether a property meets the necessary legal requirements to be exempt. Details on final policy decisions regarding the removal of private schools' eligibility for charitable rate relief will be set out at the Budget.

The Government has carefully considered the impact that changes to the tax treatment of private schools will have on pupils and their families across both the state and private sector, as well as the impact they will have on state and private schools. Following scrutiny of the Government's costing by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility, the Government will confirm its approach to these reforms at the Budget on 30 October, and set out its assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes in a Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN). TIINs give a clear explanation of the policy objective, including details of the tax impact on the Exchequer, business, individuals and any equalities impacts.

These changes will not affect the VAT status of FE Colleges. Maintained schools are funded by local authorities, who are able to recover their VAT through the s33 VAT refund scheme, which aims to ensure VAT is not a burden on local taxation. Academies can also recover their VAT under s33B, to ensure they are not

disincentivised from leaving LA control. FE colleges do not meet the rationale for admission to either refund scheme.

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[\[6308\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made a comparative assessment of the potential merits of introducing VAT on private schools (a) during the academic year and (b) at the start of the new academic year.

Sir Oliver Dowden:

[\[6309\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of pupils moving schools midway through the academic year as a result of the imposition of VAT on independent schools on (a) staff, (b) parents and (c) pupils.

Clive Lewis:

[\[6320\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of charging VAT on private school fees on levels of demand for state school places.

James Murray:

On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools. Any fees paid from 29 July 2024 relating to the term starting in January 2025 onwards will be subject to VAT.

A start date of January 2025 will have given schools and parents 5 months to prepare for the changes, and it is right that we introduce these changes as soon as possible in order to raise the funding needed to help deliver our education priorities.

The Government has carefully considered the impact that these changes will have on pupils and their families across both the state and private sector, as well as the impact they will have on state and private schools. Following scrutiny of the Government's costing by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility, the Government will confirm its approach to these reforms at the Budget on 30 October, and set out its assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes in the normal way.

The Government recognises that some pupils may subsequently move into the state education sector. However, the number of pupils who may switch schools as a result of these changes represents a very small proportion of overall pupil numbers in the state sector.

The Government is confident that the state sector will be able to accommodate any additional pupils and that these policies will not have a significant impact on the state education system as a whole.

Jess Brown-Fuller:

[\[7694\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether providers of higher-level qualifications funded through the Dance and Drama Awards scheme will be subject to VAT.

James Murray:

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

As announced in July this change will apply to private schools providing full-time education for pupils of school age or to institutions providing full-time education for 16-19 year olds for a fee, where that institution is principally concerned with providing education suitable to that age range.

The draft legislation was published in July and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools>.

■ Probation Service: Finance**Clive Lewis:****[6327]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department plans to increase real terms funding for the Probation Service in the context of the prisoner early release scheme.

Darren Jones:

As the Chancellor has made clear, all future spending decisions will be negotiated through the Spending Review process and announced on October 30th through the Budget.

■ Property Development: Taxation**Anna Dixon:****[7207]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a tax on unbuilt developments where planning permission has lapsed; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of such a tax on the construction of new homes.

James Murray:

Introducing new taxes requires a comprehensive evaluation of a variety of factors including, but not limited to, complexity, fairness, and simplicity for the taxpayer. The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the usual tax policy making process and welcomes representations to help inform future decisions on tax policy. Any changes are generally announced at fiscal events, where decisions are taken in the round.

The Government has committed to delivering 1.5 million new homes and has consulted on reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework to deliver key steps to get Britain building, including the reintroduction of mandatory housing targets.

■ Public Health: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[7798\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps through the forthcoming Budget to restore public health grants to real terms 2015 levels.

Darren Jones:

Detailed spending decisions are a matter for the Chancellor and will be announced at the Budget on 30 October. DHSC will confirm 2025/26 public health grant allocations following the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Regional Airports: Air Passenger Duty

Sally Jameson:

[\[7041\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of Air Passenger Duty on the growth of regional airports.

James Murray:

Air Passenger Duty (APD) exists to ensure that aviation makes a fair contribution to the public finances. The Government understands that regional airports tend to have a greater proportion of domestic and short-haul international passengers compared to larger airports.

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. In 2023/24, 13m passengers on domestic flights benefited from the creation of the domestic band.

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

■ Shipping: Russia

Steve Darling:

[\[6746\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure UK insurers and other maritime service providers verify compliance with the oil price cap for shipping contracts involving vessels potentially linked to Russia's shadow fleet.

Tulip Siddiq:

HM Treasury's Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) supports industry in complying with the Oil Price Cap. On 16 February 2024, OFSI issued updated industry guidance (UK Maritime Services Ban and Oil Price Cap Industry Guidance). OFSI also co-authored a joint G7+ Coalition Advisory for the Maritime Oil Industry and Related Sectors, issued 12 October 2023, and a Price Cap Coalition Oil Price Cap Compliance and Enforcement Alert, issued 1 February 2024. Alongside this,

OFSI has also published updated Financial Sanctions Guidance for Maritime Shipping, issued 5 March 2024.

From 19 February 2024, the price cap attestation model was updated to require attestations to be shared on a per-voyage basis, as part of a relevant transaction. As well as per-voyage attestations, the new model requires itemised ancillary costs to be recorded and provided to contractual counterparties upon request. These measures were designed to make it easier for good-faith actors to reliably comply with the price cap, through providing greater transparency for UK service providers engaging in the trade and transport of Russian oil.

OFSI takes a proactive enforcement approach and is currently undertaking a number of investigations into suspected breaches of the Oil Price Cap, using powers under SAML A to request information and working closely with our international partners in the G7+ Coalition.

The UK has also taken action directly targeting shadow fleet vessels and entities that seek to undermine UK sanctions and facilitate the trade and transportation of Russian oil and oil products. Since Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has sanctioned 25 vessels and 18 entities and individuals linked to Russia's shadow fleet, under its ship specification and designation powers.

■ Spectacles: VAT

Claire Hazelgrove:

[\[7250\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing VAT on spectacles for people with a disability.

James Murray:

The government offers support for individuals to help with the cost of glasses through NHS optical vouchers. Those eligible for help include children and those on certain income-related benefits. The value of optical vouchers varies from £42.40 to £233.56, depending on the level of a patient's glasses prescription.

While spectacles attract the standard rate of VAT, health and welfare services, including opticians and eye tests, are exempt from VAT made by qualifying opticians.

One of the key considerations for any potential new VAT relief is whether the cost saving is likely to be passed on to consumers. Evidence suggests that businesses only partially pass on any savings from lower VAT rates.

VAT is a broad-based tax that applies to most goods and services. Any new VAT relief must be considered in the context of the current fiscal position. As set out at the end of July, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has pledged to restore economic stability after revealing £22 billion of unfunded pressures in 2024-25 inherited from the previous Government.

Restoring fiscal responsibility and economic stability are critical to getting our economy growing and keeping taxes, inflation, and mortgages as low as possible.

As with all taxes, the Government welcomes representations on how the tax system can be improved.

■ Sunscreens: VAT

Sarah Champion:

[\[7460\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of the potential impact of removing VAT from sunscreen on the incidence of (a) melanoma and (b) non-melanoma skin cancers.

James Murray:

VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption, and the 20 per cent standard rate applies to most goods and services. It is the UK's second largest tax, forecast to raise £176 billion in 2024/25. Tax breaks reduce the revenue available for public services, and must represent value for money for the taxpayer.

One of the key considerations when assessing any potential new VAT relief is whether the cost saving is likely to be passed on to consumers. Evidence suggests that businesses only partially pass on any savings from lower VAT rates. In some cases, therefore, reliefs do not represent the best value for money, as there is no guarantee that savings would be passed on to consumers, and therefore no guarantee that it would make certain products more accessible to the public.

■ Taxation: Electronic Government

Blake Stephenson:

[\[7616\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to help support small businesses to comply with the Making Tax Digital for Income Tax regulations.

James Murray:

HMRC have worked closely with stakeholders in the business and tax communities on the design and scope of MTD for Income Tax to make sure it is fit for purpose. This has led to practical design changes and improvements that will benefit users.

HMRC is currently testing the IT functionality, customer support model and customer experience for MTD for Income Tax.

HMRC will continue to provide guidance and communications to help small businesses, landlords and their agents prepare for this change.

Ahead of rollout, HMRC will also introduce a comprehensive communications campaign, based on customer insight, to further increase awareness.

■ Textiles: Recycling

Jess Asato:

[\[6939\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) VAT reductions, (b) tax breaks and (c) other financial incentives for businesses engaged in (i) upcycling and (ii) the sustainable production of textiles.

James Murray:

The Government has inherited a challenging fiscal position, with debt near 100% of GDP and borrowing more than double what it was before the pandemic. In addition to this, a Treasury audit in July 2024 revealed an additional £21.9 billion pressure on departmental spending.

As a result, the Government will have to take difficult decisions in relation to tax, spending and welfare at the budget.

Defra are convening a taskforce of experts to help to develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England. The Taskforce will consider the evidence for action right across the economy, and as such the Taskforce will evaluate what interventions may need to be made in the textiles sector as it helps to develop the Circular Economy Strategy.

■ Tobacco: Excise Duties**Paul Davies:****[7303]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to help ensure that tobacco duty contributes to the costs of (a) tobacco control and (b) public health initiatives.

James Murray:

The UK has some of the highest tobacco duty rates in the world, payable at £316.70 per thousand cigarettes, plus 16.5% of the retail price and £412.32 per kilogram for hand rolling tobacco. These have helped to support a significant fall in smoking prevalence over the last 10 years to 11.9%. The Chief Medical Officer considers them a key part of the wider anti-smoking strategy.

The government is also funding more smoking cessation services. This includes providing an additional £70 million per annum for local Stop Smoking Services, working to ensure all NHS hospitals offer 'opt-out' smoking cessation services and delivering the national Smoke-free Pregnancy Financial Incentives scheme and the Swap to Stop scheme.

As with all taxes, the Government keeps tobacco duty rates under review during its Budget process.

■ Treasury: Civil Servants**John Glen:****[6105]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people have been appointed to civil service positions without open competition in her Department since 4 July 2024; what their (a) job titles and (b) salary bands are; and on what basis each was appointed.

James Murray:

Since 4 July 2024, 13 individuals have been appointed to Civil Service positions without open competition. Regarding the request for job titles and salary bands, the Treasury does not comment on individual appointments at Deputy Director level or below.

At Director level and above, 1 appointment has been made without competition since 4 July 2024.

The Director of Investment was appointed to the SCS2 pay band via Exception to the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles. The appointee has since been appointed, unpaid, as a direct ministerial appointment.

■ Treasury: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7020\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

James Murray:

HM Treasury has one departmental car that is allocated to the Chief Secretary, and it is used by other Treasury junior ministers when available. Due to driver working patterns it is not always the exact same make and model of car. The budget for this service is £120,000 per year.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7021\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what her Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

James Murray:

HM Treasury follows the guidance set out by the Cabinet Office on use by Senior Officials, which has been in place since before 24 May 2024.

■ Treasury: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[\[6106\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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.

James Murray:

As of 8 October 2024, one direct ministerial appointment was made. Ian Corfield was appointed as an unpaid International Investment Summit Adviser by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Ian Corfield will be in post until 31 October 2024.

Professor Alan Taylor has been appointed by the Chancellor following a fair and open recruitment process run by HM Treasury to join the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on 2 September for a 3-year term, replacing current external member Professor Jonathan Haskel who has been on the MPC since September 2018.

No appointments have been asked to resign or have been removed from their posts since 4 July 2024.

■ Valuation Office Agency

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[6640\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data her Department holds on the (a) number of applications for valuations of any type by the District Valuer that took longer than (i) three, (ii) six and (iii) 12 months to be completed from the point of application, by type of valuation and (b) the average timeframe for processing applications, in the latest period for which data is available; and if she will make a comparative estimate of the average timeframe for processing requests from NHS organisations.

James Murray:

The Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) District Valuer Services (DVS) provides independent, impartial, valuation and professional property advice across the entire public sector, and where public money or public functions are involved. In 2023-24 in total DVS received around 24,500 separate case requests, spread across 139 different case types. The length of time taken to complete a case varies depending on case type and complexity. The VOA does not hold data broken down into timeliness figures for the timeframes specified and as a comparison across all case types.

In 2023-24 the VOA handled around 3,400 cases relating to NHS premises, including over 2,900 cases relating to reimbursement of GP premises costs. Specifically, for cases related to reimbursement of GP premises costs, 55% were completed by DVS in under 3 months, 26% were completed between 3 and 6 months, 15% completed between 6 and 12 months, and 4% took over 12 months to complete. On average it took 121 days to complete a reimbursement of GP premises cost case, including negotiations with GPs and their advisers, so timeframes are not solely within the VOA's control.

■ Widowed People: Workplace Pensions

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[5877\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many surviving spouses in each public sector pension scheme have lost their pension because they have (a) remarried and (b) established a (i) legal and (ii) other partnership.

Darren Jones:

The data required to answer this question is not held centrally by HM Treasury, but some of the relevant data may be held by individual Public Service Pension Schemes (PSPSs). While the cessation of survivor pensions upon remarriage or cohabitation was a common feature across older legacy PSPSs, all active members of major PSPSs are now accruing pensions in reformed schemes that do not cease survivor pensions in the case of remarriage or cohabitation.

WALES**■ Wales Office: Paternity Leave****Shaun Davies:**[\[7916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in her Department was in each of the last three years.

Jo Stevens:

The average length of paternity leave taken by staff in my Department in the last three years was 14 days in 2021-22, 0 days in 2022-23, and 14 days in 2023-24.

In the current 2024-25 year, 14 days have been taken.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Black History Month****Tom Hayes:**[\[7125\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to promote Black History Month.

Bridget Phillipson:

This Government is clear: someone's race or ethnicity should never be a barrier to opportunity. For Black History Month, we are celebrating Black British changemakers, past and present, and encouraging others to do the same.

We are also engaging with grassroots activists and community leaders, and showcasing their work on Government channels. We stand in solidarity with those affected by racism and are committed to understanding and addressing the causes of racial inequality.

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment**John Glen:**[\[6092\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 2316 on Equality, if she will publish guidance on the application of the socio-economic duty on (a) Civil Service recruitment (i) decisions and (ii) policy and (b) public appointments.

Anneliese Dodds:

The duty will require public bodies, when making strategic decisions, to actively consider how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Guidance will be developed that will help relevant authorities comply with the duty once commenced. We will be updating Parliament on this in due course.

■ Conversion Therapy

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[7363\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether it is her policy to ban conversion therapy for (a) asexual, (b) bisexual, (c) intersex and (d) nonbinary people.

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government's position is that conversion practices are abuse. Such practices have no place in society and must be stopped.

Through the development of the Conversion Practices Bill, this Government will deliver on our manifesto commitment to bring forward a full, trans-inclusive ban on conversion practices, implementing key safeguards for LGBT people.

We are committed to listening to all viewpoints as this work progresses, and to engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, organisations and all LGBT communities.

Nadia Whittome: [\[8247\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether forthcoming legislation to ban conversion practices will include protections for those who are asexual.

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government's position is that conversion practices are abuse. Such practices have no place in society and must be stopped.

Through the development of the Conversion Practices Bill, this Government will deliver on our manifesto commitment to bring forward a full, trans-inclusive ban on conversion practices, implementing key safeguards for LGBT people.

We are committed to listening to all viewpoints as this work progresses, and to engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, organisations and all LGBT communities.

■ LGBT+ People: Discrimination and Hate Crime

Uma Kumaran: [\[7189\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to help (a) end discrimination against LGBT+ people and (b) ensure that LGBT+ hate crime is investigated.

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government believes it is crucial that all LGBT+ people are safe and protected from discrimination in all its forms.

Work is underway on the various Manifesto commitments that will enhance legislative protections for LGBT+ individuals. This Government has already committed to bring forward parity in the law to make all existing strands of hate crime constitute an aggravated offence to greater protect LGBT+ victims and to deliver a trans-inclusive ban on abusive conversion practices.

The police are operationally independent and work in line with the College of Policing's standards. The Government of course expect the police to fully investigate all offences and to work with the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.

■ Lone Parents: Discrimination

Tom Hayes:

[\[7122\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to help tackle discrimination against single parents looking for work.

Anneliese Dodds:

We are clear that the Equality Act 2010, which provides protection against direct and indirect discrimination across a range of fields, including employment, service provision and housing, already offers some protection for single parents.

Significantly more women than men, and disproportionately more members of particular ethnic groups, have single parent responsibilities. Accordingly, employers in particular must ensure that their rules and practices which may affect single parents do not indirectly discriminate on grounds of sex or race. We continue to keep the effectiveness of the Act under review and are committed to supporting every woman to thrive in her working life.

■ Sexuality: Equality

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[\[7361\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of including asexuality as a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010.

Anneliese Dodds:

We have no plans for including asexuality as a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 covers discrimination in employment, the provision of goods, services, and public functions, housing, premises, education, transport, occupational pensions, clubs, and associations. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of nine characteristics, including sex and sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is defined under the Act as a person's orientation towards persons of the opposite sex, the same sex, or of either sex. The Act also prohibits discrimination based on the perception that someone has a protected characteristic, for example, that they are heterosexual, lesbian, or gay when they are not.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Access to Work Programme****Steve Darling:****[6749]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Access to Work scheme applications are outstanding (a) nationally and (b) by regional.

Alison McGovern:

The information requested about Access to Work applications that are outstanding by region is not readily available as it is a national service and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

As of 7th October 2024, there were around 55,500 applications outstanding nationally. The Department for Work and Pensions is committed to reducing waiting times for new applications for Access to Work, as well as renewals. We are considering the best way to deliver that for customers. We have increased the number of staff processing Access to Work claims and have prioritised applications from customers who are about to start a job, and renewals.

Please note:

- The data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal Departmental use only, and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.
- Applications includes new claims, renewals and change of circumstances.

Oliver Ryan:**[6917]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to reduce the time taken for Access to Work benefit applications to be approved.

Alison McGovern:

The Department for Work and Pensions is committed to reducing waiting times for new applications for Access to Work, as well as renewals. We are considering the best way to deliver that for customers. We have increased the number of staff processing Access to Work claims and have prioritised applications from customers who are about to start a job, and renewals.

■ Bereavement Support Payment**Rebecca Long Bailey:****[6292]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending bereavement support payments to widowers who were unmarried and living with their partner but who were not pregnant or eligible for child benefit.

Andrew Western:

Bereavement Support Payment is currently only available to those who are married, in a cohabiting relationship with dependent children, or in a civil partnership. A marriage or civil partnership is a legal contract associated with certain rights, including entitlement to benefits derived from another person's National Insurance contributions such as Bereavement Support Payment. In February 2023, the Government extended bereavement benefits to cohabitants with children in response to two court judgments. However, for families without children, the basic principle for only paying BSP where there was a legal union remains. The Government keeps the eligibility of all benefits including Bereavement Support Payments, under review.

Carer's Allowance**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[8093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has considered the potential merits of (a) reviewing and (b) reforming the Carer's Allowance.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting elderly or disabled relatives or friends. Sometimes unpaid carers will need to turn to the benefit system for financial support, so it is right that we keep Carer's Allowance under review, to see if it is meeting its objectives, and giving unpaid carers the help and support they need and deserve.

Carer's Allowance: Eligibility**Sorcha Eastwood:**[\[6904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the eligibility criteria for Carer's Allowance for people in receipt of the State Pension who have provided long-term unpaid care.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Although there is no upper age limit to claiming Carer's Allowance, it cannot normally be paid with the State Pension. It has been a long-held feature of the GB benefit system, under successive Governments, that where someone is entitled to two benefits for the same contingency, then whilst there may be entitlement to both benefits, only one will be paid to avoid duplication for the same need. Although entitlement to State Pension and Carer's Allowance arise in different circumstances they are nevertheless designed for the same contingency – as an income replacement. Carer's Allowance replaces income where the carer has given up the opportunity of full-time employment in order to care for a severely disabled person is unable to undertake full time employment due to their caring responsibilities, while State Pension replaces income in retirement. For this reason, social security rules operate to prevent them being paid together, to avoid duplicate provision for the same need.

However, if a carer's State Pension is less than Carer's Allowance, State Pension is paid and topped up with Carer's Allowance to the basic weekly rate of Carer's Allowance which is currently £81.90.

Where Carer's Allowance cannot be paid, the person will keep underlying entitlement to the benefit. This gives access to the additional amount for carers in Pension Credit of £45.60 a week and potentially other means-tested support. Around 125,000 people are receiving the Carer Premium with their Pension Credit. And even if a pensioner's income is above the limit for Pension Credit, they may still be able to receive Housing Benefit.

■ Carer's Allowance: Employment

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[6522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the earnings threshold for claiming Carer's Allowance on levels of employment amongst unpaid carers.

Andrew Cooper: [\[7050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to revise the (a) limits on earnings and (b) number of hours that can be worked for people in receipt of Carer's Allowance.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Government recognises the challenges unpaid carers are facing and is determined to provide them with the help and support they need and deserve. It is looking closely at how the benefit system currently does this.

The Secretary of State undertakes a statutory annual review of benefit and pensions, and the level of the Carer's Allowance earnings limit will be considered as a part of this review.

■ Carer's Allowance: Young People

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[6520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she make an assessment of the potential impact of the ineligibility for the Carer's Allowance of people in education for more than 21 hours a week on levels of poverty amongst young carers.

Sir Stephen Timms:

This Government recognises and appreciates the vital contribution made by all unpaid carers.

It is a general principle that people in full-time education should be supported by the educational maintenance system, rather than the social security benefit system. That is why full-time students are usually precluded from entitlement to income-related and income-maintenance benefits, including Carer's Allowance. Part-time students may be able to claim Carer's Allowance though. This reflects long-standing principles of the benefit system, and we have no plans to change these rules.

Department for Work and Pensions officials work very closely with their Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care counterparts to ensure that young carers get the help and support they need.

■ Children: Maintenance

Dame Caroline Dinenege:

[\[6048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to review the minimum reduction in the level of income that is required to trigger a review of a parent's child maintenance payments.

Andrew Western:

When a parent's income has changed by at least 25%, their calculation can be updated. The 25% income change tolerance was set to offer a stable maintenance liability, to provide greater certainty to both parents, whilst also remaining fair in dealing with unexpected and major changes in circumstances; and, to set the threshold at a level which supports operational efficiency.

The Department is conducting a review of the child maintenance calculation, and the 25% income change tolerance falls within the scope of this review.

Esther McVey:

[\[6193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Child Maintenance Service enforces parent (a) compliance and (b) payment.

Andrew Western:

Where a paying parent fails to pay on time or in full, the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) aims to take immediate action to recover the debt and re-establish compliance. If this is unsuccessful and the paying parent is employed, the CMS will use a Deductions from Earnings Order (DEO) to take payment directly from their wages.

The CMS also has a range of strong enforcement powers that can be used against those who consistently refuse to meet their obligations to provide financial support to their children.

The Department plans to enhance effectiveness in collecting arrears payments by delivering changes via regulations to streamline the enforcement process. This will remove the requirement to obtain a court issued liability order, and instead allow the Secretary of State to issue an administrative liability order. Introducing this simpler administrative process will enable the CMS to take faster action against those paying parents who actively avoid their responsibilities.

■ Children: Poverty

Andrew Cooper:

[\[7057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of trends in the level of child poverty in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

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 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 Strategy will be published in the Spring and will be UK-wide.

In September, the Taskforce heard from local leaders about the challenges faced in their communities, and how they 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.

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.

■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients: Social Security Benefits**Jo White:**[\[6885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to review payments of benefits to people serving full life terms in secure psychiatric units.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Where a court has decided that someone has committed a criminal offence but that they should say be sent to hospital rather than receiving a custodial sentence in prison, the length of their stay is determined by their recovery and the extent to which they are no longer a risk to themselves or others. Psychiatrist, and in some cases a Mental Health Tribunal or the Secretary of State for Justice, determine when they will be released. All patients in hospital are entitled to benefits. DWP keeps all benefits under review.

■ Cost of Living: Disability**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[5883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the cost of living for people with disabilities.

Sir Stephen Timms:

In England, the Household Support Fund (HSF) is a scheme providing discretionary support towards the cost of essentials, such as food and energy to those most in need, including disabled people. The current HSF is running from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025, with an additional £421m being provided to enable the extension in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

This winter, we are continuing to deliver the £150 Warm Home Discount to eligible low-income households and we expect it again to support well over three million households.

The extra costs disability benefits are a contribution to meeting the extra costs that arise from a disability or long term health condition. These benefits were not subject to the benefits freeze, were most recently updated by 6.7 per cent from 8 April 2024 and were qualifying benefits for the Disability Cost of Living Payments paid in 2022 and 2023. They are not means-tested, are non-contributory and thus paid regardless of any income or savings. They are also tax-free and worth up to £184.30 a week, or over £9,580 a year.

The extra costs disability benefits can be paid in addition to other financial support that those with a health condition or disability may be eligible for, such as Employment and Support Allowance, Universal Credit, premiums and additional amounts paid within the income-related benefits, Carer's Allowance, Motability and the Blue Badge scheme.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Civil Servants

John Glen:

[\[6119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people, other than special advisers, have been appointed to civil service posts in her 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.

Andrew Western:

The information requested is only collated centrally once a quarter and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Andrew Western:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles to its ministerial cadre/officials, as under previous administrations.

The Department for Work and Pensions is currently allocated one vehicle including allocated and shared vehicles. For security reasons specific details of the allocation including make and model of the vehicle is not issued.

The average cost to a Department for a single DPC (Department Pool Car) in 2024/25 financial year is £108K per annum.

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[7030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Andrew Western:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles. The arrangements relating to the using of vehicles in the Government Car Service is set out in the Civil Service Management Code. There has been no change in this policy since the general election.

■ Disability Living Allowance: Children

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[7366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of launching a digital version of the Disability Living Allowance for Children claim form that can be submitted online.

Andrew Western:

DLA Child is currently undergoing transformation as part of DWP's Service Modernisation Programme. Work is underway to explore options including how to apply, with the aim of providing a sustainable, simplified and accessible service and the ability for customers to self-serve.

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[7367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will review the current set of questions on the Disability Living Allowance for children claim form.

Sir Stephen Timms:

There are currently no plans to review the Disability Living Allowance claim form (DLA1).

The questions on the claim form are intended to gather sufficient information from parents/guardians to accurately award children and young people the appropriate Disability Living Allowance award.

■ Disability: Costs

Marsha De Cordova: [\[6443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Scope report entitled Disability Price Tag 2024, what steps she is taking to support disabled households with extra costs.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[6444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Scope report entitled Disability Price Tag 2024, published in September 2024, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of extra costs incurred by disabled people.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) provides a contribution to the extra costs that may arise from a disability or health condition. There is no objective way of deciding what an adequate level of PIP should be, as everyone has different requirements reflecting their own circumstances and priorities.

PIP is a non-contributory, non-means-tested, additional cost benefit and can be worth over £9,500 a year, tax free. Individuals can choose how to use the benefit, in the light of their individual needs and preferences. The benefit can also be paid in addition to any other financial or practical support someone may be entitled to such as Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance, NHS services, free prescriptions, help with travel costs to appointments or the Blue Badge scheme. The benefits have been consistently uprated in line with inflation since they were introduced and were, like other benefits, increased by 6.7% from 8 April 2024.

DWP pays close attention to the evidence base on the extra costs faced by disabled people; including academic research, analysis by Scope, and DWP's own commissioned research on the Uses of Health and Disability Benefits from 2019. In order to understand more, DWP is now undertaking a new survey of Personal Independence Payment customers to understand more about their disability related needs. This project has an advisory group of experts including representatives of the disability charity Scope, academic experts, and Disability Rights UK.

■ **Employment: Older People**

Andrew Cooper:

[\[7060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department provides to older jobseekers in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England who are looking to (i) reskill and (ii) change careers.

Alison McGovern:

Improving employment support and employment outcomes for people of all ages, including older jobseekers will play an important part in the government's growth mission. We will reform jobcentres, so they match people to the right job and combine employment, skills and career focused support to help individuals build their careers. A new national jobs and careers service will also help get more people into work and we will set out further detail in the upcoming Labour Market White Paper.

77 50PLUS Champions are working in all Districts across England, Wales and Scotland, to support older workers, including helping customers to reskill or change career.

■ Guide Dogs**Tom Hayes:**[\[7103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to (a) tackle discrimination against visually impaired people with guide dogs and (b) educate (i) businesses and (ii) public services on the (A) role and (B) importance of guide dogs.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Equality Act 2010 places a general duty on businesses and service providers to make reasonable adjustments to allow disabled people, including people with assistance dogs, access to goods and services so they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for enforcing the Equality Act. It has published guidance - 'Assistance Dogs: a guide for businesses and service providers' - to help businesses understand what they can do to meet their legal duties to assistance dog owners.

Duties and protections under the Equality Act are ultimately enforceable through the courts, and anybody who thinks that they have been discriminated against - including where access to an assistance dog has been refused - can take legal action to seek to resolve the issue. The EHRC will support people who have experienced discrimination through that process.

Over the years, Ministers have held discussions with Guide Dogs UK about their 'Open Doors' campaign which aims to achieve the fullest possible access for owners of guide dogs and assistance dogs. I fully support that campaign and the principle that Guide Dogs and assistance dogs should always be allowed access, except in the most exceptional circumstances.

Laura Kyrke-Smith:[\[7699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help ensure that guide dog owners are not refused access to (a) businesses and (b) other services.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Equality Act 2010 places a general duty on businesses and service providers to make reasonable adjustments to allow disabled people, including people with assistance dogs, access to goods and services so they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people.

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■ Housing Benefit and Pension Credit

Paula Barker:

[\[6620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department is taking steps with HMRC to data match housing benefit claimants with those eligible for pension credit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

DWP do not need HMRC data to match Housing Benefit customers with Pension Credit.

The government is actively working with external partners and local authorities to boost the uptake of Pension Credit and to target additional support to the poorest pensioners.

In November we will also be directly contacting pensioners who are in receipt of Housing Benefit but who may be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit – building on last year's "Invitation to Claim" trial.

In the longer term we will bring together the administration of Pension Credit and Housing Benefit as soon as operationally possible, so that pensioner households receiving Housing Benefit also receive any Pension Credit to which they are entitled.

■ Housing Benefit and Pension Credit: Costs

Lee Anderson:

[\[6482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of bringing together the administration of Pension Credit and Housing Benefit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No definitive estimate has yet been made as to the full cost of this policy. The Department has already begun working with local authorities to ensure that take-up of Pension Credit is maximised and implementation is appropriately planned. This work will help further our understanding of the costs so we deliver consistent and high quality support to pensioners.

■ Industrial Accidents: Construction

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to reduce work-related fatal injuries in the construction industry.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the workplace regulator for Great Britain, works closely with the construction industry to influence and promote safe working practices to prevent accidents and reduce worker ill health.

This year HSE is continuing its range of interventions and enforcement to reduce fatal injuries in the construction industry, which includes HSE inspectors investigating construction site incidents and inspecting construction site activity, taking enforcement where non-compliance with health and safety legislation is identified. HSE inspectors will continue to highlight poor practice, explain what good compliance looks like and seek to influence better management of health and safety risk on construction sites.

HSE will continue to work with industry, trade associations, professional bodies, trade unions and others who promote health and safety standards, such as the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) and Construction Industry Advisory Committee (CIAC). This collaboration brings improvements in the construction industry through sharing lessons learnt from incident investigations and promoting good practice in providing sector-specific information and guidance.

■ Industrial Injuries: Romford

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to reduce work-related injuries in Romford constituency.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the workplace regulator for Great Britain and their mission, set out in a 10-year strategy, is to protect people and places, which includes reducing work related injury.

HSE undertakes a range of activities to reduce work related injury, which includes conducting health and safety inspections of various businesses across a range of sectors; investigating health and safety concerns; investigating work related incidents; and taking enforcement action where non-compliance with health and safety legislation is found to improve standards.

HSE cannot specify what steps are taken to reduce work-related injuries in the Romford constituency as the same principals of inspection and investigation described apply across the country, not just in specific regions.

■ Job Creation: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[5533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support job creation schemes in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Alison McGovern:

As set out in our manifesto, we are committed to transforming our employment support system, to delivering the Youth Guarantee and to working with local areas to tackle inactivity.

The Jobcentre Plus Lincolnshire Partnership Team works closely with Southeast Lincolnshire Councils Partnership team on the commissioning of specific upskilling and into work programmes using Shared Prosperity Funding. These schemes all have expected outcomes and measures of progression into and towards the Labour Market with the employment teams of the commissioned partners connecting local employers to the programmes.

An example of this is the Connect to Grow Programme delivered by local area provider, Steadfast Training in the Spalding and South Holland area. The specific aim of this 13-week course is to secure employment, increase working hours (via a subsequent job) or enter self-employment. Presently there has been 135 starts, 102 completions and 40 successful outcomes with employers including Morrisons, Prezzo and Smart Cabs.

On a national level Strategic Relationship Team plays a key role in supporting local communities. Recruitment Managers across the county are working with local partners to make a difference to their communities through various activity. For example, B&M recently opened a local store in Lincoln with the support of the Strategic Relationship Team.

■ Jobcentres: Domestic Abuse

Tom Hayes:

[\[7098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what training work coaches receive on domestic abuse; and how often.

Alison McGovern:

All Work Coaches new to DWP receive mandatory learning to support vulnerable customers and complex needs as part of their induction and onboarding. This includes completion of 30-minutes of self-paced learning on domestic abuse.

The Work Coach learning journey includes an additional 90-minutes of facilitated learning on domestic abuse. The aim of this learning is to explain what support we can offer to a victim, or survivor, of domestic abuse. After completing their facilitated learning Work Coaches have access to self-paced learning to enable them to continue to build their knowledge and understanding in their day-to-day role.

■ Letter Boxes

Mike Amesbury: [\[7845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ask the Health and Safety Executive to issue guidance on the potential impact of low-level letter boxes on back injuries among postal workers.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) does not currently intend to produce guidance for postal workers on preventing the potential impact of back injuries from low-level letter boxes. HSE already publishes a range of guidance to help employers understand how to assess and prevent the risks of musculoskeletal injuries to their workers.

The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has carried out ergonomic research which includes a study on reaching letter boxes. The Building Safety Regulator is providing advice to the MHCLG on this research, including what changes may be necessary to the Building Regulations and its associated guidance. The research will be published in due course.

■ Local Housing Allowance

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[6903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to ensure Local Housing Allowance keeps pace with local rents.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates were restored to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024 for one year.

Decisions on LHA for future years will be taken in the context of the Government's missions, housing priorities, and the fiscal context.

■ Maternity Pay and Paternity Pay

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[6902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of (a) maternity and (b) paternity pay for (i) one child and (ii) multiple child births.

Andrew Western:

Maternity pay is primarily a health and safety provisions for pregnant working women. It is not intended to replace a woman's earnings completely, rather it provides a measure of financial security to help pregnant working women take time off work in the later stages of their pregnancy and in the months following childbirth.

We want new parents to be able to take time away from work. The standard rate of Statutory Maternity Pay, Maternity Allowance and Statutory Paternity Pay is reviewed annually. All three rates were raised again by 6.7% in April from £172.48 to £184.03.

These payments are not paid in respect of each child but in respect of each pregnancy. The qualifying conditions for both are generally based on a woman's, father's or partner's recent employment and earnings. They are not intended to assist with the costs associated with the birth of a new child or children.

■ Maternity Pay: Scotland

Melanie Ward:

[\[7151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much was spent on maternity pay in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Andrew Western:

Outturn for Maternity Pay consists of both Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance, and is published by country in the [Expenditure by country and region tables](#), last updated following Autumn Statement 2023.

Outturn for Scotland in the last five years available is as below

(Expenditure £ million, nominal terms)

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Statutory Maternity Pay Scotland	191.0	175.0	187.9	206.9	206.3
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Maternity Allowance Scotland	29.8	27.8	25.9	21.6	19.1

Maternity Allowance expenditure figures for Scotland are estimates using national and regional breakdowns from Official Statistics on Maternity Allowance benefit caseload and average amounts of benefit paid, applied to GB outturn expenditure totals.

Statutory Maternity Pay Expenditure figures for Scotland are estimates using national and regional breakdown of amounts of SMP paid to employees, applied to GB outturn expenditure totals.

Please note, these figures may change with the next publication of data, following Autumn Budget 2024.

We are not expecting to publish breakdowns of MA in Autumn 2024 as a new operational system to record MA cases is currently being developed. As such, Maternity Allowance statistics will be suspended from the quarterly statistics release on 13 August 2024 until data can be extracted from the new system. ([Maternity Allowance: quarterly statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).

■ Means-tested Benefits: North Cornwall**Ben Maguire:** [\[7375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the cost to (a) calculate and (b) distribute funding to people on means-tested benefits in North Cornwall constituency.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The department administers a wide variety of means-tested benefits and asked for clarification on which benefits you were specifically interested in. As no response was received we have interpreted the question to refer to the costs of administering all means-tested benefits in North Cornwall constituency. As such, I can confirm that no estimate has been made of administrative costs for the Department at constituency level.

■ Pensioners: Income**Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[5720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for the number of pensioners with an annual income of between £15,000 and £20,000.

Emma Reynolds:

We estimate that the number of pensioner units with an annual income of between £15,000 and £20,000 is approximately 1.5 million. This number has been rounded to the nearest 100,000.

This estimate is based on Pensioners' Incomes data derived from the Family Resources Survey and covers private households in the United Kingdom.

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.

■ Personal Independence Payment**Manuela Perteghella:** [\[6897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the PIP review process on (a) vulnerable and (b) disabled claimants.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Regular reviews are a key feature of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and ensure that payments accurately match the current needs of claimants. Awards can be paid at one of eight rates dependent on the claimants needs. Award durations are based on the likelihood of claimant's needs changing.

Award durations can vary from nine months to an on-going award. Guidance ensures that those claimants on the highest level of support whose needs will not improve receive an ongoing award of PIP with a light touch review at the 10-year point.

We understand that assessments can be stressful for some claimants which is why reviews are carried out without the need for the claimant to attend an assessment where sufficient and robust evidence is provided. Where an assessment is required, our Assessment Providers will choose the most appropriate method such as a phone, video or in-person assessment.

Alex Easton:

[\[7181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the consultation entitled Modernising support for independent living: the health and disability green paper, published on 29 April 2024, what her policy is on the use of (a) cash payments and (b) vouchers to people in receipt of the Personal Independence Payment; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of replacing cash payments with vouchers on disabled people.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The consultation entitled Modernising Support for Independent Living: the health and disability green paper ran for 12 weeks and closed on Monday 22 July. We received over 16,000 responses, demonstrating the depth of feeling about this important policy area. The consultation explored a range of policy proposals developed by the previous Government, including options for alternatives to cash support.

We will be considering our own plans for social security in due course. As we develop proposals, we will consider the potential impacts of reform on disabled people. This government is committed to championing the rights of disabled people and people with health conditions, and to the principle of working with disabled people so that their views and voices are at the heart of all that we do.

Melanie Onn:

[\[7462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of preparations made by Maximus for processing Personal Independence Payment claims.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Under the Functional Assessment Service (FAS) contracts which went live on 9 September 2024, assessment suppliers will deliver the Health Assessment Advisory Service on behalf of the department. These FAS contracts are central to the improvements we are making to health assessments.

Individuals now only need to deal with one supplier for the assessment of their health condition or disability, providing a simpler and more straightforward service. Each supplier including Maximus, will be held accountable to the same service delivery performance standards set by the department. Over the longer term, this will enable us to introduce a new integrated Health Assessment Service, which is being developed and built by the DWP Health Transformation Programme.

The department conducted an open and transparent procurement under the Public Contract Regulations in line with Government policies and considered the quality of

assessments, the experience for individuals, as well as the value for money offered by each of the bids.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals

Kim Johnson:

[\[6601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of personal independence payment appeals resulted in the decision being (a) lapsed and (b) overturned at tribunal hearing in each of the last five years.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The tables below provide information on the number of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeal clearances; and whether they were lapsed or overturned at a tribunal hearing.

Data provided is for the last five financial years.

Table 1: Number of appeals cleared for each financial year and how many were subsequently lapsed or overturned at a tribunal hearing

FINANCIAL YEAR	APPEALS CLEARED	APPEALS LAPSED	APPEALS OVERTURNED
2019-20	99,800	27,100	53,700
2020-21	77,000	26,300	37,000
2021-22	48,300	17,100	20,500
2022-23	65,300	19,000	30,500
2023-24	77,700	25,600	34,400

Table 2: Proportion of lapsed or overturned appeals for each financial year

FINANCIAL YEAR	APPEALS LAPSED (%)	APPEALS OVERTURNED (%)
2019-20	27	54
2020-21	34	48
2021-22	35	42
2022-23	29	47
2023-24	33	44

Kim Johnson:

[\[6602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people whose personal independence payment appeals resulted in the decision being (a) lapsed and (b) overturned at tribunal hearing had their decision changed from no award

to an award of both the daily living and mobility components at the enhanced rate in each of the last five years.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The table below provides information on the total number of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeals, which were either lapsed or overturned at a tribunal hearing. It also includes the number of claimants who had no award prior to the appeal, and had their award changed to Enhanced for both daily living and mobility components post lapsed or overturned appeal. Data provided is for the last five financial years.

Table 1: Number of lapsed and overturned appeals for each financial year and how many subsequently went from nil to enhanced on both daily living and mobility components

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL APPEALS LAPSED	TOTAL APPEALS OVERTURNED	APPEALS	
			APPEALS LAPSED (NIL AWARD TO ENHANCED-ENHANCED)	OVERTURNED (NIL AWARD TO ENHANCED-ENHANCED)
2019-20	27,100	53,700	2,900	5,100
2020-21	26,300	37,000	3,300	4,000
2021-22	17,100	20,500	1,900	2,200
2022-23	19,000	30,500	1,900	3,800
2023-24	25,600	34,400	2,100	4,900

The table below provides information on the proportion of PIP appeals which were either lapsed or overturned at a tribunal hearing, that previously had no award but had their award changed to enhanced for the daily living and mobility component post appeal. Data is provided for the last five financial years.

Table 2: Proportion of lapsed and overturned appeals whose award changed from nil to enhanced for each financial year

FINANCIAL YEAR	APPEALS OVERTURNED (NIL AWARD TO ENHANCED-ENHANCED)(%)	
	APPEALS LAPSED (NIL AWARD TO ENHANCED-ENHANCED)(%)	APPEALS OVERTURNED (NIL AWARD TO ENHANCED-ENHANCED)(%)
2019-20	11	9
2020-21	12	11
2021-22	11	11
2022-23	10	12

FINANCIAL YEAR	APPEALS LAPSED (NIL AWARD TO ENHANCED-ENHANCED)(%)	APPEALS OVERTURNED (NIL AWARD TO ENHANCED-ENHANCED)(%)
2023-24	8	14

Notes:

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100.
2. Data provided is for England and Wales (excluding Scotland).
3. These figures include appeal clearances and decisions for PIP New Claims, Reassessments, Award Reviews and Change of Circumstances. These figures include appeals cleared from April 2019 to March 2024.
4. Appeals data has been taken from DWP PIP customer system's management information. Therefore, this appeal data may differ from that held by His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service for various reasons such as delays in data recording and other methodological differences in collating and preparing statistics.
5. This data is unpublished data. It should be used with caution, and it may be subject to future revision.
6. A lapsed appeal is where DWP changed the decision in the customer's favour after an appeal was lodged but before it was heard at a tribunal hearing.
7. An overturned appeal is where the decision was changed in the customer's favour after an appeal was lodged and was heard at tribunal hearing.

Kim Johnson:**[6603]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Tables 5Aii and 6Aii in the official statistics entitled Personal Independence Payment: Official Statistics to July 2024, published on 17 September 2024, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the quality of personal independence payment decisions, in the context of the proportion of appeals which are lapsed or overturned at a tribunal hearing.

Sir Stephen Timms:

It is our aim to make the right decision as early as possible in the process. To support this we have made improvements to our decision-making processes, giving Decision Makers additional time to proactively contact customers if they think additional evidence may support the claim.

We will continue to learn from decisions overturned at appeal, for example we regularly gather feedback from Presenting Officers who attend tribunal.

Further, the Health Transformation Programme is transforming health and disability benefit services over the longer term to improve the claimant experience, and improve trust in our services and decisions. It is creating a new customer-focussed

Health Assessment Service and transforming the entire PIP service, from finding out about benefits and eligibility through to decisions and payments.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Cost of Living**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[6445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Personal Independence Payments at supporting disabled claimants with the additional costs of disability.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) provides a contribution to the extra costs that may arise from a disability or health condition. There is no objective way of deciding what an adequate level of PIP should be, as everyone has different requirements reflecting their own circumstances and priorities.

DWP pays close attention to the evidence base on the extra costs faced by disabled people; including academic research, analysis by Scope, and DWP's own commissioned research on the Uses of Health and Disability Benefits from 2019. In order to understand more, DWP is now undertaking a new survey of Personal Independence Payment customers to understand more about their disability related needs. This project has an advisory group of experts including representatives of the disability charity Scope and academic experts.

PIP is a non-contributory, non-means-tested, additional cost benefit and can be worth over £9,500 a year, tax free. Individuals can choose how to use the benefit, in the light of their individual needs and preferences. The benefit can also be paid in addition to any other financial or practical support someone may be entitled to such as Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance, NHS services, free prescriptions, help with travel costs to appointments or the Blue Badge scheme. The benefits have been consistently uprated in line with inflation since they were introduced and were, like other benefits, increased by 6.7% from 8 April 2024.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Mental Illness**

Jessica Toale:

[\[7660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the Personal Independence Payment assessment process for people with recognised long-term mental health conditions.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Research is in progress seeking to understand more about the experience of claiming Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for those with a mental health condition or neurodiversity.

Entitlement to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) depends on the effects that severe disability has on an individual with a long-term health condition or disability and not on a particular disability or diagnosis. The needs arising from mental health

conditions are assessed in the same way as for all other health conditions or disabilities.

■ Poverty: Children

Imogen Walker: [7956]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to reduce levels of child poverty in Hamilton and Clyde Valley constituency.

Imogen Walker: [7957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many adults were living in absolute poverty in Hamilton and Clyde Valley constituency in each of the last five years.

Imogen Walker: [7958]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many children were living in absolute poverty in Hamilton and Clyde Valley constituency in each of the last five years.

Alison McGovern:

Statistics for the total number of adults living in relative and absolute poverty are not available at a constituency level. Statistics on the total number of adults 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-hbai-statistics)

Statistics on the number of Children living in absolute and relative poverty per constituency are published annually in the “Children in low income families: local area statistics” publication and can be found in tabs “5_Relative_ParIC” and “6_Absolute_ParIC”. These are only produced on a before housing cost basis. A link to these statistics can be found here: Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2023 - GOV.UK [Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2023)

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.

The vital work of the Taskforce comes alongside our commitments to roll out free breakfast clubs at all primary schools, create 3,000 additional nurseries, as well as deliver our plan to make work pay to turn the minimum wage into a real living wage.

■ Sickness Benefits

Jim Shannon:

[\[7455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are in receipt of a sickness benefit.

Sir Stephen Timms:

People 'in receipt of a sickness benefits' have been assumed to be those in the main phase of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and the Universal Credit (UC) Limited Capability to Work (LCW) and Limited capability for work and work-related activity (LCWRA) groups. The Department regularly publishes Benefit Combination statistics on [Stat-Xplore](#) and these were [extended in February 2024](#) to include additional information for those on ESA and the UC Health Journey, so can now be used to provide the information, from quarter ending May 2019 to the end of the latest quarter, February 2024.

The figures can be obtained from the '[Benefit Combinations - Data from May 2019 for England and Wales](#)' and '[Benefit Combinations – Data from May 2019 for Scotland](#)' datasets using the 'Additional Claim Details' options. The 'ESA Phase of Claim' and 'UC Health Journey' options should be used to identify quarterly totals for ESA Support Group (SG), ESA Work-related Activity Group (WRAG), Universal Credit Limited Capability to Work (LCW) and Limited capability for work and work-related activity (LCWRA) groups, alongside Totals for those 'Not on ESA' and 'Not on UC or UC Health Journey'.

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

Using the Benefit Combinations data on Stat-Xplore and the assumptions above, there are 3,043,410 working age claimants of ESA (SG or WRAG) or UC Health (LCW or LCWRA) within GB, at Feb-24.

Notes:

1. Total is rounded to 10.
2. A person can claim both ESA and be on the UC health caseload and these claimants would be counted in each separate caseload in the published data on Stat-Xplore. Benefit Combinations data on Stat-Xplore allows these 'Dual claims' to be identified and only counted once in the above.

■ Social Security Benefits

Neil O'Brien:

[\[6464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average duration of phone calls to report hospital stays for claimants of (a) disability benefits, (b) low or no income benefits and (c) universal credit, including time spent on hold, was in each month since January 2010.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We do not hold the information requested.

Neil O'Brien:

[\[6465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many phone calls to report hospital stays for claimants of (a) disability benefits, (b) low or no income benefits and (c) universal credit there were in each month since January 2010.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We do not hold the information requested.

Neil O'Brien:

[\[6466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether claimants of (a) disability benefits and (b) low or no income benefits can report a hospital stay via a phone call; and if her Department will take steps to introduce a tell me once system.

Sir Stephen Timms:

For Disability Benefits, the usual route for the customer to notify us of a hospital admission is either via phone or in writing. Universal Credit customers can report a hospital stay via a phone call, they can also report it digitally via a journal message on their Universal Credit account or via a third party or supporter if consent has been given.

The Department is working on a digital channel for customers which will allow them to tell us about changes in one place. We do have plans to enable this going forward, but the work is not expected to be complete for at least another 12 months. Disability Benefits, other low-income benefits and later life services are in-scope for this work, but, at present, Universal Credit is not.

■ Social Security Benefits: Applications

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[6503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support is available for claimants unable to complete her Department's forms.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department is committed to pursuing a just, equal and inclusive society, ensuring independence and control for all customers, including all disabled people and those with complex needs. This means we need to ensure that our customers have access to reasonable adjustments or additional support, to enable them to access benefits and our services.

If a customer is unable to manage their own affairs, an appointee may be appropriate. For customers without an appointee, and unable to complete forms through other channels, the DWP Visiting service can conduct home visits to provide support. Some benefits also offer a telephony option.

Universal Credit customers can access the UC Helpline or the Help to Claim Universal Credit service, offered by the Citizens Advice Bureau. Support is also offered within our Jobcentres.

We aim to provide a tailored service, producing forms in alternative formats such as Braille, large print, coloured paper, as well as screen-readable formats such as word and web-accessible PDF. The Department's forms are designed to be accessible for people who use assistive technology. Our online PDFs are compliant with Work Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 accessible standards and claim form design and standards are regularly tested to ensure they continue to meet user needs.

■ Social Security Benefits: Deductions

Neil Coyle:

[\[8156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that deductions from social security payments do not leave people in relative poverty.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The primary aim of deductions in Universal Credit is to protect customers by providing a last resort repayment method for arrears of essential services, such as, housing, electricity and gas. The policy also enables social obligations, such as, paying Court Fines to be enforced when other repayment methods have failed, or are not cost effective, and ensures that benefit debt is recovered in a cost-effective manner.

The Department has an established process to support anyone experiencing financial hardship and encourages customers unable to afford the proposed rate of repayment to contact DWP Debt Management at the earliest opportunity. Departmental agents will, where applicable, negotiate an affordable and sustainable repayment plan. Furthermore, there is no limit on the number of times a person can request a change to their repayment rate. In exceptional cases, based on individual circumstances, a temporary suspension of recovery may be agreed.

We are committed to reviewing Universal Credit, to make sure it is doing the job we want it to.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[6447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to collaborate with (a) disabled people and (b) disabled people's organisations to help improve disabled people's interactions with the benefits system.

Sally Jameson:

[\[7651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking with (a) disabled people and (b) disabled people's organisations to help improve the experience of disabled people within the benefits system.

Sir Stephen Timms:

This Government is committed to championing the rights of disabled people and to the principle of working with them, so that their views and voices will be at the heart of all that we do.

The Health Transformation Programme (HTP) is modernising health and disability benefit services to improve user experience and increase trust in these services.

HTP service design has been informed by user research conducted with customers, operational staff and health care professionals, including one-to-one sessions with customers at each stage of their claim. The Department has also engaged with a significant number of stakeholder organisations, establishing positive relationships with representative groups by seeking their expertise before beginning to develop and test new processes.

This collaborative approach will help the department to tailor services to customer needs.

Wendy Chamberlain:[\[6515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to respond to the consultation entitled *Modernising support for independent living: the health and disability green paper*, which closed on 22 July 2024.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The consultation on *Modernising support for independent living: the health and disability green paper* ran for 12 weeks and closed on Monday 22 July.

There were over 16,000 responses to the consultation, which demonstrates the depth of feeling about the previous Government's proposals. I can confirm that responses to the set of proposals on the reform of Personal Independence Payment were mixed and for some proposals consistently negative.

We do not intend to publish a response to the previous Government's consultation. We will be considering our own plans for social security in due course and will fulfil our continued commitment to work with disabled people so that their views and voices are at the heart of all that we do.

Deirdre Costigan:[\[6778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to (a) clarify guidance and (b) introduce further safeguarding measures to ensure that disabled people who engage in regular physical activity do not risk a (a) review of and (b) reduction to their disability benefits.

Deirdre Costigan:[\[6779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that engagement in physical activity does not put disabled people at potential risk of losing their benefits.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Entitlement to disability benefits is based on a functional assessment of the person's ability to perform a range of activities relevant to the specific benefit.

Engaging in regular physical activity will not automatically result in reduction in benefit or trigger review or reassessment. It will, however, be considered when assessing the person's functional ability.

It is regrettable to note - as reported in the 'Activity Alliance Annual Disability and Activity Survey (June 2024)' - that "around two-fifths (38%) of disabled people say that a fear of their benefits or financial assistance being taken away prevents them from trying to be more active".

This government is committed to championing the rights of disabled people and to the principle of working with them, so that their views and voices will be at the heart of all that we do.

■ Social Security Benefits: Foreign Nationals**Rupert Lowe:**[\[6949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people of what nationality claiming an out of work benefit are not UK citizens; and what the cost to the public purse is of such benefits.

Andrew Western:

The Department does not hold data on the current nationality of all those claiming benefits. DWP policy responsibility lies in establishing a customer's eligibility to claim benefits. For non-UK / Irish citizens, an individual's specific nationality does not play a role in this and the Department therefore does not consistently collect nationality information at the point of benefit claim.

■ Surgical Mesh Implants**Steve Darling:**[\[7602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that her Department's assessors are aware of the symptoms of mesh injury.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Personal Independence Payment and Work Capability Assessments are functional assessments that consider the impact of a person's disability or health condition, rather than the condition itself. They have been developed considering the needs of people with the full range of physical, mental, and cognitive conditions.

The department has not specified that assessment suppliers (ASs) employ health professionals (HPs) who are specialists in specific conditions or impairments. Instead, the focus is on ensuring they are experts in disability analysis, focusing on the effects of health conditions and impairments on the individual's daily life.

HPs have access to guidance and support (such as Condition Insight Reports and Continuous Professional Development modules) on how certain conditions present

and how they might affect function. These were developed specifically for HPs, to enable them to gain insight into specific conditions before undertaking an assessment. They contain clinical and functional information relevant to the condition and are usually developed with relevant stakeholders, and quality assured to ensure accuracy from both a clinical and policy perspective. All HPs within the Health Assessment Advisory Service, have access to learning modules specifically relating to mesh injury/implants.

There are also opportunities for charities and organisations to engage with ASs, which include forums, to continue to foster good relationships and to help aid the understanding of how conditions may impact on daily life. We expect this engagement to continue.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Expenditure

Ben Goldsborough:

[8035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of Temporary Housing Subsidy rates on local authority budgets.

Sir Stephen Timms:

DWP pays local authorities a Housing Benefit subsidy for temporary accommodation cases but this is subject to limits to incentivise local authorities to find settled accommodation for residents and to ensure good value for money for the taxpayer. Local authorities usually pay the costs of temporary accommodation upfront and then claim back from DWP through the Housing Benefit subsidy.

The rate of subsidy is usually based on 90% of the January 2011 Local Housing Allowance rates and maximum subsidy caps of £500 and £375 per week are in place in some high rent areas.

DWP collects data on local authority Housing Benefit expenditure and levels of Housing Benefit subsidy paid, including temporary accommodation expenditure in England, Scotland and Wales. [Housing Benefit expenditure and subsidy data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-benefit-expenditure-and-subsidy-data)

We understand that local authorities are subject to many funding pressures which are impacting their budgets. However, any increases to the subsidy rates for temporary accommodation would need to be taken in the context of the government's missions, goals on housing, and the fiscal position.

■ Unemployment: Young People

Shaun Davies:

[6692]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with (a) Metro Mayors and (b) local authorities on tackling youth unemployment.

Alison McGovern:

Our plan to get Britain Working includes a new Youth Guarantee for all young people aged 18-21 to ensure that they can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or employment support. This will sit alongside; a new national jobs and careers service to help get more people into work, work health and skills plans for the economically inactive, and the launch of Skills England to open new opportunities for young people. Further detail will be shared in the up-coming White Paper.

Such ambitious plans require input and expertise from a wide range of stakeholders - from community groups and employers through to local authorities and providers of employment support and careers advice. We have convened a small advisory group with the Mayoral Combined Authorities, Local councils and the Central London Forward to gather expertise and support the development of the White Paper, and we are working closely with the Devolved Governments to share insights on what is currently working across Britain.

We look forward to working closely with stakeholders post-publication on the design and implementation of the measures in the White Paper.

■ Universal Credit**Steff Aquarone:**[\[8343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of 53 Mondays in this financial year on rent payments for Universal Credit claimants .

Sir Stephen Timms:

The current financial year, which runs from 06/04/24 to 05/04/25, does not contain 53 Mondays.

Universal Credit always converts weekly amounts to monthly sums using 52 weeks. The legitimacy of this approach was confirmed by the High Court having been tested via a judicial review.

Every five or six years, weekly tenants may have a rent charging year containing 53 charging days. This will not apply in all cases and some claimants will not have a 53-week charging year during the life of their benefit claim.

The rent charging year beginning 1 April 2024 and ending on 6 April 2025 is one such year and is of a period which exceeds one calendar year and is not aligned to a financial year. The 53rd payment covers the tenancy for part of the following calendar year.

Most people in work are paid monthly, as is Universal Credit, and they budget for their outgoings on a monthly basis. Weekly rental liabilities do not map directly onto a monthly cycle and this creates budgeting complexities for tenants. They will be required to make only four payments of rent in some months but five payments in

others even though their monthly income remains constant. This problem exists in all rent charging years, not just those with 53 Mondays.

The Government will consider this issue as part of its wider work on Universal Credit.

■ Universal Credit: Children

Claire Hazelgrove: [\[7253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Universal Credit entitlement for people with children not in full-time education due to (a) special educational needs and disabilities or (b) other health issues.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No assessment has been made.

■ Universal Credit: Disability

Marsha De Cordova: [\[6448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the health element of Universal Credit in providing support to people with the cost of disability, in the context of Scope's report entitled Disability Price Tag 2024: Living with the extra cost of disability, published in September 2024.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No such assessment has been made. We are committed to reviewing Universal Credit, to ensure it is doing the job we need it to.

Tom Hayes: [\[7113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of Universal Credit in supporting people with disability costs.

Sir Stephen Timms:

We are committed to reviewing Universal Credit, to make sure it is doing the job we want it to. We will set out the details of this in due course.

■ Universal Credit: Domestic Abuse

Tom Hayes: [\[7099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will introduce separate Universal Credit payments by default to help ensure domestic abuse perpetrators cannot gain control over joint household income.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department have no plans to introduce separate Universal Credit payments by default. Where domestic violence has been reported split payments can be made.

Tom Hayes: [\[7100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting survivors of domestic abuse from repaying advances of Universal Credit payments.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No assessment has been made of exempting survivors of domestic abuse from repaying advances of Universal Credit payments. However, the Government is committed to reviewing Universal Credit so that it makes work pay and tackles poverty.

■ Universal Credit: Lone Parents**Kate Osamor:**[\[6332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of Gingerbread's report entitled They are sanctioning the children, published on 16 September 2024.

Alison McGovern:

The Child Poverty Taskforce will explore how we can harness all available levers to reduce child poverty, including by listening to stakeholders on potential changes, before publishing a strategy in Spring 2025.

Additionally, the Government is committed to reviewing Universal Credit so that it makes work pay and tackles poverty.

■ Universal Credit: Payments**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[6517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's guidance on Universal Credit and earnings, updated on 13 May 2024, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of changes to Universal Credit payments in an assessment period with two paydays, for claimants who are paid four-weekly, on levels of (a) poverty, (b) debt and (c) food bank usage among such claimants.

Sir Stephen Timms:

No impact assessment has been made on changes to the Universal Credit assessment periods or payment structures. However, the Government is committed to reviewing Universal Credit so that it makes work pay and tackles poverty.

■ Work Capability Assessment**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[6446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 2 August 2024 to Question 1798 on Work Capability Assessment, what steps she is taking to (a) reform or (b) replace the Work Capability Assessment.

Tom Hayes:[\[7114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to reform the Work Capability Assessment.

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[7386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reform the Work Capability Assessment.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The government is committed to reforming or replacing the Work Capability Assessment, alongside putting in place a proper plan to support disabled people into work. We will say more about this in due course.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders to keep the views of disabled people and people with health conditions at the heart of what we do, as we consider our next steps.

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[7626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her plan to reform or replace the Work Capability Assessment will recognise the increased cost of living for those with physical disabilities.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The government is committed to reforming or replacing the Work Capability Assessment, alongside putting in place a proper plan to support disabled people into work. We will say more about this in due course.

We want people to avoid poverty, and for this to happen we must ensure that disabled people with health conditions have the opportunity to work and save for as long as they wish and are able to. We will continue to engage with stakeholders to keep the views of disabled people and people with health conditions at the heart of what we do, as we consider our next steps.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Alex Burghart:

[\[7835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October 2024 to Question 5643 on Terrorism: Northern Ireland, how many requests for public inquiries he is considering.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 October 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Hilary Benn:

I have recently considered several requests for public inquiries and decided to ask all the families involved to ~~get in touch~~ ^{meet} with the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) ~~to hear how the independent Commission would approach any investigation~~. The Government will consider any further requests on a case-by-case basis.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals

Kim Johnson:

[\[6601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of personal independence payment appeals resulted in the decision being (a) lapsed and (b) overturned at tribunal hearing in each of the last five years.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 October 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Sir Stephen Timms:

The tables below provide information on the number of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeal clearances; and whether they were lapsed or overturned at a tribunal hearing.

Data provided is for the last five financial years.

Table 1: Number of appeals cleared for each financial year and how many were subsequently lapsed or overturned at a tribunal hearing

FINANCIAL YEAR	APPEALS CLEARED	APPEALS LAPSED	APPEALS OVERTURNED
2019-20	99,800	27,100	53,700
2020-21	77,000	26,300	37,000

FINANCIAL YEAR	APPEALS CLEARED	APPEALS LAPSED	APPEALS OVERTURNED
2021-22	48,300	17,100	20,500
2022-23	65,300	19,000	30,500
2023-24	77,700	25,600	34,400

Table 2: Proportion of lapsed or overturned appeals for each financial year

FINANCIAL YEAR	APPEALS LAPSED (%)	APPEALS OVERTURNED (%)
2019-20	27	54
2020-21	34	48
2021-22	35	42
2022-23	29	47
2023-24	33	44

Notes:

1. **Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100.**
2. **Data provided is for England and Wales (excluding Scotland).**
3. **These figures include appeal clearances and decisions for PIP New Claims, Reassessments, Award Reviews and Change of Circumstances. These figures include appeals cleared from April 2019 to March 2024.**
4. **Appeals data has been taken from DWP PIP customer system's management information. Therefore, this appeal data may differ from that held by His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service for various reasons such as delays in data recording and other methodological differences in collating and preparing statistics.**
5. **This data is unpublished data. It should be used with caution, and it may be subject to future revision.**
6. **A lapsed appeal is where DWP changed the decision in the customer's favour after an appeal was lodged but before it was heard at a tribunal hearing.**
7. **An overturned appeal is where the decision was changed in the customer's favour after an appeal was lodged and was heard at tribunal hearing.**
8. **Appeals can have their decision upheld or may also be withdrawn by the claimant. These are not included in the above tables.**

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy

Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds): [\[HCWS126\]](#)

I am pleased to announce that today (14 October), I have published a Green Paper setting out our plans to deliver “Invest 2035: The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy”.

Growth is the number one mission of this Government. Our vision for a modern Industrial Strategy is for a credible, 10-year plan to drive sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth and deliver the certainty and stability businesses need to invest across the UK. This is the only way to boost our productivity, reinvest in our public services, create high-quality jobs and ensure tangible impact in communities right across the UK.

The Industrial Strategy will ensure we can build on our significant and historic strengths - which are the foundations of a vibrant, global economy and position us well to seize the economic opportunities of the coming decade.

To unlock this growth the Strategy will focus on tackling barriers in our highest potential growth-driving sectors. In doing so, the Industrial Strategy will create a pro-business environment and support high-potential clusters across the country. It will also support our net zero, regional, and economic resilience and security aims.

We are prepared to tackle the critical issues head on and make the choices required to kickstart investment.

We must create a strong pro-business environment that supports businesses to thrive and grow. This Industrial Strategy will bring forward coordinated sector-specific and cross-cutting policies that support businesses to overcome barriers and makes it simpler and cheaper for companies to scale up and invest. These will be founded on four principles: long-term stability, renewing our commitment to free and fair trade, easing the investor journey, and being a strategic, growth-focused state. By considering and listening to businesses and experts, we can identify the most effective levers for our sectors and clusters across the country. These policy areas include people and skills, innovation, energy and infrastructure, the regulatory environment, crowding in investment, and international partnerships and trade.

Jobs will also be at the heart of our modern Industrial Strategy, supporting growth sectors to create high-quality, well-paid jobs across the country, backed by employment rights fit for a modern economy.

We must also be clear eyed about the sectors which offer the highest growth opportunity for the economy and businesses, including where the UK has existing and nascent strengths. Our Strategy will be ambitious and targeted: taking advantage of the UK's unique strengths and untapped potential, enabling our world-leading sectors to adapt and grow, and seizing opportunities to lead in new sectors.

Over the last 25 years, roughly 60% of our productivity growth was generated by just 30% of our most productive industries. That is why our Industrial Strategy has identified eight key growth-driving sectors – Advanced Manufacturing, Creative Industries, Clean Energy Industries, Defence, Digital and Technologies, Financial Services, Life Sciences, and Professional and Business Services – in which the UK excels today and will excel tomorrow. In the next stage of development of the Industrial Strategy, we will prioritise sub-sectors within these broad sectors that meet our objectives.

We must also ensure our growth unlocks the economic potential of the UK's cities and regions, by tailoring policy to specific place-based constraints and opportunities. We will give Mayors in England the tools they need to grow their economies and develop ambitious 10-year Local Growth Plans. We will also work in partnership with the devolved governments to make this Industrial Strategy a UK-wide effort. In doing so, we will explore how the Industrial Strategy can identify, select and intervene in the most important industrial sites and sectoral clusters across the UK; making them magnets for globally mobile investment

But this Strategy – and our ambitions – can only be realised in partnership. Too often, the impact of industrial strategies has been concentrated in certain regions and not shared across communities. Businesses tell us that past plans have been short lived and often been felt by business as done *to* rather than *with* them. We will engage widely through the development of this Strategy: engaging businesses, trade unions, local and devolved leaders, academics, and international partners.

To underscore this approach, I am also very pleased to announce that we are launching the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council and have appointed Clare Barclay, CEO of Microsoft UK, as Chair. Ms Barclay brings a wealth of leadership experience at the top-flight of UK business across technology, innovation and artificial intelligence. Further members will be confirmed in due course, drawn from across business, academia and trade unions to provide a broad range of skills and expertise.

Through the Green Paper, the Government is seeking the views of businesses, stakeholders and parliamentarians to inform the continued development of our Industrial Strategy and ensure it delivers for people and communities across the UK. I would welcome your analysis and insight as well as the views of businesses and others in your constituencies.

The Industrial Strategy and growth driving sector plans will be published in Spring 2025. I will keep Parliament informed as the Industrial Strategy, and Industrial Strategy Advisory Council, continues to develop.

I am placing copies of the Green Paper in the libraries of both Houses.

Reforms to company law

The UK has always been a great place in which overseas companies can invest and do business. The Government is committed to taking steps to make the UK a place where foreign companies can easily relocate their incorporation. A UK re-domiciliation regime would increase the ease with which companies could move their place of incorporation to

the UK, minimising costs and risks that could otherwise arise from the alternative routes and ensure the UK remains internationally competitive. Today, we have published a report by the Independent Expert Panel on corporate re-domiciliation, established to consider how best to implement a framework in the UK. The Government welcomes the Panel's report and intends to consult in due course on a proposed regime design. A copy of the report will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

I can confirm that my department will lay legislation by the end of the year that will save companies £240m per year by removing redundant reporting requirements and uplifting the monetary size thresholds for micro-entities, small and medium-sized companies, as well as making technical fixes to the UK's audit framework. The changes will benefit up to 132,000 companies who will move to a smaller size category, with lighter-touch accounting and reporting requirements more proportionate to their size. These changes are the first step toward modernising the UK's reporting framework, so it is simpler and better for business, supporting the Government's aim to have the highest sustained growth in the G7. My department will also launch an ambitious consultation next year aimed at simplifying and modernising the UK's non-financial reporting framework. Efforts to modernise will also include examining the potential for updating shareholder communication in line with technology and clarifying the law in relation to virtual AGMs.

The Government is also announcing its commitment to speed up the process for raising share capital. The "Financing Growth" paper committed the Government to implementing the outstanding recommendations from the 'Secondary Capital Raising Review', published in 2022. The changes will be welcomed by business and shareholders and will speed up and simplify the process for companies raising new share capital, for example by reducing from 10 to 7 working days the minimum time in which a company must offer new shares to existing shareholders before offering them to the wider market.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ South Atlantic Cooperation

Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories (Stephen Doughty): [\[HCWS128\]](#)

On 24 September, the Foreign Secretary met Diana Mondino, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic, in New York.

Following this meeting, the Foreign Secretary and Foreign Minister Mondino were delighted to announce a package of cooperation in the South Atlantic, which was published on the Gov.UK website.

The package of cooperation includes the following commitments:

- To resume cooperation on fisheries where fishing stocks are shared between Argentina and the Falkland Islands;

- To develop a more ambitious agenda for cooperation, under the sovereignty formula, aimed at promoting human and economic development and strengthening links between the Islands and the continent
- To resume negotiations to complete the third phase of the Humanitarian Project Plan to identify unidentified Argentine soldiers killed in 1982;
- To organise a trip to the Islands by next-of-kin of fallen soldiers before the end of 2024, so that they can visit the graves of the soldiers laid to rest in the Falkland Islands;
- To resume the weekly São Paulo – Falkland Islands flight that stopped once a month in Córdoba, Argentina, as established in 2019.

It was agreed that the formula on the safeguards of sovereignty, in paragraph 2 of the Joint Statement between the UK and Argentina of 19 October 1989, applies to this agenda and to its outcomes.

The Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly was consulted throughout the negotiations and has issued a statement welcoming this package of cooperation.

It has no impact on the UK Government's commitment to defending our sovereignty in the South Atlantic, or on defending the Falkland Islanders' right of self-determination.

The United Kingdom and Argentina will celebrate the bicentenary of diplomatic relations in 2025, and the United Kingdom looks forward to a new era of constructive cooperation, characterised by improved dialogue and confidence-building measures.

HOME OFFICE

■ Implementation of the Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act 2024

The Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis):

[\[HCWS124\]](#)

The first duty of Government is to keep our citizens safe. The UK faces an evolving threat from terrorists, hostile actors and organised criminal groups, and it is vital that our intelligence and law enforcement agencies have the powers and capabilities they need to target these individuals and groups.

The Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act 2024, which received Royal Assent earlier this year, makes targeted updates to the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, to ensure the UK's investigatory powers framework remains fit for the purpose of protecting our national security. Much of the operational detail is necessarily set out in guidance, rather than on the face of the primary legislation. This is delivered through statutory Codes of Practice (the Codes), which are brought into force via secondary legislation, and which public authorities must have regard to when exercising functions to which the Codes relate. The secondary legislation to bring the Codes into force will be subject to the affirmative Parliamentary procedure.

As part of the Home Office's work in implementing the Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act 2024, today we are launching a public consultation to seek views on

the proposed revised Codes. The consultation will run over a 12-week period and provides an opportunity for stakeholders to have their say.

The consultation will seek views on three new Codes (on Bulk Personal Datasets with a low or no expectation of privacy, third party Bulk Personal Datasets and the Notices regime) and updates to five existing Codes (Bulk Personal Datasets, Communications Data, Bulk Communications Data, Equipment Interference, and Interception). It will also seek views on a set of draft Notices Regulations, which will specify what types of changes may be included in the new Notification Notices, introduce timelines for the review of Technical Capability, Data Retention, and National Security Notices, and amend existing Regulations in relation to Notice processes with regards to membership of the Technical Advisory Board.

Alongside publication of this consultation, I have also signed the Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act 2024 (Commencement No. 1 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024. These Regulations commence the majority of the 2024 Act's provisions, ensuring that important measures such as additional journalistic protections within the Bulk Equipment Interference regime are commenced as soon as possible. The Home Office will encourage public authorities which exercise functions under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 to have regard to the new draft Codes from this point onwards. This approach is being taken to provide clarity to public authorities, both in situations whereby the existing Codes do not make provision for new measures within the 2024 Act (such as those relating to Bulk Personal Datasets where there is a low or no expectation of privacy or third party Bulk Personal Datasets) and in situations whereby the draft Codes include important updates to the existing Codes (such as on what amounts to lawful authority for acquiring communications data). There will still be scope to amend the draft Codes based on responses to the consultation, ahead of final versions being brought into force through secondary legislation. The Home Office will carefully consider responses to the consultation in advance of the introduction of the relevant secondary legislation which will be progressed when parliamentary time allows.

Certain aspects of the Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act 2024 have not been included within the Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act 2024 (Commencement No. 1 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024 and will instead be commenced at a later date. In particular, some of the Notices provisions will only be commenced once the consultation has been concluded. Further, commencement of the requirement to have a warrant to examine a third party bulk personal dataset will be delayed for six months, allowing sufficient time for warrants to be prepared and staggered, thereby avoiding a situation whereby they all fall to expire on the same day.

The Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act 2024 will bring the investigatory powers regime up to date with the modern age. This approach to implementation will allow for consideration of a wide range of stakeholder views, while providing certainty to public authorities in exercising these powers.

A copy of the consultation and the associated annexes will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on Gov.UK.

■ Strengthening regulation of animals in science

The Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis):

[\[HCWS127\]](#)

My noble Friend the Minister of State, Home Office (Lord Hanson of Flint) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

This Government is committed to partnering with scientists, industry and civil society to work towards the phasing out of animal testing. As we move towards this goal, we recognise that the development of safe and effective medicines, the protection of humans and animals, and the protection of the environment still relies on the limited and strictly regulated use of animals. We are committed to maintaining the UK's history of strong laws and strengthening our regulatory framework to assure protections to animals used in science. Strengthening our national regulator is important to maintain our position at the global forefront of welfare and support the UK's life science sector to innovate and grow.

To this end, the Great Britain Animals in Science Regulator will make reforms to its organisational design to most effectively deliver its purpose of protecting animals through maintaining compliance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. Reforms will ensure that the life sciences sector is supported to grow through regulation which is proportionate, targeted, clear, and consistent, as well as robust and effective. The reforms will allow the Regulator to be flexible to developments in the scientific and regulatory landscape, so that it is adaptable and resilient over the long-term.

Changes to the Regulator's organisational design are focused on ensuring the Regulator has the right capacity and capabilities in the right places to meet best practice standards for regulators. The changes are designed to facilitate the Regulator in adopting an operating model which has an increased emphasis on data, analysis and quality monitoring, and an improved provision of guidance and communication to the life science sector on how to comply with the law to protect animals. These changes will achieve stronger protections for animals; increase adherence to the principles of replacement, reduction, and refinement; provide an enhanced quality of service for the science sector; and increase assurance to the public of the protections the UK continues to deliver for animals in science.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Attracting Investment

Prime Minister (Sir Keir Starmer):

[\[HCWS129\]](#)

I am making this statement to bring to the House's attention the following Machinery of Government change.

In support of the Government's efforts to make the UK a great place to invest, the Office for Investment will be expanded, and will now report jointly into HM Treasury, the Department for Business and Trade and No. 10. A new joint HM Treasury and Department for Business and Trade Minister for Investment will oversee this work.

Accounting Officer responsibilities for the Office for Investment remain with the Department for Business and Trade. This change is effective immediately.

TREASURY

■ National Wealth Fund Update

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rachel Reeves):

[[HCWS130](#)]

This government has been clear: our number one mission is driving economic growth to improve the lives of the British people. To grow our economy, we need more high quality, long-term investment. This means creating a new partnership with businesses and making sure Britain is the best place in the world to invest.

The government is today creating the National Wealth Fund (NWF), the UK's new impact investor, that will mobilise billions of pounds of investment in the UK's world-leading clean energy and growth industries, taking forward the recommendations of the NWF Taskforce.

To mobilise private investment at pace, the government is turbocharging the UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) to become more catalytic and from today it will operate as the 'National Wealth Fund'.

As the UK's impact investor, the NWF will have a broader mandate, extending beyond infrastructure to support delivery of the wider industrial strategy in areas where an undersupply in private finance exists, working alongside the British Business Bank. A revised mandate and future priorities will be set following legislation, planned to be brought forward later this session.

Building on UKIB's leadership and expertise, the NWF will go further to catalyse more private investment.

The NWF will be empowered to make investments that maximise the mobilisation of private investment with an expansion of UKIB's offer, including an expanded suite of financial instruments such as performance guarantees and trialling new blended finance solutions, with government departments, that take on additional risk to facilitate higher impact in individual deals.

The NWF will have a total capitalisation of £27.8bn to catalyse investment that would not have otherwise taken place. It will inherit UKIB's existing capitalisation and have an additional £5.8bn, which will be committed over this Parliament (The government previously announced that £7.3bn additional funding would be allocated through the NWF - the remaining £1.5bn has been reserved to maintain flexibility in how the Government can best deliver against its aims for the NWF). At least £5.8bn of the NWF's capital will focus on the five sectors announced in the manifesto: green hydrogen, carbon capture, ports, gigafactories and green steel.

The NWF will have a larger amount of economic risk capital to free it from previous constraints. This will be used to direct the NWF's investments towards having greater

economic impact by taking risk in service of the government's Industrial Strategy, clean energy mission and growth mission.

The NWF will adopt a proactive approach, with increased resources and focus on conducting more outreach to identify expanded project pipelines and structure innovative transactions with project sponsors, industry, local authorities and government departments.

The NWF will have a strong regional mandate to unleash the full potential of our cities and regions to be reflected in its statement of strategic priorities and how it measures success. It will work in close partnership with Mayors to support investable propositions in their Local Growth Plans, Devolved Governments, and other local leaders to support their investment plans and priority sectoral clusters across the UK.

Finally, the NWF will review its range of success measures to demonstrate the impact of its additional capital and realising of investment, impact and outcomes across the economy.

Together, these changes will ensure that the NWF can catalyse additional investment and address the key barriers identified by the taskforce. This will result in the delivery of impactful projects that otherwise wouldn't have happened, unlocking growth opportunities across the UK.

British Business Bank

Alongside this, the Chancellor together with Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds, MP announced that the government is strengthening the British Business Bank's ability to support the UK's fastest growing, most innovative companies by establishing the British Growth Partnership.

The British Growth Partnership is a new, pathfinder approach to the partnership between the British Business Bank and institutional investors that will further the government's goal, as set out in the Pensions Investment Review, of encouraging more UK pension fund investment into UK growth assets.

Additionally, we will implement a set of reforms to the British Business Bank's financial framework that will increase its impact and increase its ability to respond flexibly to the market, including by putting the British Business Bank's £7.9bn set of commercial programmes on a permanent footing.

The British Business Bank, the UK's largest domestic venture capital investor, will launch this new fund, the British Growth Partnership, to attract pension and institutional investment into venture capital and innovative businesses. These long-term investments will be made independently of government on a fully commercial basis, leveraging the British Business Bank's market expertise. The British Business Bank will in the coming months seek to raise hundreds of millions of pounds of investment for this model, supported by a cornerstone government investment, with the aim of making investments by the end of 2025.

In parallel the government can announce that we expect both successful bidders of the Long-Term Investment for Technology and Science (LIFTS) competition, Schrodgers and

ICG, to begin making investments via their new funds in late 2024, supported by pensions capital from Phoenix Group, with the aim of generating over a billion pounds of investment into UK science and technology companies.

Through LIFTS and the British Growth Partnership, the government is acting to make the investment of UK institutional capital into high-growth companies easier. This is set to unlock greater wealth for future pensioners and higher growth in the economy.

■ Reforms to bank ring-fencing

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Tulip Siddiq):

[\[HCWS125\]](#)

The statutory independent review of ring-fencing and proprietary trading led by Sir Keith Skeoch, which reported in March 2022, made recommendations to improve the operation of the ring-fencing regime.

The government will implement a package of reforms as soon as parliamentary time allows. The reforms will improve competition and competitiveness in the UK banking sector and support economic growth, while maintaining financial stability.

The reforms will include:

- the introduction of a secondary threshold to exempt retail-focussed banking groups from the regime – where investment banking activity accounts for less than 10% of Tier 1 capital;
- new flexibilities to allow ring-fenced banks to operate globally, subject to PRA rules;
- measures to encourage more investment by ring-fenced banks in UK SMEs;
- measures to reduce the compliance burdens associated with the regime; and
- an increase in the primary deposit threshold for ring-fenced banks, from £25bn to £35bn.