



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 15 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:35 P.M., 15 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Arms Trade: Israel

Imran Hussain:

[\[6281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the press release entitled UK suspends around 30 arms export licences to Israel for use in Gaza over International Humanitarian Law concerns, published on 2 September 2024, which companies have had arms export licences suspended.

Imran Hussain:

[\[6282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the press release entitled UK suspends around 30 arms export licences to Israel for use in Gaza over International Humanitarian Law concerns, published on 2 September 2024, what the value is of each arms export licence that has been suspended.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

We have suspended export licences for Israel where these relate to items for use in military operations in Gaza. It includes licences for components for fighter aircraft, helicopters and drones, naval systems and targeting equipment.

The details of individual suspended licences contain sensitive information relevant to the individual exporter companies, and therefore the government is not providing further comment on them.

■ Business: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[5862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to promote investment opportunities for businesses based in Lincolnshire.

Gareth Thomas:

The Government-owned British Business Bank supports business investment across the UK including through its Nations and Regions Investment Funds. This includes the £400m Midlands Engine Investment Fund II, supporting growing businesses across the Midlands.

Our Growth Hub network, including Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub, supports businesses of all sizes and sectors across England throughout their business journey. The Department for Business and Trade works across the UK, including Greater Lincolnshire, to showcase strong commercial investment opportunities to potential investors and support business to grow. The Government has also agreed a £720 million investment fund as part of the devolution deal for Greater Lincolnshire to support growth and business investment.

■ **Department for Business and Trade and Competition and Markets Authority:
Paternity Leave**

Shaun Davies:

[\[7899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in (a) his Department and (b) the Competition and Markets Authority was in each of the last three years.

Justin Madders:

The table below shows the average length of paternity leave taken by staff. This includes paternity leave after birth.

TIME PERIOD	AVERAGE LENGTH OF PATERNITY LEAVE (WORKING DAYS)
01.08.2023. - 31.07.2024.	10
01.08.2022. - 31.07.2023.	10
01.08.2021. - 31.07.2022.	10

The Department for Business and Trade is a newly formed Department established in February 2023. The new department absorbed the functions of the former Department for International Trade (DIT) and some of the functions of the former Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

The figures prior to 01.08.2023 include all former DIT staff and former BEIS staff who transferred to DBT.

The below figures cover the same period for staff at the Competition and Markets Authority.

YEAR	AVERAGE LENGTH (MEAN) OF PATERNITY LEAVE (WORKING DAYS)
2021-22	9.8
2022-23	9.4
2023-24	8.9
2024-25 (to date)	8.9

■ Department for Business and Trade: Remote Working**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[7482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, on how many days his Principle Private Secretary worked from home in (a) in the last (i) six and (ii) 12 months and (b) since 4 July 2024.

Justin Madders:

The Department for Business and Trade does not routinely collect this information.

■ Home Shopping: Fraud**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[7822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to prevent fraudulent practices by online shopping sites

Justin Madders:

DBT is implementing the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act which strengthens consumer law enforcement by giving the CMA new administrative powers, and the CMA and courts the ability to impose significant monetary penalties.

The Act also updates the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, setting out new 'banned practices' relating to the buying, selling, and publishing of fake consumer reviews and prohibiting 'drip pricing'.

The Product Regulation and Metrology Bill was introduced on 4 September and aims to address the gap in consumer protections which allow online marketplaces to facilitate the sale of unsafe and illegal products.

■ Oil: Russia**Sarah Green:** [\[8259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning imports of oil products from refineries using Russian crude.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

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

■ Roads: Freight**Andrew Cooper:** [\[8568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of insolvencies of road haulage businesses in each of the last five years.

Justin Madders:

Estimated numbers of companies with the SIC code 49410 that entered insolvency in the UK in each of the last five calendar years (including 2024 to date) are presented in the table below.

CALENDAR YEAR	COMPANIES ENTERING INSOLVENCY (SIC CODE 49410 – FREIGHT TRANSPORT BY ROAD)
2019	285
2020	195
2021	265
2022	411
2023	503
2024 (to 31 st August)	334

CABINET OFFICE■ **Cabinet Office: Departmental Boards****John Glen:**[\[7446\]](#)

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

Georgia Gould:

Details of the Cabinet Office Board meetings are published in the yearly Annual Report and Accounts.

■ **Cabinet Office: Official Cars****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[6998\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in (i) his Department, (ii) the Government Equalities Office, (iii) the UK Statistics Authority and (iv) the Office for National Statistics have (A) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (B) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (1) make, (2) model and (3) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles. This policy has not changed since the general election.

The Cabinet Office is currently allocated 13 vehicles (this is a mix of full and part time allocations) including shared vehicles. This is for Cabinet Office only and other entities listed are managed separately.

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.

■ Council of Nations and Regions

Tracy Gilbert: [\[7654\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans she has for the reporting to Parliament of the work of the Council of Nations and Regions.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The inaugural Council of the Nations and Regions met on 11 October in Edinburgh to discuss growth and investment.

The UK Government will be publishing the Terms of Reference for the Council and a communique summarising the discussion shortly.

A communique will be published following each meeting of the Council.

■ Council of the Nations and Regions: Location

Pete Wishart: [\[8107\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, where the role of Envoy to the Regions and Nations will be based.

Pete Wishart: [\[8108\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total operating budget of the Envoy to the Regions and Nations will be.

Pete Wishart: [\[8109\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many full time equivalent staff will be allocated to the office of the Envoy to the Regions and Nations.

Georgia Gould:

The terms of reference for the Prime Minister's Envoy for the Nations and Regions will be published online in the normal way, setting out the purpose, scope and remit of the role.

■ Government Departments: Advertising

Blair McDougall: [\[7609\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the Government has spent on advertising on X.com since October 2022.

Georgia Gould:

The full Governmental spend on X is not centrally held.

There has been zero Cabinet Office spend with X in the last 12 months.

■ **Gwyn Jenkins****John Glen:**[\[6065\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason the appointment of General Gwyn Jenkins as National Security Adviser has been cancelled; whether (a) the Prime Minister's former Chief of Staff had a role in and (b) the Attorney General had discussions with the Prime Minister on that decision; and whether the post will be advertised externally.

Georgia Gould:

Sir Tim Barrow is the National Security Advisor. There will be an open and transparent process to appoint his successor. All senior appointments will be considered in the usual way.

■ **List of Ministerial Responsibilities****Sir Bernard Jenkin:**[\[7397\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason an updated version of the transparency data entitled Government ministers and responsibilities has not yet been published; and when he plans to publish an updated version.

Georgia Gould:

A new List of Ministerial Responsibilities will be published shortly.

■ **Members: Correspondence****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[8411\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to reply to the correspondence of 10 September 2024 from the Hon. Member for East Londonderry on wider availability of Royal portraits.

Georgia Gould:

The letter from Mr Campbell has been responded to. A letter was sent in reply to him on 10 October.

■ **Ministers: Members' Interests****John Glen:**[\[7435\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2870, what guidance his Department issues for Ministers on the prevention of potential (a) conflicts of interest and (b) perceived conflicts of interest.

Georgia Gould:

The Ministerial Code sets out the standards of behaviour expected of all ministers. It is the personal responsibility of each minister to decide whether and what action is

needed to avoid a conflict or the perception of a conflict, taking account of any advice received from their permanent secretary and the Independent Adviser on Ministers' interests.

■ **Political Parties: Donors**

John Glen: [\[7434\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 2872 on Political Parties: Donors, whether transparency data will include ministerial meetings with Lord Alli.

Georgia Gould:

Details of official meetings held in a ministerial capacity with external organisations or individuals are declared quarterly on GOV.UK, alongside details of all meetings with senior media figures.

■ **Prime Minister: Aviation**

John Glen: [\[7433\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 4 September 2024 to Question 2304 on Prime Minister: Aviation, how many (a) domestic and (b) overseas flights for Prime Ministerial travel have been carbon offset since 5 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

I have nothing further to add to the answer given to the Rt Hon Member on 4 September 2024.

■ **Prime Minister: FDA**

John Glen: [\[6061\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister has had discussions with the First Division Association (FDA) on recognising it as the trade union for special advisers; and what the process is for formal recognition.

Georgia Gould:

In line with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (TULRCA), trade unions may make a request for voluntary recognition in writing.

■ **Prime Minister's Chief of Staff: Recruitment**

John Glen: [\[6059\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the post of Executive Assistant to the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff was recruited through fair and open competition.

Georgia Gould:

It is a longstanding policy not to comment on individuals.

■ Senior Civil Servants: Official Gifts

John Glen: [\[7445\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department issues to senior officials on declaring (a) gifts and (b) hospitality received by them and a Parliamentarian who is a family member.

Georgia Gould:

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.

■ Special Advisers

John Glen: [\[7444\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether there is a regular cross-government meeting of special advisers.

Georgia Gould:

Special advisers across government meet regularly in the course of their duties.

■ Special Advisers: Pay

John Glen: [\[7436\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 25 September 2024 to Question 5037 Special Advisers: Pay, if he will place a copy of the (a) special adviser pay framework and (b) associated documentation in the Library.

John Glen: [\[7440\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Special Adviser Remuneration Committee has met to (a) set policy, (a) amend the framework and (c) make individual decisions on special adviser pay since the general election.

John Glen: [\[7441\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who the members are of the Special Advisers Remuneration Committee.

Georgia Gould:

Special advisers' salaries are determined by the Special Adviser People Board, in line with the special adviser pay framework. The People Board is chaired by a senior official acting under delegated authority from the Prime Minister. The majority of Board members are senior officials. Members of the Prime Minister's special adviser leadership team also attend, as has been the case under successive administrations.

As special advisers cannot authorise expenditure of public funds, final decisions of special adviser salaries are made by civil servants.

Information on Special Adviser numbers and costs will be published in the Annual Report on Special Advisers as per the requirements of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, as was the case under the previous administration.

■ **Special Advisers: Workplace Pensions**

John Glen:

[\[7439\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether people in receipt of a Civil Service pension who then re-join as a special adviser are subject to abatement.

Georgia Gould:

As temporary civil servants, special advisers are subject to the usual Civil Service Pension Scheme rules.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Arts: Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole**

Tom Hayes:

[\[7101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support emerging artists in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council area.

Chris Bryant:

We are in the early stages of the new Government and we are considering the full range of policy options to support the arts and creative industries, and help the cultural sectors to thrive.

This government is committed to supporting culture, and making sure the arts and cultural activities will no longer be the preserve of a privileged few. We are working with Arts Council England and others to understand what the challenges and opportunities are for our sectors. As part of the Government's "Creating Growth" plan, DCMS is undertaking a review documenting current and past funding for the arts, culture, and heritage sectors.

Arts Council England's open funding programme, National Lottery Project Grants, is accessible to organisations and individuals across the country, including those in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council area. This programme provides over £100 million of support annually, and is open to new and emerging artists.

■ **Arts: Finance**

Ms Polly Billington:

[\[7947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the financial impact of reductions in arts funding provided by her Department since 2010 on the creative sector in (a) Thanet District, (b) Kent and (c) England.

Chris Bryant:

As part of the Government's "Creating Growth" plan, DCMS is undertaking a review of current and past funding for the arts, culture, and heritage sectors, which will include such an assessment on a national and regional level.

Arts: Nottingham East**Nadia Whittome:**[\[6645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is taking steps to increase funding for arts and culture in the Nottingham East constituency.

Chris Bryant:

We are in the early stages of the new Government and we are considering the full range of policy options to support the arts and creative industries, and help the cultural sectors to thrive.

This government is committed to supporting culture, and making sure the arts and cultural activities will no longer be the preserve of a privileged few. Although individual decisions on financial support for arts bodies are rightly subject to the arm's-length principle and a matter for Arts Council England, we are keen to ensure that funding for the arts is fairly distributed across the country.

We are working with Arts Council England and others to understand what the challenges and opportunities are for our sectors. As part of the Government's "Creating Growth" plan, DCMS is undertaking a review documenting current and past funding for the arts, culture, and heritage sectors.

Arts: Tax Allowances**Shivani Raja:**[\[7603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 October 2024 to Question 5439 on Arts: Tax Allowances, what grants are available to businesses in the creative industries; and what steps she is taking to help support businesses to access information about these grants.

Chris Bryant:

The creative industries have access to a range of cross-economy business support mechanisms, as well as a number of industry-specific grants. Creative industry funding opportunities include the £30 million+ Creative Catalyst programme, designed to support business innovation and growth, the £100m BridgeAI programme, which accelerates AI adoption and productivity for sectors including the creative industries, and the Create Growth Programme (CGP) which offers grants to creative businesses in 12 English regions outside London alongside support to scale-up and become investment ready.

Other programmes that offer grant funding to creative businesses include the UK Games Fund, UK Global Screen Fund, and Music Export Growth Scheme. The UK Games Fund supports independent games studios across the UK with £13.4m for grant making and talent development programmes. £21 million has been committed

for the UK Global Screen Fund to promote independent UK screen content in international markets (2022-2025). The Music Export Growth Scheme issues grants (worth £3.2m from 2022-2025) to support UK artists to break into new international markets.

The government engages closely with sectors, trade bodies and businesses, and makes all information on all grant schemes available online.

■ Charities: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[7812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help ensure the financial sustainability of charities.

Stephanie Peacock:

This government recognises the vital role that charities have played in providing, often life-saving work in our society in increasingly difficult circumstances.

DCMS is supporting charities with their financial sustainability in a number of ways. DCMS delivers a number of grant programmes which help voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs), including charities. For example, the £25.5m VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme is supporting frontline organisations across England to improve their energy efficiency and sustainability, through independent energy assessments and capital grants. This funding runs until March 2025.

Support for charities is available through social investment which provides access to grants, repayable finance and a blend of the two. This government is continuing to look at how dormant assets can be used to support the availability of finance to facilitate VCSEs becoming more entrepreneurial and financially resilient. An estimated £350 million will flow into the Dormant Assets Scheme between 2024-28, with details on how this money will be allocated to be provided in due course.

Support is also available through the Contract Readiness Programme, a £900,000 package of support enabling VCSEs in England to better compete for government contracts. The programme provides fully funded training for VCSEs interested in bidding for public contracts. This aims to create more opportunities for VCSEs to secure contracts, helping to diversify their income and increase their sustainability. Since launch, over 850 VCSEs have benefitted from the programme. This programme will run until March 2025.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Paternity Leave

Shaun Davies:

[\[7900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in her Department was in each of the last three years.

Stephanie Peacock:

The average length of paternity leave taken by DCMS staff was as follows:

2021: 10.8 days

2022: 9.7 days

2023: 10.3 days

■ Domestic Visits: Newcastle-under-Lyme

Adam Jogee: [\[6965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will visit (a) the New Vic Theatre and (b) the Philip Astley Centre in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Chris Bryant:

I will ask my officials to keep both the New Vic Theatre and the Philip Astley Centre in mind when planning future visits.

■ English National Opera: Finance

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[7387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the level of Arts Council England funding to the English National Opera on the availability of (a) free tickets to young adults and (b) opportunities for young singers and actors.

Chris Bryant:

Decisions about arts funding are subject to the arm's-length principle and are made by Arts Council England. In December 2023, Arts Council England and English National Opera agreed £24m funding for 2024-2026. This will enable ENO to continue to deliver a substantial opera season every year in London, whilst co-developing significant performance and learning activity in Greater Manchester as it works towards establishing a new main base by 2029. This brings ACE's investment in the ENO to over £35m.

The ENO provides invaluable opportunities for young people, including their free tickets for under 21s scheme. We are pleased to see that this initiative, amongst others, remains a key part of the ENO's impact.

■ Tourism: Wales

Dr Luke Evans: [\[6548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on the potential impact of its proposals to introduce a visitor levy scheme on the number of tourists visiting Wales.

Chris Bryant:

None. Responsibility for a visitor levy scheme in Wales is reserved to the Welsh Government, but DCMS and Visit Britain will of course engage with the Welsh Government as the proposals develop.

■ Youth Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[7464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what progress she has made in establishing a network of youth hubs; and what steps she is taking to support existing youth provision to work with youth hubs.

Stephanie Peacock:

This Government is committed to giving all young people the chance to reach their full potential and we recognise the importance of early intervention to ensure young people can live safe and healthy lives.

Fundamental to this is the delivery of the Young Futures Programme which will work to identify young people most at risk of being drawn into crime and other poor outcomes and create a network of Young Futures Hubs in communities across the country. We will work closely across government, with external partners and young people, to design and develop the proposals for Young Futures Hubs, in a cohesive and integrated way, ensuring they meet young people's needs and build on existing provision and expertise. We will share more information in due course.

More broadly, this government recognises the vital role that youth services and activities play in improving young people's life chances and wellbeing. As set out in section 507B of the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a statutory duty to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people in their area. This is funded through the Local Government Settlement which amounts to over £60 billion this year.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Housing

James Cartlidge:

[\[7498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the number of homes on the defence estate that could be brought back into use in the next 12 months.

Luke Pollard:

During financial year 2024-25 the Ministry of Defence (MOD) plans to refurbish circa 200 long-term empty Service Family Accommodation properties, to bring them back into use for Service families. Data for the number of houses that could be brought back into use in financial year 2025-26 is not held as financial budgets have not yet been agreed.

The programme of extensive refurbishments to long-term empty houses was launched in September 2023 and has allowed the MOD to significantly increase the number of high-quality homes available to Service families.

■ Armed Forces: Newcastle-under-Lyme**Adam Jogee:** [\[6974\]](#)

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

AI Carns:

This Government is committed to improving service life for our Service personnel and the families who support them.

We have already awarded the largest Armed Forces pay increase in 22 years, ensuring that the starting Armed Forces' salary is in line with the National Living Wage. We are working to establish a new Armed Forces Commissioner as an independent champion for our Service personnel to raise issues which impact on service life, drive up standards and deliver the homes our Service families deserve, and modernising and refining our recruitment policies and processes to attract, and then retain the best possible talent, including direct-entry cyber recruits.

■ Astute Class Submarines**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[5890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the (a) sixth and (b) seventh of the Astute Class submarines are due to enter operational service with the Royal Navy.

Luke Pollard:

The planned in-service and out-of-service dates for Royal Navy submarines are withheld as disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

Five of seven Astute Class submarines have been delivered to the Royal Navy, with boat six, HMS AGAMEMNON, launching from the BAE Systems Shipyard on 3 October 2024. The final Astute Class submarine is at an advanced stage of build.

■ AUKUS: Guided Weapons**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[5922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress he has made on the development of (a) undersea and (b) counter-hypersonic capabilities as part of AUKUS Pillar 2.

Luke Pollard:

With our AUKUS partners we are undertaking a range of work developing undersea capabilities, including the ability to launch and recover uncrewed underwater systems from current classes of British and American submarines and integrating this capability to the SSN-AUKUS design; exploring opportunities to collaborate on undersea warfare sensors and payloads, including integrating the Sting Ray torpedo into UK and US maritime patrol aircraft; and deploying common advanced artificial algorithms to process data from each nation's sonobuoys. We are also undertaking a series of integrated trilateral experiments and exercises with Australia and the United

States to enhance capability, improve interoperability, and increase the sophistication and scale of autonomous uncrewed systems in the maritime and other domains.

The AUKUS partners are increasing our collective ability to develop and deliver hypersonic and counter-hypersonic technologies through a series of trilateral tests and experiments that will accelerate the development of hypersonic concepts and critical enabling technologies.

■ **Boxer Vehicles: Weapons**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of procuring a turreted cannon for the Mechanised Infantry Vehicle, Boxer.

Luke Pollard:

The Strategic Defence Review will guide future capability development priorities to ensure the United Kingdom is both secure at home and strong abroad now and for years to come. As the review is still ongoing, the implications for capability programmes, including BOXER, will not be fully known until it has concluded in the first half of 2025.

However, I can confirm that the Army has conducted operational analysis, lethality and survivability studies, which includes analysing potential turreted options. The Army will continually review the capabilities, priorities and affordability choices that will be provided by BOXER and other platforms to ensure that its Armoured Fighting Vehicle fleet best meets Defence and NATO's needs.

■ **Clyde Naval Base**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[5886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the repair to the submarine lift at HMNB Clyde is due for completion; and what the estimated cost was of that repair.

Luke Pollard:

The shiplift at HMNB Clyde is undergoing scheduled routine maintenance and upgrade work.

Costs for key assets in the naval base are included in the routine maintenance contract with Babcock. It would not be appropriate to provide detailed availability of critical infrastructure assets due to operational sensitivities.

■ **Defence: Iron and Steel**

James Cartlidge: [\[4387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has a target for increasing the use of UK steel in defence.

Luke Pollard:

The UK steel industry is an important strategic national asset, vital for our security and our economy. Steel used in our major Defence programmes is sourced by our

prime contractors from a range of UK and international suppliers, as Defence programmes may often have requirements for specialist steel which cannot be sourced in the UK.

The future pipeline for steel requirements is published to enable UK steel manufacturers to better plan and bid for Government contracts. As part of the Strategic Defence Review, this Government is committed to developing a defence industrial base that is able to better support our own and allies security while also helping to drive economic growth. We will ensure a strong defence sector and resilient supply chains, including steel, across the whole of the UK.

■ Devonport Dockyard

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[5885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the estimated cost of the upgrade of submarine docking facilities at Devonport Dockyard; and when that work is due for completion.

AI Carns:

The cost of the current endorsed programme for upgrading submarine docking facilities at Devonport Dockyard is approximately £3 billion.

The opening of 9 Dock in September 2024 is the latest of a number of significant investments in Devonport. A range of other upgrade works will continue over the next five years. We are also examining what future further investments will be required to meet future demands.

■ Future Combat Air System

James Cartlidge:

[\[7501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 September 2024 to Question 2108 on Future Combat Air System, how much of the £1.3 billion is (a) Government and (b) private sector funded.

James Cartlidge:

[\[7502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 September 2024 to Question 2108 on Future Combat Air System, how much of the £1.3 billion was planned in a previous financial year to be spent this financial year.

James Cartlidge:

[\[7503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 September 2024 to Question 2108 on Future Combat Air System, whether the £1.3 billion represents the full expected allocation for the (a) Global Combat Air Programme and (b) Future Combat Air System as at the start of this financial year.

Luke Pollard:

The £1.3 billion figure provided on 19 September 2024 to Question 2106 accounts for the Government funding for Future Combat Air System/Global Combat Air Programme in the current financial year.

All of the £1.3 billion of spend this financial year was planned in the last financial year.

The £1.3 billion of spend this financial year is on the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) programme, the majority of which is for Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) activity. At the start of this financial year, it was expected that the Ministry of Defence would spend up to ~£1.46 billion on FCAS/GCAP. The forecast was reduced to £1.3 billion due to revised estimates of programme activity from industry throughout the year.

■ Harland and Wolff: Belfast**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[5888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the (a) future of the Harland and Wolf shipyard in Belfast and (b) contract for three Fleet Solid Support Ships.

Luke Pollard:

Ministry of Defence Ministers and officials have regular meetings with counterparts in other Government Departments, including with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on a range of matters, including the future of Harland & Wolff's shipyards.

The successful delivery of the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) ship programme remains a priority. There is extensive engagement with Navantia UK as the Prime Contractor to understand what steps the company is taking to ensure delivery of the FSS contract and management of its supply chain.

■ HMS Lancaster**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[5887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when HMS Lancaster is due to retire from the active surface fleet.

Luke Pollard:

On current plans, the last Type 23 frigate will transition out of service in 2035.

To avoid compromising operational security, the Ministry of Defence does not routinely disclose individual out of service dates or specific in-service dates for warships to avoid revealing elements of the Fleet's long-term schedule.

■ Ministry of Defence: Civil Servants

John Glen: [\[6133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many civil servants, other than special advisers, his Department has appointed without open competition since 4 July 2024; what their (a) job titles and (b) salary bands are; and on what basis each was appointed.

Al Carns:

Since 4 July 2024, there have been 30 civil servants in the Ministry of Defence who have been appointed on exemption. I am withholding the information about job titles and salary bands as it contains personal data which cannot be released as individuals could potentially be identified.

I can confirm that of the 30, one was appointed under Exemption 5: Former Civil Servant, 27 under Exemption 1: Temporary appointments, and two under the Military Transition scheme.

The appointments are based on a justifiable need of the Civil Service under **Exemption 1: Temporary appointments**; where either the urgency of the need or the short duration of the role make a full competition impracticable or disproportionate, Departments may appoint an individual for up to a maximum of two years, to provide managers with the flexibility to meet the short-term needs of the Civil Service, **Exemption 5: Former civil servants**; Former civil servants who were previously appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition may be re-appointed (to a permanent or fixed-term appointment) within a maximum of five years of leaving the Civil Service.

The **Military Transition scheme** is a Going Forward into Employment (GFIE) scheme run through the Cabinet Office. In the summer of 2019 this became an accredited scheme to recruit veterans and their spouses into the Civil Service.

■ Ministry of Defence: Land

Dan Norris: [\[5847\]](#)

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

Luke Pollard:

This Government was elected on a mandate to introduce the most ambitious plans to improve animal welfare in a generation, including the banning of trail hunting.

Licenses to trail hunt on Ministry of Defence (MOD) land are currently under Ministerial review. To date, no licenses to trail hunt on MOD land have been granted for the 2024-25 hunting season, pending Ministerial review.

Shaun Davies: [\[6696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to issue any licences for fox trail hunting on Ministry of Defence land.

Luke Pollard:

This Government was elected on a mandate to introduce the most ambitious plans to improve animal welfare in a generation, including the banning of trail hunting.

Licenses to trail hunt on Ministry of Defence (MOD) land are currently under Ministerial review. To date, no licenses to trail hunt on MOD land have been granted for the 2024-25 hunting season, pending Ministerial review.

The MOD is in discussion with other Government Departments on this policy and we hope to provide an update on progress shortly.

■ RAF Alconbury and RAF Molesworth

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of allocating funding to RAF (a) Molesworth and (b) Alconbury.

Luke Pollard:

Allocation of funding for United States Visiting Forces Estate in the United Kingdom is the responsibility of the United States Government.

■ RAF Wyton: Land

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of disposal of land that is part of RAF Wyton.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) steps he plans to take and (b) funding he plans to allocate to support the growth of RAF Wyton.

Luke Pollard:

As part of the 'Better Defence Estate Strategy', the UK Strategic Command Station at RAF Wyton will gain an enhanced integrated operations hub, designed to directly support UK Armed Forces on operations globally. This initiative will also enable the release of our site at Feltham in Middlesex, resulting in regeneration and supporting the Government's commitment to building 1.5 million homes. No recent assessments of the potential merits of the disposal of land at RAF Wyton have been undertaken.

■ Strategic Defence Review

James Cartlidge: [\[8456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what role artificial intelligence has played in (a) sifting and (b) evaluating Strategic Defence Review submissions.

Luke Pollard:

AI is helping the Strategic Defence Review team comprehend and analyse over 8,000 responses across the propositions, totalling over 2.2 million words.

This is enhancing the review team's ability to focus on complex tasks, such as applying robust challenge to submissions through Panel Sessions during October and November. AI is not a replacement for human judgment, but an enabler of greater efficiency and one part of facilitating a more comprehensive Review Process. Decisions on drafting are solely made by the reviewers: Lord George Robertson, General Sir Richard Barrons and Dr Fiona Hill.

James Cartlidge: [\[8457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many submissions have been received for the Strategic Defence Review.

Luke Pollard:

Over 1,700 individuals and organisations responded providing over 8,000 answers across 23 Propositions. Respondents included Serving and retired members of the Armed Forces, the defence industry, the public, academics, Parliamentary colleagues, and our closest allies and partners, including NATO.

■ Submarines

Mr Mark Francois: [\[5891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what he expects the Initial Operating Capability date for the new SSNR class of attack submarines in Royal Navy service to be.

Luke Pollard:

The Royal Navy's submersible ship nuclear AUKUS submarines will be operational from the late 2030s, replacing the current Astute Class.

■ Veterans: Northern Ireland

Robin Swann: [\[5517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2024 to Question 4577 on Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner: Resignations, what recent steps the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has taken to support veterans in Northern Ireland.

Al Carns:

Since 2021 the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has provided £2.9 million funding for projects supporting veterans specifically in Northern Ireland (NI). In addition, £9.4 million has been provided for UK-wide projects, most of which have also benefitted veterans in NI. Together, this funding has supported 48 projects in NI and a further 68 UK-wide.

■ Warrior Vehicles

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to procure a tracked Infantry Fighting Vehicle capability for the British Army.

Luke Pollard:

The Army's tracked Infantry Fighting vehicle, Warrior, is due to be withdrawn from service by the end of the decade. Whilst BOXER is not a direct replacement, it will become the Army's primary mechanised infantry platform working with Ajax and Challenger 3 in the Brigade Combat Teams. Warrior will remain effective until new capabilities are introduced throughout the decade.

The Strategic Defence Review will guide future capability development priorities, in which operational analysis and ongoing refinement of the Army's force design will be considered.

■ Watchkeeper WK450

Mr Mark Francois: [\[5889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the estimated lifetime cost of the Watchkeeper Remotely Piloted Vehicle; and when that vehicle will achieve Full Operational Capability.

Luke Pollard:

The through life costs of the Watchkeeper Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS) until the end of the current in-service contract will be £1.548 billion. The Watchkeeper UAS reached Full Operational Capability in 2018.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[5892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Watchkeeper Remotely Piloted Vehicles have been lost during (a) trials and (b) initial service with (i) DE&S and (ii) the Army.

Luke Pollard:

The Army have lost three Watchkeeper Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS) during trials, and five Watchkeeper UAS in service. DE&S do not operate Watchkeeper UAS.

■ World War II: Anniversaries

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[7483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the repatriation of over 125,000 British prisoners of war and the subsequent Long March between January and May 1945.

Al Carns:

There are plans to mark the Long March, and the subsequent repatriation of the Prisoners of War (under Operation EXODUS) on Defence social media channels in 2025. This will form part of the wider VEDay80 and VJDay80 Communications campaigns, aiming to educate younger generations to the sacrifices made by our Second World War veterans. Defence has supported, and will continue to support, the commemoration of key events of 80 years ago that signalled the end of World War Two. This includes the anniversaries of the Battle of Monte Cassino, D-Day, and

Operation Market Garden; my Department will also work with others into 2025 to commemorate the significant anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption

Rachael Maskell: [\[7475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help tackle longer waiting times for adoption experienced by (a) disabled children, (b) Black, Asian and ethnic minority children, (c) older children and (d) children with other protected characteristics.

Rachael Maskell: [\[7476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help encourage more people to become adopters of children in the care system.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to working with Regional Adoption Agencies, groups of local authorities joining up to deliver adoption services, to ensure that children waiting to be adopted are placed with a loving family as quickly as possible. In 2024/25, the government supported Regional Adoption Agencies with £9 million to develop a wide range of high quality and innovative services. A key focus of their work includes action to reduce how long children wait to be adopted, with a particular focus on those children who statistically wait the longest: black and minority ethnic children; children with disabilities; sibling groups; and children aged over 4 years old. This work includes supporting regional and national adopter recruitment campaigns to attract prospective adopters from a wider range of communities and walks of life, alongside a series of innovative matching projects looking at how to improve decision making; increasing the ethnic diversity of adoption panels to better reflect the communities they serve; and regional and national activity days to increase matching by bringing approved adopters and children together in a safe environment.

■ Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[7623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on expanding the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund.

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[7624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether there will be cuts to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund in the next Budget.

Janet Daby:

The department is continuing to hold Spending Review discussions regarding future funding for children's social care with colleagues across government.

■ Basic Skills: Aldershot

Alex Baker:

[\[8005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department has taken to help improve children's oracy skills in Aldershot constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

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 life chances.

The independent Curriculum and Assessment review will seek to deliver a curriculum which is rich and broad, inclusive and innovative to ensure that children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work, building the knowledge, skills and attributes young people need to thrive. This includes embedding oracy, digital and life skills in their learning. The Review will consider the recently published report of the Oracy Commission as part of this work.

In the early years, too, developing language skills is vital to enable children to thrive. The department is funding evidence-based early language interventions, targeting children needing extra support with their speech and language development.

■ Children: Hygiene

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[7546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps through education settings to help reduce child hygiene poverty.

Janet Daby:

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

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

This urgent work has started and the ministerial taskforce will harness all available levers to drive forward short-term and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty, with a child poverty strategy published in spring next year.

The department is working with the Department of Health and Social Care to deliver supervised toothbrushing for 3 to 5 year olds in the most deprived communities. These programmes prevent tooth decay and encourage toothbrushing routines at home.

In addition, the period product scheme continues to provide schools and colleges with access to a wide range of period products for their learners. Since its launch in 2020, 99% of secondary schools and 94% of colleges in England have used the scheme.

Furthermore, the government has announced an extension of the Household Support Fund for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. In England, an additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the Fund to support the cost of essentials, plus funding for the devolved governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

■ Department for Education: Paternity Leave

Shaun Davies: [\[7901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in her Department was in each of the last three years.

Janet Daby:

The average length of paternity leave taken by employees of the Department for Education for each of the last three years is set out in the table below.

YEAR	AVERAGE NUMBER OF CALENDAR DAYS
2022	18.7
2023	19.9
2024 (to date)	19.9

■ Foster Care

Rachael Maskell: [\[7477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help increase the number of people available to foster children in the care system.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to working in partnership with local authorities to recruit more foster carers. This includes delivering ten regional fostering recruitment and retention hubs, covering 64% of local authorities in England. The hubs will transform the way people who are interested in fostering are supported and rollout the Mockingbird programme, which offers peer-support to foster carers and the children in their care. The department is also funding 'Fosterlink', a new support service for local authority fostering services not in the regional programme. This identifies areas for improvement and creates a national network to share best practice.

■ Free School Meals

Damian Hinds: [\[7416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to change the eligibility criteria for free school meals.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is driving an agenda of change to break down the barriers of 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 government 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.

■ Further Education: Qualifications**Munira Wilson:**[\[7557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Written Statement of 25 July 2024 on Technical Qualifications Reform, UIN HCWS22, what the scope of the review is.

Munira Wilson:[\[7558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, who is responsible for carrying out her Department's proposed review of level 3 qualifications.

Munira Wilson:[\[7559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her planned timetable is for publishing the findings of her Department's review of level 3 qualifications.

Janet Daby:

The review of Qualifications Reform has already begun and will focus on Level 3 qualifications currently scheduled to have funding removed on 31 July 2025. It will aim to ensure that there are a range of high quality qualifications at Level 3 alongside T Levels and A levels to meet the needs of learners and employers.

The department will also clarify the position on the wider qualifications landscape, given that the previous government had made statements about funding expectations

going forward. We will aim to do that as soon as we can, after the review. However, clarifying the position on the 2025 defunding list is our top priority.

My noble Friend, the Minister for Skills is overseeing the internal review, which is being undertaken by civil servants. We have already held a Ministerial chaired round table with key leaders in the college sector and are undertaking a series of focus groups with colleges, schools and other organisations to ensure that the views of stakeholders are fully considered.

The outcomes of the review will be published before the end of the year.

■ Further Education: Teachers

James MacCleary: **[7673]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teachers are currently employed by colleges; and what proportion of those have been included in the 5.5% pay increase.

Janet Daby:

Information on the further education (FE) workforce, including numbers of teaching staff employed in the sector, is published in the 'Further education workforce' statistical publication, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-workforce>.

For the 2022/23 academic year, the total number of teaching staff in general FE colleges, including tertiary and sixth form colleges in England, is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/2c50762e-50c3-4b6f-a8da-08dce6ed00e6> .

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

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.

■ Grammar Schools

Sir John Hayes: **[7408]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will remove the prohibition on the creation of new grammar schools in England.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government has no plans to change the law that prohibits the creation of more grammar schools.

The department is committed to creating opportunities for all children to give them the best life chances. This government is focused on ensuring every child has access to

excellent local schools that deliver high standards for all their pupils so that they achieve and thrive.

■ **Lord Wharton of Yarm**

Munira Wilson:

[\[7556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what were the terms of departure of Lord Wharton from his role as Chairman of Office for Students.

Janet Daby:

Lord Wharton resigned as chair of the Office for Students (OfS) on 9 July 2024.

Lord Wharton's resignation was accepted by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, who swiftly appointed Sir David Behan as temporary chair of the OfS while the process to appoint a permanent chair is undertaken.

The department thanked Lord Wharton for his service as chair of the OfS through a period of change and challenge.

■ **Private Education: VAT**

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[\[7734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential impact of introducing VAT on independent schools on the arts sector.

Stephen Morgan:

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

Dame Caroline Dinenge:

[\[7735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of plans to introduce VAT on independent schools on (a) the number of children attending choir schools, (b) the number of choir schools, (c) the music industry and (d) levels of tourism.

Stephen Morgan:

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

The government is passionate about extending opportunities for children and young people in the arts through a broader curriculum, ensuring all pupils in state-funded

schools can access creative subjects, alongside subjects such as mathematics, science and English.

■ Schools: Mobile Phones

Mike Reader:

[7687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning smartphones (a) in classrooms, (b) within school grounds and (c) in the proximity of schools.

Stephen Morgan:

The department knows that using mobile phones in schools can lead to online bullying, distraction and classroom disruption, which can lead to lost learning time, while research also suggests that excessive screentime can have a negative impact on children's wellbeing.

Schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy that sets out what is expected of all pupils, including what items are banned from school premises. In February 2024, the department published non-statutory guidance for schools on how to develop, implement and maintain a policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime. As has been the longstanding policy of successive governments, headteachers remain responsible for deciding how they choose to implement this policy, including choosing to prohibit children from bringing mobile phones on site entirely.

■ Schools: Sanitary Products

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[8468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is her policy to continue the provision of free period products to pupils during the school holidays.

Janet Daby:

The Period Products Scheme recently opened for the 2024/25 academic year, with schools and colleges able to order free period products for their pupils and students. Beyond this, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has launched a multi-year Spending Review which will set government spending plans for a minimum of three years of the five-year forecast period. This will set spending policy in line with the government's wider fiscal strategy and change the way public services are delivered by embedding a mission-led approach.

The Spending Review will conclude in spring 2025.

■ Special Educational Needs

Oliver Ryan:

[7630]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to improve the (a) process and (b) tools used to diagnose SEND in children.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special education 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 wants to drive a consistent and inclusive approach to supporting children and young people with SEND through early identification, effective support, high quality teaching and effective allocation of resources. The department's approach will support families, breaking down the barriers to opportunity for their children.

The department knows that parents have struggled to get the right support for their children, particularly through long and difficult Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan processes. The department wants to make sure that EHC plan applications are processed promptly and, where required, 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 people such as children and young people, parents, schools, colleges and local authorities and their partners, and it is deciding how to proceed based on these insights.

The department is also investing heavily in the SEND system, for example:

- Investing a further £21 million to train 400 more educational psychologists across specialists.
- Announcing that funded support for the 11,100 schools registered for the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme would continue for 2024/25.
- In partnership with NHS England, funding the Early Language and Support For Every Child (ELSEC) to trial new ways of working to earlier identify and support children with speech, language and communication needs in early years and primary schools, utilising Therapy Support Assistants.
- Funding the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme, which will deploy specialists from both health and education workforces within mainstream primary school settings. PINS will build teacher and staff capacity to identify and meet the needs of neurodiverse children, including those with speech and language needs, through whole-school interventions.
- Funding up to 7,000 early years staff to gain an accredited Level 3 early years SENCO qualification to support the development of the early years' workforce.

■ Special Educational Needs: Cheshire**Mike Amesbury:**[\[7529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with (a) Halton Council and (b) Cheshire West and Cheshire Council on the adequacy of SEND provision.

Catherine McKinnell:

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) sits with local authorities.

The department supports local authorities to meet this duty by providing annual capital funding. In March 2024, local authorities were notified of £850 million of investment in places for children and young people with SEND or who require alternative provision.

Local authorities can use this funding to deliver new places in mainstream and special schools, as well as other specialist settings. It can also be used to improve the suitability and accessibility of existing buildings.

Halton Council has received just under £5.5 million in capital funding through this route between 2022 and 2025. Cheshire West and Chester Council has received £11.6 million.

In summer 2023, the department began collecting annual data from local authorities on available capacity in special schools, SEND units and resourced provision. This data will help the department to more effectively support local authorities to fulfil their statutory duty to provide sufficient specialist places.

■ Special Educational Needs: Rother Valley

Jake Richards:

[\[7612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children in Rother Valley constituency (a) have EHCP plans and (b) are receiving specialist education for special educational needs; and how many of those have not been attending school in each of the last 5 years.

Catherine McKinnell:

The special educational needs (SEN) publication publishes data on pupils in schools in England with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans which can be accessed at the following link: <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 type and 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. A table showing the number of SEN support and EHC plans is shown below:

ROTHER VALLEY	TOTAL
SEN support	1,208
EHC plans	2,384

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 all children and young people aged 0 to 25 in the Rother Valley who have an EHC plan and are educated other than in school is not readily available. Information is available on the placements of children and young people with EHC plans, for the Rotherham 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/2c1e2c6d-9043-4ff0-410a-08dce44cbd16>.

Due to changes in the method of data collection in 2023, information is available for two years only.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Speech and Language Disorders**

Dr Ben Spencer:

[8231]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the (a) adequacy of and (b) geographical inequalities in access to Speech and Language Screening in educational and early years settings.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is aware that the most prevalent type of primary need identified among pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is 'speech, language and communication needs' (SLCN). Our vision for children and young people with SLCN is the same as it is for all children and young people. We want them to receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

The statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) two-year old progress check and the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) development review offer two valuable opportunities to identify additional needs, including speech and language needs, for children aged 2 to 3 and put the right support in place for the children who need it.

The department is funding support for 11,100 schools registered for the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme. The majority of these are schools with the highest levels of disadvantage, as defined by the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. As of January 2024, we estimate over 211,000 reception age children so far have received this extra support.

In partnership with NHS England, we are funding the Early Language and Support for Every Child (ELSEC) pathfinder programme, to trial new ways of working to earlier identify and support children with SLCN in early years and primary schools, utilising

Therapy Support Assistants and a variation of identification tools across the pathfinders.

The department will consider how best to use learnings and insights from these programmes to improve support for children with SLCNs, including consistency of support provided across different geographies.

■ Students: Debts

Alex Baker: [\[8004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an estimate of the median level of student debt held by people in Aldershot constituency.

Janet Daby:

The median debt of full-time undergraduate borrowers funded by student finance England, whose postcode is within the Aldershot constituency, and who entered repayment within the last five financial years is £46,577. The median debt includes tuition fees and maintenance loans and the effective date of the data is 30 April 2024.

The borrower's postcode refers to the current contact or home address supplied by the borrower to the Student Loans Company.

■ Students: Employment

Tom Hayes: [\[7663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the readiness of students to enter the workforce.

Janet Daby:

The department wants to expand access to high quality careers advice and work experience, helping to break down the barriers to opportunity and boosting economic growth. This government recognises that work readiness is a key part of school life. The department wants young people in all parts of the country to gain workplace skills and explore career opportunities.

In 2024/25, the department is investing around £30 million through the Careers and Enterprise Company to support secondary schools and colleges to improve their careers programmes in line with the government's careers framework, the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance. 92% of secondary schools and colleges, 400 leading employers and 4,000 business volunteers are part of a national network of Careers Hubs. They are working together to improve careers advice and inspire young people.

The department wants to go further to make sure that young people in all parts of the country get the opportunities they deserve. According to a report from the Children's Commissioner, more than one third of children report that they do not know enough about good jobs available to them as they get older and leave school.

The department's ambition is to offer a guarantee of two weeks' worth of high quality work experience for all young people, irrespective of their background. This will open

doors to a wider range of employers and businesses and give young people a greater insight into the labour market. The department has also committed to train 1,000 careers advisers so that young people can get the expert advice they need to reflect on their workplace experiences and set future career goals.

These ambitions are vital to ensuring that young people are supported to make successful transitions from education and training into employment. The department wants to prepare all young people to make informed choices about their futures and support them into work they can be proud of.

■ Students: Housing

Jim Shannon:

[7454]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of student accommodation provision.

Janet Daby:

Education is a devolved matter, and this response outlines the information for England only.

Student accommodation is a busy part of the housing market. As universities and landlords are private, autonomous bodies, the government has no role in the provision of student accommodation, nor a remit to intervene in how it is allocated.

The department recognises the concerns that many students have about the availability and cost of their accommodation. We expect universities and private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure they are affordable, fair, clear and promote the interests of students.

All student landlords must be registered with a local authority or belong to one of the three government-sponsored Accommodation Codes of Practice. Since 2006, these have protected the interests of students to ensure standards are maintained and disputes are resolved promptly.

■ Teachers: Pay

Marie Goldman:

[7608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on whether teachers in (a) sixth forms and (b) other further educational institutions will receive the same pay rise as teachers in other settings; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the level of pay rise received by teachers in those settings on (i) recruitment and (ii) retention.

Janet Daby:

The government does not set or recommend pay in further education (FE), including in sixth form colleges and other FE institutions. 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 our missions to improve opportunity and economic growth. The department is investing around an additional £600 million to support FE across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas, 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.

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[\[7684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to increase the level of pay for non-academized sixth-form college 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 in other FE colleges, play in developing the skills needed to drive our missions to improve opportunity and economic growth. The department is investing around £600 million to support FE across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. This includes extending retention payments of up to £6,000 after tax to eligible early career FE teachers in key subject areas, 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.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Boilers: Caravans and Park Homes****Nick Timothy:**[\[8513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his Department's policy is on clean heat market mechanism exemptions for boilers used in (a) new-build caravans and (b) park homes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The previous government published a consultation on the Clean Heat Market Mechanism earlier this year. The Government will set out plans for the policy when it responds to that consultation.

■ Carbon Capture and Storage**Sir Gavin Williamson:**[\[7767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the carbon capture, utilisation and storage scheme on energy bills.

Sarah Jones:

Track 1 projects are expected to be funded through a mixture of levy and exchequer funding. We expect levy funded projects to become operational from late 2028. The exact split of levy and exchequer funding across Track 1 will be determined in due course and is subject to further negotiation, consultation, and statutory processes. DESNZ will consider potential impacts on energy bills as part of the statutory processes for drawing down on any other new or existing levies that may further support CCUS Track-1.

■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Finance**Clive Lewis:**[\[7486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will publish the evidential basis informing the decision to fund carbon capture, usage and storage clusters announced on 4 October 2024.

Sarah Jones:

The Department plans to release the Full Business Cases (FBCs) for the two clusters next year, in line with the requirements for programmes in the Government Major Projects Portfolio.

Sir Gavin Williamson:[\[7768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what proportion of funding for the carbon capture, utilisation and storage scheme will be raised by a levy on energy bills from 2029 onwards.

Sarah Jones:

Track 1 projects are expected to be funded through a mixture of levy and exchequer funding. We expect levy funded projects to become operational from late 2028. The exact split of levy and exchequer funding across Track 1 will be determined in due course and is subject to further negotiation, consultation, and statutory processes. DESNZ will consider potential impacts on energy bills as part of the statutory processes for drawing down on any other new or existing levies that may further support CCUS Track-1.

Carbon Capture and Storage: Yorkshire and the Humber**Graham Stuart:**[\[7414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he expects to progress Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage in the Humber through the Track-1 Expansion and Track-2 processes.

Sarah Jones:

The historic investment we recently announced in Carbon Capture and Storage in the North-West and North-East is just the start, representing a vote of confidence in this technology and burgeoning industry. To be ultimately successful, delivering on our climate commitments and protecting jobs, we need to deliver across all four corners of the UK. We have been engaging with the Track-1 and Track-2 clusters, to understand their deployment and expansion plans. We recognise that industry will be hoping for clarity as soon as possible on next steps, and we will have more to say on future projects in the coming months.

Energy: Billing and Social Tariffs**Amanda Martin:**[\[7678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to work with the six largest energy suppliers to ensure that they (a) help support vulnerable customers with their bills and (b) provide adequate social tariffs.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

I have been meeting regularly with energy suppliers to outline my expectations of the standard of service that they should provide, including supporting vulnerable consumers.

In August, I met with 13 suppliers – including the six largest suppliers – and encouraged them to build on the Voluntary Debt Commitment from last year and go further in supporting vulnerable customers this winter.

The Government has no plans to introduce a social energy tariff this winter. It expects energy suppliers to do everything they can to support customers who are struggling with bills, especially vulnerable customers.

■ Energy: Housing

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[7974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to boost energy efficiency of homes in Sheffield Central constituency.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Support for boosting energy efficiency in homes is currently available through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme, Home Upgrade Grant, Energy Company Obligation Scheme and the Great British Insulation scheme. These schemes are available across the country, including to those based in Sheffield.

The Warm Homes Plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation, low carbon heating and other home improvements to cut bills. We will partner with combined authorities and local and devolved governments to roll out this plan.

Tom Hayes:

[\[8359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) availability and (b) reliability of information for consumers on the purchase of green home improvements.

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.

■ Great British Energy: Community Energy

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[7622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Local Power Plan will contain measures to increase the take up of cooperative energy schemes.

Michael Shanks:

Yes. The aim of Great British Energy's Local Power Plan (LPP) is to support a more decentralised and resilient energy system, with more local generation and ownership. By doing so, we are giving communities a stake in the transition to net zero as owners and stakeholders in clean power projects. The LPP will support Local and Combined Authorities, and Community Energy Groups, which could include energy

cooperative schemes, to roll out small and medium-scale renewable energy projects. The LPP will increase the capability and capacity of these groups to build a pipeline of successful projects in their local areas, including through commercial, technical and project-planning assistance.

■ Great British Insulation Scheme

Charlotte Nichols: [\[8480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many people secured a grant from the Great British Insulation Scheme since it opened in April 2003.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) is not a government grant, rather it is an obligation on larger energy suppliers to deliver the most cost-effective single insulation measures to eligible households across Great Britain.

Information on the number of measures installed and the number of households that have received measures under GBIS since it launched in 2023 can be found in Tables 1 and 2 of the latest [GBIS Statistics Release](#).

■ Heat Pumps

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[7618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether there will be any exceptions to the planned phasing out of gas boilers in favour of heat pumps in all homes by 2035.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government's position is not to force anyone to rip out a working boiler and will incentivise moves to cleaner, affordable heating.

The Government has started delivery of the Warm Homes Plan, which will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation, heat pumps and other home improvements to cut bills.

More detail will be set out in due course.

■ Lighting

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[8387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to prohibit light bulbs with an energy efficiency below 45 watts; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of this ban on animals that require specific light bulbs to survive indoors.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The previous Government consulted on new minimum energy performance standards for lighting products, which would ban the most inefficient lighting products from being sold on the GB market. Officials are analysing the feedback received including, for

example, evidence around the need for aquaria lighting. The Government will publish a response in due course.

■ National Grid: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes: [\[7409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will meet with community representatives in Lincolnshire to discuss the potential impact of the proposed Grimsby to Walpole project under the great grid upgrade.

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.

■ Nuclear Reactors

Andrew Griffith: [\[7582\]](#)

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

Michael Shanks:

Advanced Modular Reactors have the potential to help tackle hard-to-abate emissions in energy intensive industries. The Government continues to fund research and innovation to develop High Temperature Gas Reactor technology and their advanced fuels through the £385 million Advanced Nuclear Fund during the current Spending Review period. The current programme is also providing funding to the UK's nuclear regulators to ensure they can develop capabilities to regulate novel reactor types.

Some advanced reactor designs require High Assay Low Enriched Uranium (HALEU) fuel, so securing a supply of HALEU is essential to unleash the benefits of new designs on our path to Net Zero. Our £300m HALEU programme expect to develop a full HALEU front-end fuel cycle capability in the UK by the early 2030s, helping to support and attract advanced reactor designs to the UK.

■ Offshore Industry

Tracy Gilbert: [\[7655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussions he has had with representatives in the energy sector on the development of an offshore energy passport.

Michael Shanks:

The Secretary of State welcomes the delivery of an industry-led Skills Passport. This is an important step to help workers transition from carbon-intensive industries to new clean energy sectors as part of the Government's clean energy mission 2030.

■ **Warm Home Discount Scheme: Runcorn and Helsby****Mike Amesbury:**[\[7530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many people are in receipt of the warm home discount in Runcorn and Helsby constituency.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The most recent published statistics on Warm Home Discount can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/warm-home-discount-statistics-2023-to-2024>

The published statistics use parliamentary constituency boundaries as defined prior to the 2024 General Election.

■ **Warm Home Discount Scheme: South Holland and the Deepings****Sir John Hayes:**[\[8103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many people are in receipt of the Warm Home Discount in South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

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 5,733 households in South Holland and The Deepings received Warm Home Discount in the 2023-24 scheme year, making up approximately 11.6% of the overall number of households in the constituency.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **Agriculture: Floods****Blake Stephenson:**[\[7942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to manage the potential impact of housing developments on trends in the level of farm floods.

Emma Hardy:

Flood risk is an important consideration in the planning system. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, including floodplains.

Where development needs to be in locations where there is a risk of flooding as alternative sites are not available, local planning authorities and developers should ensure development is appropriately [flood resilient and resistant](#), [safe](#) for its users for the development's [lifetime](#), and will not increase flood risk overall.

In July 2024, the Government issued a consultation inviting views on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework in order to achieve sustainable growth. The consultation, which closed on 24 September, invited views on potential improvements to planning policy for flood risk. The Government will respond in due course.

■ Agriculture: Land Use

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Government's planning policies on large-scale solar farms on food (a) production and (b) security in England.

Daniel Zeichner:

The total area used for solar farms is very small, and – even in the most ambitious scenarios – solar farms will occupy less than 1% of the UK's agricultural land, causing minimal impact on food production.

We produce 62% of all the food we need, and 75% of food which we can grow or rear in the UK for all or part of the year. Food security is built on supply from diverse sources, strong domestic production and imports through stable trade routes. Imports supplements domestic production, ensuring that any disruption from risks such as adverse weather does not affect the UK's overall security of supply.

As we face up to the challenge of the energy transition, we must plan for how we use land in this country to ensure a proper balance between food security, nature recovery and clean energy. We will publish a Land Use Framework for England to help find this balance, working in tandem with our spatial energy plan.

Solar power is crucial to achieving net zero, providing an abundant source of cleaner, cheaper energy on the mission towards 2030. We do not believe that the rollout of solar power poses a threat to food security.

■ Cats: Animal Breeding

Gill Furniss:

[\[8458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he is taking steps to tackle (a) unethical cat breeding and (b) kitten farming.

Daniel Zeichner:

Under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, anyone in the business of breeding and selling cats as pets needs to have a valid licence issued by their local authority. Licensees must meet strict statutory minimum welfare standards which are enforced by local authorities who

have powers to issue, refuse, vary or revoke licences. Anyone carrying on a licensable activity without a licence faces up to 6 months' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both.

Defra has been working on a post-implementation review of the Regulations. This review considers whether the Regulations have met their objectives, and where there could be scope to further improve the protections they provide.

■ Clothing: Microplastics

Jess Asato:

[\[7642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to require retailers to publish data on microplastics used in their clothing.

Mary Creagh:

The Secretary of State has asked his department to convene a Taskforce of experts from across the Government, industry, academia and relevant NGOs. The Taskforce will help to develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England and a series of roadmaps detailing the interventions that the Government will make on a sector-by-sector basis. 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. In the meantime we have no plans to require clothing producers or retailers to publish additional data.

■ Clothing: Waste Disposal

Jess Asato:

[\[7640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the sixteenth report of session 2017-19 of the Environmental Audit Committee entitled Fixing fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability, HC 1952, published on 19 February 2019, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of accepting the recommendation to impose a charge on clothing garments to fund clothing collection and sorting services.

Mary Creagh:

No recent assessment has been made of the Environmental Audit Committee's recommendation for a charge on garments to fund collection and sorting services. However, the Secretary of State has asked his department to convene a taskforce of experts from across the Government, industry, academia and relevant NGOs. The Taskforce will help to develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England and a series of roadmaps detailing the interventions that the Government will make on a sector-by-sector basis. 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.

■ Dogs: Imports

Mr Peter Bedford:

[\[7691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs were imported under the Balai Directive in each month of (a) 2023 and (b) 2024 to date; and from which country did those dogs originate.

Daniel Zeichner:

Please see attached Balai data for the number of dogs imported each month in 2023 and 2024.

The EU data may include animals that have originated from a non-EU country but have travelled through an EU Border Control Post (BCP). The database records the EU BCP Country as the Country of Origin for these imports. The Rest of the World data will not include any animals that have arrived through an EU BCP.

This information is drawn from the external Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System (IPAFFS), not directly controlled by the department.

Attachments:

1. [Attachment for PQ 7691](#) [PQ 7691 attachment.docx]

■ Domestic Waste: Recycling

Dame Caroline Dinéage:

[\[7739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether officials in his Department have had discussions with Council leaders on the potential merits of allowing local decision makers greater control over the design of local household waste recycling centre services.

Mary Creagh:

No, officials have not had any such discussions. The Environmental Protection Act requires that waste disposal authorities provide places for residents to dispose of household waste. Householders must be allowed to deposit waste deemed to be 'household waste' for free. This encourages responsible waste disposal and recycling. Local authorities may otherwise determine how best to deliver a service that meets the needs of their residents.

■ Environment Protection: British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the forthcoming end to climate and biodiversity financing commitments for the Overseas Territories.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the environments of the Overseas Territories in the context of the forthcoming end of nature and climate financing commitments.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[5913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on the forthcoming end to biodiversity financing in the Overseas Territories.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[5914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Overseas Territories on continuity of environmental financing support.

Mary Creagh:

The UK Government remains committed to supporting the UK Overseas Territories to protect their diverse and unique environments. Discussions are ongoing regarding funding for biodiversity in the Territories, as part of the Spending Review process; and there are meetings planned with FCDO ministers regarding the important role that biodiversity plays in the sustainability of our Overseas Territories.

■ Flood Control: East of England and Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes: [\[7404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the risk of flooding in (a) Lincolnshire and (b) the Fens.

Emma Hardy:

Protecting communities from flooding is a key priority for this Government, and that is why we have launched a Flood Resilience Taskforce. It will provide oversight of national and local flood resilience and preparedness ahead of and after the winter flood season. It met for the first time on 12 September to discuss preparation for the winter ahead.

Since 2010, the Environment Agency (EA) has invested over £332 million in flood schemes in Lincolnshire, better protecting over 83,000 properties. The Fens 2100+ is a £9.8 million programme to develop a Fens-wide flood resilience investment strategy that achieves long-term value for money and generates regional and national benefits. This investment strategy will be completed in 2025 and is being developed with Flood Risk Management Authorities to assist them in planning their flood risk management activities for the next 20-25 years and beyond. This includes taking forward a 'Sustainable Recovery Pilot' project in the Witham Fens in Lincolnshire, which is looking at managing flooding differently, building on risk management authorities' day to day activities, to help this area of fenland be more resilient and aid quicker recovery from flooding.

The EA is developing a vision for the future use of Crowland and Cowbit Washes (flood storage reservoir) which will explore options for multi-benefit uses, including flooding, climate change adaptation and environmental benefits. We will work with landowners and Risk Management Authorities to develop this work as the current

appetite to adapt our flood risk management approach is high given Storm Henk impacts.

■ **Floods: Beverley and Holderness**

Graham Stuart:

[\[7413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to pay the second phase of grants under the Farming Recovery Fund to farmers affected by flooding in Beverley and Holderness constituency.

Daniel Zeichner:

We are aware of the ongoing challenges farmers have been facing following the winter storms and the wet weather in late 2023 and early 2024. We are committed to maintaining food production and supporting thriving farm businesses as well as protecting communities from flooding. All spending commitments will be confirmed in the spending review. This includes the Farming Recovery Fund, more information on the expanded Farming Recovery Fund will be made available soon.

■ **Floods: Housing**

Alex Mayer:

[\[7631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help people adapt their homes to mitigate against the risk of flooding.

Emma Hardy:

Property flood resilience measures, such as airbrick covers and flood resilient materials, can ensure that new and existing homes are resilient to risks from flooding.

The Environment Agency's Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Framework provides consultancy and contracting services for the survey, supply, and installation of property flood resilience to homes and is in place for up to four years. Lead Local Flood Authorities can also use the framework to secure these services for local projects. In the current flood's investment programme, there are over 150 property flood resilience schemes planned, which will better protect over 4,000 homes.

■ **Foie Gras: Imports**

Ruth Jones:

[\[8465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2024 to Question 3584 on Foie Gras: Imports, whether he plans to publish a consultation on a potential ban on the import of foie gras.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government shares the British public's high regard for animal welfare and has made clear that the production of foie gras from ducks or geese using force feeding raises serious welfare concerns.

The Government looks forward to delivering the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation.

Ministers are reviewing policies and any next steps will be announced in due course.

■ Food Supply

Ben Goldsborough: [\[8034\]](#)

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 proposed planning reforms on food security.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government places great importance on our agricultural land and food production. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out how the best and most versatile agricultural land should be reflected in planning policies and decisions. The Framework is also clear that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.

Food security is national security, which is relevant to all five Government missions and central to our primary mission to grow the economy. Boosting Britain's food security is one of the core priorities of this Government. We need a resilient and healthy food system that works with nature and supports British farmers. The only way to do this effectively is to listen to farmers and others with a stake in our food system, countryside and nature. We will consider relevant evidence and analysis, including that contained in Henry Dimbleby's National Food Strategy, as we develop our plans to support our farmers and food and drink businesses, boost food security, invest in rural communities, deliver growth, manage waste more effectively across the supply chain, improve resilience to climate change and tackle biodiversity loss.

■ Food Supply: Supply Chains

Rebecca Paul: [\[8078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing the draft regulations proposed following the UK fresh produce sector: review of the supply chain, published on 14 December 2023.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government will deliver a resilient and healthy food system, with a new deal that ensures fairness in the supply chain across all sectors, including the fresh produce supply chain. Farmers should always receive a fair price for their products and the Government is committed to tackling contractual unfairness wherever it exists.

We will soon share proposals building on the consultation with industry, and will continue to work closely with stakeholders from the fresh produce sector on the best way to achieve this.

■ Food: Production

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[8029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a new national accreditation for sustainable Controlled Environment Agriculture food production.

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.

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) is the sole National Accreditation Body for the United Kingdom.

■ Forest Products: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister:

[\[8086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4798, whether his Department has had discussions with (a) the Ulster Farmers Union and (b) businesses on the (i) potential cost and (ii) other practical implications of compliance with Regulation EU 2023/1115.

Daniel Zeichner:

Ministers are currently considering our approach to Regulation 2023/1115 in Northern Ireland. The Government will communicate relevant arrangements at the earliest possible opportunity, noting also that the EU Commission has proposed to delay the implementation deadlines by 12 months to 30 December 2025.

■ Horticulture

Sir John Hayes:

[\[7718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce a horticulture strategy.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government appreciates and values the vital work of the horticulture industry and recognises its role in maintaining a secure food supply.

As part of our mission-driven Government, and in partnership with the sector, we are considering how we can achieve our ambitious, measurable and long-term goals for the sector, including how to recognise the sector's diversity and specialist needs.

■ Hunting: National Parks

Dan Norris:

[\[5849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with national park authorities where trail hunting takes place.

Mary Creagh:

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

The Government committed to enacting a ban on Trail Hunting in line with our manifesto commitment. Work to determine the best approach for doing so is ongoing and is at a very early stage. Initial discussions have been held with officials from other departments but, to date, none have taken place with the National Parks Authorities.

■ Inland Waterways: Finance

Rachel Gilmour:

[\[7670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the level of funding for waterways.

Emma Hardy:

The Canal and River Trust is the largest inland waterway navigation authority in England and Wales, responsible for the 2,000 miles of canals and rivers it owns. The Government is currently providing the Trust with a 15-year grant (2012-2027) totalling about £740 million to support maintenance of the canal network infrastructure. A review of the grant funding concluded that the Trust is providing value for money and there was a good case for continued grant funding. A further substantial 10-year grant from 2027 of £401 million was announced in July 2023, reconfirmed by the Government in August 2024, reflecting the importance of the country's inland waterways and supporting the Trust in the long-standing objective of reducing reliance on public funding while developing alternative funding sources.

The Government also provides grant-in-aid funding to the Environment Agency to support its 630 miles of navigations. This totalled around £70 million over the last three years. Future funding will be determined as part of the current spending review.

There is no other general Government funding available for inland waterways, and the other navigation authorities responsible for smaller waterway networks raise funds through their boat licensing regimes and other activities working with local communities.

■ Livestock: Animal Welfare

Luke Taylor: [\[6884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of opening a consultation on banning the use of (a) cages and (b) close confinement systems in animal farming.

Daniel Zeichner:

We are firmly committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare and want to work closely with the farming sector to deliver high standards.

The use of cages and other close confinement systems for farmed animals is an issue we will want to fully consider in due course.

Adrian Ramsay: [\[7312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ban the use of (a) cages and (b) close confinement systems for farmed animals.

Daniel Zeichner:

We are firmly committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare and want to work closely with the farming sector to deliver high standards.

The use of cages and other close confinement systems for farmed animals is an issue we will want to fully consider in due course.

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[7696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to end the use of cages in farming.

Daniel Zeichner:

We are firmly committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare and want to work closely with the farming sector to deliver high standards.

The use of cages for farmed animals is an issue we will want to fully consider in due course.

■ Moorland: Fires

Paul Davies: [\[7287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help support the sharing of best practice at the (a) Peak District and (b) South Pennines fire operation groups on moorland fires.

Mary Creagh:

Fire Operation Groups (FOGs) and similar networks across the country play a vital role in mitigating, preventing and responding to the risks and realities of wildfire. The government applauds the work they do. Defra supports the promotion of shared learning and professional development through its membership of established forums and networks.

■ Packaging: Recycling

Dame Caroline Dinenage:

[\[7740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to implement regulations through powers introduced in the Environment Act 2021 to require producers to take responsibility for the waste that arises from their products.

Mary Creagh:

The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024, which reform the UK's producer responsibility system for packaging, are due to be brought before parliament in autumn this year, with the aim of these regulations coming into force by 1 January 2025.

■ Pesticides

Ben Coleman:

[\[7702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of changes to the maximum residue level of 49 pesticide residues between 2022 and 2024 on levels of pesticide residues on food; and what steps his Department is taking to protect the (a) food supply and (b) environment from harmful pesticides.

Emma Hardy:

The Government's first priority with regard to pesticides is to ensure that they will not harm people or pose unacceptable risks to the environment. We will continue to base decisions on the use of pesticides on careful scientific assessment of the risks. This provides a high level of protection for people and the environment.

The GB pesticide Maximum Residue Level (MRL) regime sets high standards of consumer protection to ensure no harmful effects on human health. GB MRLs are set below, and usually well below, the level considered to be safe for people to eat.

The MRLs apply to both food produced domestically and that imported from other countries. Our ongoing monitoring programme provides assurance that food complies with the rules and is safe to eat. It is led by the Health and Safety Executive with advice from the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food.

■ Pet Travel Scheme: Dogs

Mr Peter Bedford:

[\[7692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs travelled to the UK under the Pet Travel Scheme via (a) sea, (b) tunnel and (c) air in (i) 2023 and (ii) 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

MEANS OF TRANSPORT	JANUARY – DECEMBER 2023	JANUARY – AUGUST 2024
Air	14,196	10,904
Sea	98,090	81,603
Tunnel	176,423	142,142
Total	288,709	234,649

The data regarding the Pet Travel Scheme covers pets entering Great Britain and is based on information provided by checkers employed by approved carriers of pet animals. Please be aware that this is subject to change as we often receive throughput returns from carriers months later.

■ **Plastics: Packaging**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[7520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have had discussions with His Majesty's Treasury on the Government's response to the consultation on Plastic Packaging Tax - chemical recycling and adoption of a mass balance approach, published on 18 July 2023.

Mary Creagh:

Yes. Officials in Defra work closely with HM Treasury colleagues. We are aware that the Treasury has committed to publishing a response to the consultation before the end of this year.

■ **Plastics: Pollution**

Martin Wrigley: [\[6887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his international counterparts on supporting a legally-binding global target to cut plastic production before the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, South Korea in November 2024.

Emma Hardy:

On the 24 September in New York, the Foreign Secretary announced the UK had endorsed the Bridge to Busan declaration to support greater ambition on addressing unsustainable levels of primary plastic production in the negotiations for a new treaty to end plastic pollution. Further information, including the full list of signatories to the Bridge to Busan declaration can be found at the following address:

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

■ Poultry and Pigs: Animal Welfare**Andy McDonald:** [\[6270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a timetable for a public consultation on the use of (a) cages for laying hens and (b) farrowing crates for pigs.

Daniel Zeichner:

We are firmly committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare and want to work closely with the farming sector to deliver high standards.

The use of enriched 'colony' cages for laying hens and farrowing crates for pigs is an issue we will want to fully consider in due course.

■ Poultry: Animal Welfare**Andy McDonald:** [\[6269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the Scottish Government's consultation on a proposal to phase out the use of cages in Scotland's laying hen sector.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK Government is committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare and wants to work closely with the farming sector to deliver high standards.

Intergovernmental discussions between Defra and the devolved Governments on animal welfare matters are ongoing and the use of enriched 'colony' cages is an issue we will want to fully consider in due course.

■ Water: East of England**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[7566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with Essex and Suffolk Water on levels of investment in local water infrastructure.

Emma Hardy:

Since taking office, the Secretary of State and I have met with representatives from all water and wastewater companies. Officials also regularly meet with water companies to discuss localised and regional issues.

On 11 July, Ofwat proposed allowing a spending package of £88bn by water companies between 2025 - 2030. This investment will deliver upgrades across England and Wales to improve local water infrastructure including: 1500 wastewater treatment works, improvements of thousands of storm overflows and investment in improving bathing waters.

For PR24, Essex and Suffolk Water are proposing to invest £1.5 billion in total in the region, notably £386 million on new water supplies and £17.5 million on leakage. This is the largest investment programme in the last 30 years, working to increase

resilience and secure water supply for the future, reducing the impact on the environment.

■ Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme: Plant and Animal Health) (Amendment etc.) Regulations 2024

Jim Allister:

[\[8399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to prepare for the coming into force of the Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme: Plant and Animal Health) (Amendment etc.) Regulations 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

These regulations came into force on 2 September. Ministers and officials regularly engage with businesses, trade bodies and others to provide support and to inform our implementation of the Windsor Framework, including on these regulations.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Africa: Restitution

John Glen:

[\[6075\]](#)

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 recommendations of the Summary Report of the APPG on Afrikan reparations, published in October 2023.

Anneliese Dodds:

Museums and galleries in England operate independently of the government. Decisions relating to the care and management of their collections are a matter for the trustees of each museum. The Arts Council published guidance in 2022 on the handling of restitution claims. The guidance sets out that, each claim should be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the individual circumstances, provenance, and historic and current contexts.

■ Armed Conflict: Ukraine

Alex Easton:

[\[7183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Prime Minister has had recent discussions with his international counterparts on efforts to help end the conflict in Ukraine.

Stephen Doughty:

The Prime Minister recently discussed Ukraine during his visits to Germany, France, Ireland and Italy, and we are in constant contact with the Government of Ukraine. The Prime Minister recently hosted President Zelenskyy in Downing Street, where they discussed the President's victory plan. The Government's support for Ukraine is ironclad. The UK has now committed £12.8 billion in military, humanitarian and

economic support. Ukraine has been clear that a just peace must respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and the UN Charter.

■ **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Floods and Landslips**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[7858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has offered assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina following recent flooding and landslides.

Stephen Doughty:

I [Minister Doughty] was in contact with the Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on 5 October and expressed the UK's condolences for the loss of life and damage caused by flooding and landslides. On 4 and 5 October, British search and rescue specialists (in BiH as a short-term training team arranged by the British Embassy in Sarajevo) provided advice and expertise to BiH armed forces and emergency services on the ground. The UK's Ambassador to BiH visited the worst affected sites on 5 October, meeting the UK team and local mayors. The UK Government is considering, with BiH authorities and international partners, how it might support further responses.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Detainees**

Tim Roca:

[\[8070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure the release of unlawfully detained British nationals abroad.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

FCDO consular staff are currently providing consular assistance in over 1600 cases relating to arrest or detention abroad. The UK Government cannot interfere in judicial proceedings in other countries. However, with the consent of the individual we will raise individual cases with the relevant overseas authorities where there are welfare or human rights concerns, such as allegations of torture or mistreatment or fair trial concerns, highlighting the detaining state's obligations under international human rights law.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Written Questions**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[8481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to answer Question 6569 on Armenia: Azerbaijan tabled by the hon. Member for Rutland and Stamford on 4 October 2024.

Stephen Doughty:

I [Minister Doughty] responded to Question 6569 on 14/10/2024.

■ Gaza: Ceasefires

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[8315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with international counterparts to help secure a ceasefire in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is working in lockstep with our allies in seeking an end to the violence in the region. The Prime Minister has discussed the volatile situation in the region with His Majesty King Abdullah II, Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Macron and Chancellor Scholz. The Foreign Secretary has also spoken to his counterparts - including Israeli Foreign Minister Katz, US Secretary of State Blinken and French Foreign Minister Barrot. He has also spoken to Lebanon's Prime Minister and previously warned Iran against action that could further push the region to the brink.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[8316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, steps he is taking with international partners to help increase levels of aid entering into 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.

■ Gulf Cooperation Council

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[7412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) ensure good relations with countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council and (b) encourage investment from such countries in the UK economy.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK's partnerships with the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are historic and enduring. These are underpinned by shared prosperity, security interests and deep people-to-people links. This government has committed to deepening cooperation with the Gulf. Both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have had early engagement with all six of their Gulf counterparts.

We have resumed negotiations on the UK-GCC Free Trade Agreement and are working closely with Gulf partners to boost trade and investment ties.

■ **Hamis: Hostage Taking**

Richard Tice: [\[8341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to help secure the release of (i) Emily Damari and (ii) other hostages held by Hamas.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We condemn Hamas' continued holding of hostages in Gaza, including Emily Damari and others with UK links, who remain cruelly detained. The Foreign Secretary and I have met all the families of hostages with links to the UK, whose loved ones have been murdered or taken by Hamas and have heard firsthand the suffering they have endured. We welcome the tireless efforts of our partners in Qatar, Egypt and the United States, and fully endorse their efforts to secure a resumption of ceasefire negotiations and a hostage release deal between Israel and Hamas.

■ **Iran: Detainees**

Tim Farron: [\[7726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Iranian counterpart on (a) the arrest of Mojdeh Farah on September 9 and (b) the imprisonment of other Christian converts in that country.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are aware of Ms Farah's case. We condemn Iran's restrictions against Freedom of Religion or Belief. Christians, particularly converts from Islam and other minority religions, continue to face severe repression in Iran. We are committed to holding Iran to account for its attacks against religious minorities, including at the UN Third Committee this month.

■ **Israel: Arms Trade**

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[7719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024 to Question 4213 on Israel: Arms Trade, for what reason he decided to suspend export licences to Israel on the grounds that there is clear risk that such equipment might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law, in the context of the conclusions outlined in the document entitled Summary of the IHL process, decision and the factors taken into account, published on 2 September 2024, on the conduct of hostilities.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

On day one in office, the Foreign Secretary commissioned a thorough review into Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), given the grave

concerns about the conduct and consequences of the war in Gaza for civilians. The review assessed IHL compliance across three areas: humanitarian provision and access, treatment of detainees and the conduct of the military campaign. The review found possible breaches of IHL in the areas of humanitarian access and in the treatment of detainees. The lack of sufficient verifiable evidence meant that we could not determine whether possible breaches of IHL in the conduct of the campaign had been committed. However, concerns regarding Israel's compliance and commitment in the areas of humanitarian relief and treatment of detainees give cause for concern about its attitude and approach to the conduct of hostilities. The scale of the destruction and the number of civilian deaths also cause great concern. The UK's robust export licensing criteria states that the Government will not issue export licences if there is *a clear risk* that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of IHL. Given the conclusions of the review, on 2 September the Government suspended around 30 export licences to Israel, effectively covering all arms exports for use in the current conflict in Gaza, exempting components for F-35 aircraft which, for reasons outlined in the Foreign Secretary's Statement and the Business and Trade Secretary's Written Ministerial Statement, have been excluded from the suspension.

■ **Israel: Lebanon**

Mary Glendon:

[\[8136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to encourage a ceasefire on the Israel-Lebanon Blue Line.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We were the first G7 country to call for the implementation of an immediate ceasefire between Lebanese Hizballah and Israel, on 19 September. The Prime Minister has spoken with a number of international leaders, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, His Majesty King Abdullah II, President Macron and Chancellor Scholz, to press the case for restraint. This builds on extensive discussions by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary at the UN with regional leaders. The Foreign Secretary spoke with counterparts in Egypt, Oman and Iraq about our ongoing efforts for de-escalation.

■ **Israel: Palestinians**

Tim Roca:

[\[8074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in Israel on that country's policy on a two-state solution.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The Foreign Secretary most recently spoke to Israeli Foreign Minister Katz on 2 October. We advocate publicly and privately the need for a long-term political solution, that will include the implementation of a two-state solution. An immediate ceasefire must be agreed but is just the first step towards a lasting solution to this

crisis. We continue to work to support progress towards a two-state solution with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

■ Kurdistan: Elections

Dame Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[7712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the dissemination of AI-generated misinformation in the lead-up to the regional elections in Kurdistan; and what steps his Department is taking to support free and fair elections in that region.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The upcoming elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) are essential for democratic legitimacy and for the people of the KRI to express their voice.

The British Consulate General in Erbil has supported roundtables and workshops with the Kurdistan Regional Government, parties, candidates and civil society, which have focused on preventing online harassment of women candidates, including through AI-generated fakes and misinformation.

Consulate General staff engaged with all parties in advance of the election campaign. We continue to encourage political parties and media in the KRI to act responsibly to ensure free, fair and inclusive elections on 20 October.

■ Lebanon: Humanitarian Aid

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[8317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to increase the levels of aid it provides to Lebanon.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK is one of the largest donors to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Lebanon Humanitarian Fund and the Central Emergency Response Fund. We have announced £10 million of aid to Lebanon, which includes essential medicine, hygiene kits, fuel for water stations and support for emergency teams. This is in addition to the £5 million already provided to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. UK bilateral humanitarian support for this financial year is up to £31 million. A first shipment of UK aid for people in need in Lebanon arrived in Beirut on 06 October.

■ Pakistan: Human Rights

Alex Easton:

[\[8057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential implications for its policies of the (a) recent sentencing to death on charges of blasphemy of Shaughta Karan in Pakistan and (b) possible violations of (i) freedom of religion or belief and (ii) other human rights in that country.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Pakistan is a FCDO human rights priority country. We work to protect and promote human rights in Pakistan through our diplomatic engagement and programme funding. This includes regularly raising our opposition to the death penalty and concerns about the misuse of blasphemy laws, both in principle and in relation to specific cases. I underlined the importance of promoting religious tolerance and harmony with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister Azam Tarar on the 4 September.

■ **Polio: Disease Control****Laura Kyrke-Smith:**[\[7356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking with (a) the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and (b) other multilateral organisations to help eradicate polio.

Laura Kyrke-Smith:[\[7357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure access to (a) safe and (b) effective polio vaccines in conflict-affected areas.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is proud to be a longstanding supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), having contributed £1.4 billion since 1995. The UK continues to be a supportive partner to the GPEI and will take every opportunity to ensure every child everywhere is safe from Polio, including in conflict-affected areas. The UK is engaging internationally to reinforce the importance of delivering the second polio vaccination campaign in Gaza this month. The UK is also one of the largest donors to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Investing £1.65 billion from 2021 - 2025 to support eligible countries with polio vaccines as part of essential childhood immunisations.

Rebecca Paul:[\[7681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the UK maintains funding for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is proud to be a longstanding supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), having contributed £1.4 billion since 1995. The UK continues to be a supportive partner to the GPEI and will take every opportunity to ensure every child everywhere is safe from polio. The UK is working with the international community to coordinate efforts and ensure sustainable resources for all upcoming global health replenishments. Effective coordination across the Global Health Initiatives will be needed to deliver for the global health challenges ahead.

■ Saudi Arabia: Capital Punishment**Abtisam Mohamed:** [\[8322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Saudi counterpart on the use of the death penalty by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[8323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia complies with international human rights obligations.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK opposes the death penalty in all circumstances as our joint statement on 10 October made clear; the Saudi authorities are well aware of our opposition. We will continue to raise human rights with the Saudi authorities through a range of diplomatic channels.

■ Uganda: Religious Freedom**Ruth Jones:** [\[8220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterpart in Uganda on (a) the proposed national religious and faith organizations policy 2023 and (b) the potential impact of that policy on religious freedom.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK is committed to freedom of religion or belief for all. Through our High Commission in Kampala, we maintain a regular dialogue with religious institutions and those working to promote freedom of religion and belief. The Ugandan Constitution enshrines the 'freedom to practise any religion', providing for freedom of belief, the right to practice and promote any religion, and the right to belong to and participate in the practices of any religious organisation in a manner consistent with the constitution. We will continue to raise any issues directly with the Ugandan Government and other interlocutors.

■ Undocumented Migrants**Alicia Kearns:** [\[7856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding the Government will contribute to Italy's Rome Process; and what that funding will be used for.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK will contribute up to £4 million to the Rome Process, the Italian government's initiative bringing together international partners to tackle drivers of irregular migration. The funding will be channelled through a new multi-donor fund - the Rome

Process Financing Facility - that will support climate-related development projects in Africa.

■ **West Bank: Violence**

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[8318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on tackling increases in levels of settler violence in the West Bank.

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[8319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to issue further sanctions against groups and individuals for settler violence in the West Bank.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. To date, we have sanctioned eight individuals responsible for inciting and perpetrating human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank. We have also designated two groups known to have supported, incited and promoted violence against these communities. We do not comment on future sanctions.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[7479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the level of funding available for the provision of harm reduction programmes by alcohol and drug services.

Andrew Gwynne:

Local authorities are responsible for commissioning services to prevent, mitigate and treat alcohol and drug related health harm, based upon local need. The Department is continuing to invest in improvements to local alcohol and drug treatment services to ensure those in need can access high quality help and support. Funding for treatment services is provided through the public health grant.

In addition, local authorities have 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 jointly 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 and drug treatment services in England. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced

updates to the fiscal framework and launched the next Spending Review, which will settle 2025-26 budgets in October 2024 and conclude the multi-year Spending Review in spring 2025.

Rachael Maskell:

[7480]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help prevent alcohol use among children and young people.

Andrew Gwynne:

Our mission-based approach will ensure that every child has the best start in life and that we create the healthiest generation of children ever. Statutory guidance on relationships, sex, and health education requires all primary and secondary schools to ensure that pupils know the key facts and risks associated with alcohol use, as well as how to manage influences and pressure, and keep themselves healthy and safe.

The Department has worked with the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education Association to develop the lesson plans on alcohol, and has commissioned an update of the resources to be published later this year. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://pshe-association.org.uk/drugeducation>

The Government also has an alcohol and drug information and advice service called Talk to FRANK, which aims to reduce alcohol and drug use and its harms by providing awareness to young people, parents and concerned others. Information on alcohol and its harms is available on the Tank to FRANK website at, at the following link:

<https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/alcohol>

Tom Hayes:

[7661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to bring forward a strategy on tackling alcohol abuse.

Deirdre Costigan:

[8278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the the potential merits of creating a national strategy to reduce alcohol harm.

Andrew Gwynne:

Under our Health Mission, the Government is committed to prioritising preventative public health measures to support people to live longer, healthier lives. The Department will continue to work across Government to understand how best to reduce alcohol-related harms.

Tom Hayes:

[7662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of marketing on levels of consumption of alcohol (a) in general and (b) by people at risk of alcoholism.

Andrew Gwynne:

Under our Health Mission, the Government is committed to prioritising public health measures to support people to live longer, healthier lives. To strengthen the evidence base on the impact of alcohol marketing on levels of consumption, the Department has commissioned a study to examine the causal association between alcohol marketing and alcohol related attitudes and consumption. More information about the study is available at the following link:

<https://www.stir.ac.uk/research/hub/contract/1960743>

Brain Cancer: Medical Treatments**Kevin Bonavia:****[900644]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve treatment for people with glioblastoma brain tumours.

Andrew Gwynne:

One of the Secretary of State's first acts as Minister was to meet with clinicians to discuss what more we can do to diagnose and treat patients with brain tumours including glioblastoma.

In September 2024, my Department announced new funding opportunities for brain tumour research to make sure promising treatments are made available to patients.

Cancer: Medical Treatments**Rebecca Paul:****[7682]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that the new NHS Commercial Framework allows for increased use of indication-specific pricing agreements to support patient access to future cancer innovations.

Karin Smyth:

As part of the 2024 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing, Access and Growth, NHS England committed to undertake two consultations on amendments to the NHS Commercial Framework for New Medicines. The first of these launched on 31 July 2024 for eight weeks. The proposed amendments would make the framework more explicit about the circumstances in which NHS England will consider indication specific pricing mechanisms. They would also align the framework with the Competition and Markets Authority statement on combination medicines.

NHS England and the Department engaged with key stakeholders throughout the consultation period, and NHS England intend to publish an updated NHS Commercial Framework for New Medicines by the end of 2024.

Carers**Wendy Chamberlain:****[7551]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 30 of Lord Darzi's report entitled Independent investigation of the National Health Service in

England, published in September 2024, if he will (a) make an assessment of the adequacy of support provided to unpaid carers and (b) take steps to improve support provided to unpaid carers.

Stephen Kinnock:

Lord Darzi's independent review of the National Health Service is 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.

This Government 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. The Government are also committed to reviewing the implementation of Carer's Leave and examining the benefits of introducing paid Carer's Leave. We will also keep Carer's Allowance under review to ensure it meets its objectives.

■ **Carers: Government Assistance**

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that unpaid carers (a) are adequately supported and (b) have access to (i) short breaks and (ii) legal advice.

Stephen Kinnock:

Lord Darzi's independent review of the NHS is 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.

This 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.

The Government are also committed to reviewing the implementation of Carer's Leave and examining the benefits of introducing paid Carer's Leave. We will also keep Carer's Allowance under review to ensure it meets its objectives.

The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to deliver a wide range of sustainable, high-quality care and support services, including support for carers, such as access to short breaks or information and advice. The Better Care Fund (BCF) includes funding that can be used for unpaid carer support, including short breaks and respite services for carers.

■ Cerebral Palsy: Children

Sir John Hayes:

[7407]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help support children with cerebral palsy.

Andrew Gwynne:

We want a society where every person, including those with a long-term condition such as cerebral palsy, receives high-quality, compassionate continuity of care, with their families and carers supported. We will change the National Health Service so that it becomes not just a sickness service, but able to prevent ill health in the first place. This will help us be better prepared for the change in the nature of disease and allow our services to focus more on the management of chronic, long-term conditions, like cerebral palsy.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published guidance on care and support for children and young people with cerebral palsy, to support healthcare professionals and commissioners. The guidance recommends service providers develop clear pathways that allow patients with cerebral palsy access to multi-disciplinary teams, specialist neurology services and regular reviews of their clinical and functional needs. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng62>

NHS England's Getting It Right First Time Programme aims to improve care for people with neurological conditions, including those with cerebral palsy, by reducing variation and delivering care more equitably across the country.

Most services for people with cerebral palsy are commissioned locally by integrated care boards, which are best placed to make decisions according to local need. Nevertheless, at a national level, the Government is working closely with NHS England to continue to improve services for people with neurological conditions, including those with cerebral palsy.

■ Cervical Cancer: Screening

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[8464]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to increase the uptake of cervical screening appointments.

Andrew Gwynne:

A range of national improvements and innovations have been implemented to help increase uptake in the NHS Cervical Screening Programme. In some areas cervical screening appointments can now be made in any primary care setting rather than just at an individual's own general practice, with appointments being made available during evenings and on weekends and via integrated sexual health clinics. In addition, laboratories that analyse samples can now operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to accommodate surges in capacity.

■ Clean Air Act 1993

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[7549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact on human health of updating the Clean Air Act 1993 in line with World Health Organisation air quality guidelines published in 2021.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to cleaning up our air and protecting the public from the harms of pollution and plans to introduce a comprehensive Clean Air Strategy which will include a series of interventions to reduce emissions, and in turn everyone's exposure to air pollution.

There are currently no plans to undertake a general assessment of the potential impact on human health given that it is already well established that even low concentrations of air quality pollutants are likely to be associated with adverse effects on health. Therefore, continued reductions, even where concentrations are below the air quality guidelines, are likely to be beneficial to health.

■ Dental Services

Mark Swards:

[\[8562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure NHS dental practices have the capacity to treat more patients.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government plans to tackle 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 the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

The 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 Leeds South West and Morley constituency, this is the NHS West Yorkshire ICB. NHS dentists are required to update their NHS website profiles at least every 90 days to ensure patients have up-to-date information on where they can access care.

■ Diabetes: Eating Disorders

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[\[8395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the quality of care available for Type 1 diabetics with diabulimia; and if he will take steps to improve such provision.

Andrew Gwynne:

Type 1 Disordered Eating (T1DE), also referred to as diabulimia, is a relatively newly acknowledged condition. NHS England has provided funding for T1DE services across the National Health Services' regions over the last five years, to help develop service specifications. The first nationally funded T1DE pilot services commenced in 2019 in London and the South Coast of England, latterly including Bournemouth and Portsmouth. A nationally commissioned evaluation was put in place to evidence the impact T1DE services had on patient outcomes and staff experience, and to provide analysis of the NHS costs and savings accrued in running the services.

On the basis of the positive findings from the evaluation of these initial services, and to further build the evidence base, NHS England has provided funding for a further five pilot services in Cheshire and Mersey, Norfolk and Norwich, Coventry and Warwickshire, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and Humber and North Yorkshire for two years, with each pilot running until 31 March 2025.

The new services are delivering a national service specification, and the national team has partnered with the National Institute for Health and Care Research to evaluate delivery, with the intention that, subject to positive findings, integrated care systems can consider the evaluation outputs to determine future locally sustained approaches beyond the initial pump prime national support. NHS England has considered early learning from delivery of these services in the development of a proposal for a wider programme of support for patients nationally. However, our ability to take this forward will be subject to the outcome of the national spending review and confirmation of the NHS England diabetes programme budget.

■ Disability**Deirdre Costigan:**[\[6763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate support for people with physical disabilities that live independently.

Deirdre Costigan:[\[6764\]](#)

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 learning disabilities that live independently.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is determined to stabilise the adult social care system and enable health and social care services to work together better to provide joined-up care for people with complex health and care needs, such as people with a physical or learning disability.

To best support those drawing on care, the Government recognises the importance of holistic, joined-up services. The Department of Health and Social Care is working with partners across the Government, including the Department of Work and Pensions, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the

Department for Education, to build the right support across a range of public services including the social care, housing, and benefits systems.

Under the Care Act, local authorities are responsible for shaping their care market to meet the diverse needs of all local people. This includes commissioning a diverse range of care and support services that enable people with either physical or learning disabilities, or both, to access quality care and, if they choose, live independently.

Section 2 in the Care Act places a duty on local authorities to provide or arrange services, facilities, or other resources to prevent or delay the development of care and support needs for adults, with the aim of keeping people independent. This occurs in the context of local populations and the services available.

Currently, adults who are receiving local authority support with their social care costs can choose to receive their personal budget, the amount of money they are assessed to require to meet their eligible needs under the Care Act 2014, as a direct payment. This allows the person, or their nominated representative, to commission their own care, providing them with greater independence, choice, and control in meeting their eligible personal care and support needs.

In England, we continue to fund the locally administered Disabled Facilities Grant which helps eligible disabled people on low incomes to adapt their homes, through practical changes like installing stair lifts or level access showers, to make them safe and suitable for their needs.

We also incentivise the supply of supported housing for adults with a physical or learning disability, autistic people, or adults with mental ill-health. These interventions seek to enable disabled adults to live more independent and healthy lives in their own home, for as long as possible.

The extra costs disability benefits are not means-tested and 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. These benefits were not subject to the benefits freeze, having most recently been uprated by 6.7% from 8 April 2024, and were qualifying benefits for the Disability Cost of Living Payments paid in 2022 and 2023.

The extra costs disability benefits can be paid in addition to other financial and practical support that those with a health condition or disability may be eligible for, such as other social security benefits or access to the Blue Badge scheme.

Adult social care is not just a service for older adults, as it supports approximately 300,000 disabled people aged 18 to 64 years old to live independent and dignified lives. The Government wants to better support working age disabled people to participate in society and access employment.

■ Fast Food: Schools

Rachael Maskell: [\[7474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to introduce a ban on fast food outlets near schools.

Andrew Gwynne:

As part of a consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, undertaken from 30 July to 24 September 2024, the Government sought views on how national planning policy could better support local authorities in promoting healthy communities and in tackling childhood obesity. Consultation responses are being considered and the Government will set out its plans in due course.

■ Food: Advertising

Jim Dickson: [\[7667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has had recent discussions with relevant stakeholders on the potential merits of regulating the outdoor advertising of high fat, salt and sugar products.

Jim Dickson: [\[7668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of outdoor advertising of food and drink products that are high in fat, salt and sugar on children's consumption of those products.

Andrew Gwynne:

Departmental officials engage with a range of external stakeholders on diet and obesity policies. Supporting people to stay healthier for longer is at the heart of the Government's Health Mission which aims to reduce the amount of time spent in ill health, tackle health inequalities and drive economic growth. This includes taking bold action to tackle the childhood obesity crisis and create the healthiest generation of children ever.

The Government welcomes recent action at local level to ban junk food marketing across the public transport networks and public spaces that are controlled locally.

Whilst no assessment has been made on the potential impact of outdoor advertising of less healthy food and drink products on children's consumption of those products, the Government has committed to implementing the advertising restrictions set out in the Communications Act 2003 on less healthy food and drink products without further delay. The regulations introduce a 9pm watershed for the advertisement of less healthy food or drink products on television and a total restriction of paid-for advertising of these products online will come into force across the United Kingdom on 1 October 2025.

Evidence shows that these restrictions will have a direct impact on childhood obesity by reducing children's exposure to advertising of less healthy products. We estimate

that these restrictions will remove up to 7.2 billion calories from children's diets per year in the UK and reduce the number of children living with obesity by 20,000.

■ General Practitioners

James Naish: [\[6724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) experienced GPs not covered by the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme and (b) other GPs to find employment.

Stephen Kinnock:

We remain committed to growing the number of doctors in general practice (GP) and we are working to increase the GP workforce in England.

NHS England is working to address training bottlenecks so the health service has enough staff for the future, and we will provide £82 million to fund the recruitment of over 1,000 newly qualified GPs, via the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, so patients can get the care they need. GPs are self-employed contractors to the National Health Service, and it is largely up to employers to determine how best to staff their Primary Care Network or GP to best meet the needs of their population.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[8405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an estimate of the additional resources needed by general practice to meet patient demand in 2024-2025.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP), and we are committed to fixing the crisis in GPs. Our plan to restore GPs will require both investment and reform, and our 10-Year Health Plan will outline steps to shift care from hospitals back to the community, as well as the move to Neighbourhood Health Services which will bring together vital health and care services, ensuring healthcare is closer to home.

Additionally, we will increase the proportion of funding for GPs and are already investing £82 million to recruit 1,000 newly qualified GPs in 2024/25. We will also train more doctors which will increase the number of appointments delivered in GPs, as well as take pressure off those currently working in the system.

■ General Practitioners: Gosport

Dame Caroline Dinenge: [\[7738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase access to GP services in Gosport constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients across the country, including in the Gosport constituency, are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP), and we are committed to fixing the crisis in GPs. Our plan to restore GPs will require both investment and

reform. We will increase the proportion of funding for GPs and are already investing £82 million to recruit 1,000 newly qualified GPs. This will increase the number of appointments delivered in GPs, secure the future pipeline of GPs, and take pressure off those currently working in the system.

Additionally, we will introduce Neighbourhood Health Centres to bring together vital health and care services, ensuring healthcare is closer to home and patients receive the care they deserve. The Government will also bring back the family doctor by incentivising GPs to see the same patient.

■ General Practitioners: Leicester

Shockat Adam:

[\[8528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of GPs in Leicester.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are working to increase the general practice (GP) workforce across England, including in Leicester. This includes measures to boost recruitment, address the reasons why doctors leave the profession, and encourage them to return to practice.

NHS England has allocated £1.9 million of emergency short-term funding this year for the recruitment of newly qualified GPs in Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland. The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care Board (LLR ICB) has communicated the available funding for additional resource to each Primary Care Network, with guidance on how it can be most effectively used across the ICB area.

In order to offer wider opportunities beyond the standard recruitment platforms, the LLR ICB is also enabling its GPs to widen their candidate search by utilising the LLR Local Medical Committee's recruitment channel. The ICB continues to work closely with NHS England Workforce Training and Education to ensure they maximise the number of GP trainees that they take in LLR, which also helps with longer term recruitment and retention.

■ General Practitioners: NHS

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[7411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of qualified GPs working in the NHS; and if he will make an estimate of what the proportional change in the number of qualified GPs working in the NHS will be by 2036.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are working to increase the general practice (GP) workforce in England. This includes measures to boost recruitment, address the reasons why doctors leave the profession, and encourage them to return to practice.

NHS England is working to address training bottlenecks so the health service has enough staff for the future, and we will provide £82 million to fund the recruitment of

over 1,000 newly qualified GPs, via the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, so patients can get the care they need.

■ Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [\[7471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to monitor the effectiveness of services being delivered in the community instead of in secondary care; and how he plans to take account of such monitoring in his response to the Darzi Review.

Rachael Maskell: [\[7472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to pilot the community delivery of secondary care services.

Stephen Kinnock:

Some services traditionally delivered in secondary care, such as particular diagnostic tests, are already being delivered in the community. Services delivered in the community which can support reductions in acute care demand or hospital occupancy, for example virtual wards or urgent community response services, are monitored locally and nationally. There is growing evidence of the effectiveness of a range of community services in supporting better outcomes for patients, as well as reducing healthcare costs, and this will help inform the ambitious 10-Year Health Plan to reform the health service.

The 10 Year Health Plan will set out a bold agenda to deliver on the three big shifts needed to build a National Health Service fit for the future: moving healthcare from hospital to the community; from analogue to digital; and from sickness to prevention. This includes plans to move towards Neighbourhood Health Services, with more care delivered in local communities to spot problems earlier and shift care closer to peoples' homes. It will be a key part of the response to the Darzi review.

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

■ Health Services and Social Services

Jon Pearce: [\[900634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to reform NHS health and social care services.

Karin Smyth:

Lord Darzi's report made clear the NHS suffered from a failure to reform over the last 15 years. This government will deliver this reform with investment to turn services around.

Reform is at the heart of our health mission and will be delivered by the upcoming 10 Year Plan for Health – delivering on the three shifts needed to move healthcare from hospital to the community, analogue to digital, sickness to prevention.

We are also committed to building consensus on the long-term reform needed to create a National Care Service.

■ Health Services: Waiting Lists

Angus MacDonald:

[\[7393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to work with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations to help (a) increase the flexibility of NHS appointment systems and (b) reduce the number of missed appointments across the UK.

Karin Smyth:

This government is committed to putting patients first. This means making sure that patients are seen on time and have the best possible experience during their care, no matter where they are treated in the UK. Whilst health is a devolved issue, we intend to work closely with partners across the devolved governments in providing support and sharing best practice to reduce waiting lists and fix the NHS, including the configuration of appointment systems and policies relating to reducing Did Not Attend (DNAs).

Together we aim to deliver faster, improved and more equitable health outcomes for all patients across the UK, and strengthen our collaboration in achieving these common goals.

■ HIV Infection: Diagnosis

Neil O'Brien:

[\[7536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people living with diagnosed HIV infection there were in (a) the period to 2014 from the earliest date for which data are available and (b) each year since 2014, by UK statistical region for people whose country of birth was (i) in the UK, (ii) in Europe, (iii) in Northern Africa, (iii) in Eastern Africa, (iv) in Middle Africa, (v) in Southern Africa, (vi) in Western Africa, (vii) in Africa, (viii) in Asia, (ix) in Oceania, (x) in Northern America, (xi) in Latin America and the Caribbean and (xii) unknown.

Andrew Gwynne:

The information requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Hospitals: Medical Equipment

Richard Foord:

[\[900637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the condition of NHS hospital equipment.

Karin Smyth:

The Darzi review made it clear that the NHS has been starved of capital, with outdated scanners and is 15 years behind the independent sector in its use of technology.

We will make the NHS fit for the future, replacing outdated equipment and providing hospitals with the latest technology.

This will provide quicker, more effective, efficient diagnosis and a better experience for patients.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Medical Treatments**Rebecca Paul:**[\[7679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish a strategy for ensuring people living with (a) Crohn's disease and (b) other forms of inflammatory bowel disease are able to access treatment in a timely manner.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England's Getting It Right First Time Programme on gastroenterology aims to reduce variations in care, increase early diagnosis and proactive management of Crohn's disease and colitis, and increase access to inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) specialist nurses. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has also produced a range of guidance on IBD, and Crohn's disease and colitis, to support early diagnosis and effective management of these conditions. It ensures that the care provided to people with IBD is based on the best available evidence. In the last two years, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has recommended four new drugs for the treatment of moderate to severe Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, including Upadacitinib, Risankizumab, Mirikizumab, and Etrasimod.

NHS England's National Bladder and Bowel Health Project is delivering better care for people with IBD, with a focus on developing clinical pathways. NHS England commissions specialised colorectal services nationally to support equity of access to high-quality treatment for patients with IBD requiring complex surgery. This work is supported within NHS England by the clinical leadership of the Specialised Colorectal Services Clinical Reference Group, which is made up of experts in surgery, medicine, radiology, pathology, and nursing, alongside patient and public voice representatives.

To raise awareness of IBD among general practitioners and other primary care staff, the Royal College of General Practitioners has produced an Inflammatory Bowel Disease Toolkit. The toolkit outlines when to suspect IBD, the appropriate investigative tests and diagnostic tools for IBD, how to manage a flare-up of symptoms and how to support patients with IBD.

■ Ketamine

Jim Shannon:

[7451]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help (a) reduce and (b) prevent the use of ketamine by (i) people under the age of 25 and (ii) other people.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department takes seriously the threat of ketamine and other drugs to our young people, and is working with partners across the Government to respond to existing and new drug threats and to reduce and prevent the health harms. We know that drug treatment is protective, and the number of places in treatment for people who use drugs other than opiates is being increased by 30,000.

The Government has a drug information and advice service called Talk to FRANK, which aims to reduce drug misuse and its harms by increasing awareness for young people and parents. Information on ketamine and the danger of its misuse is available at the following link:

<https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/ketamine>

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) is developing a briefing on ketamine for local areas, many of which are already mobilising in response to local need. The OHID also commissions drug education materials to be used by schools in personal, social, health, and economic education.

■ Mental Health Services: Schools

Damian Hinds:

[6002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how his plans for dedicated mental health professionals' support for secondary schools relate to plans for mental health support teams for schools set out in the Green Paper for Transforming children and young people's mental health, published in 2017.

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[6833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for spending on mental health support in schools; and if he will provide a breakdown of projected spending by (a) local authority area and (b) spending type.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is working across the Government to deliver our commitment of a specialist mental health professional in every school. We need to ensure any support meets the needs of young people, teachers, parents, and carers which is why we are exploring a range of options. This includes existing programmes of support with evidence of a positive impact, such as Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges.

■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists**Andrew Cooper:**[\[7061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time was for mental health treatment in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England in each of the last three years.

Stephen Kinnock:

A table showing the average waiting time for mental health treatment for the Mid Cheshire constituency, Cheshire, and England for those aged over 18 years old, and another table for those aged under 18 years old, for each of the last three years, is attached.

Attachments:

1. Table for 7061 [Table for 7061.xlsx]

■ National Health Service in England Independent Investigation**Dr Beccy Cooper:**[\[7262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeframe is for implementation of the review by Lord Darzi entitled Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England, published on 12 September 2024.

Karin Smyth:

Lord Darzi's full report has laid bare the true extent of the challenges facing our health service, giving us the frank assessment necessary to face these problems honestly and properly and do the hard work required to fix them. Lord Darzi's findings will inform our 10-year plan to radically reform the National Health Service and build a health service that is fit for the future.

The plan will consider the change needed to meet the three health mission goals; a fairer system where everyone lives well for longer, an NHS that is there when people need it, and fewer lives lost to the biggest killers. This is a long-term challenge and will take time to deliver, and so the plan will consider both what immediate actions are needed to get the NHS back on its feet and bring waiting lists down, as well as the longer-term changes needed to make the health service fit for the future.

Alongside the 10-year health plan we are also taking action to address immediate challenges in the health service, such as hiring a thousand more general practitioners and ending junior doctor strikes. We have also committed to cut NHS waiting times with 40,000 more appointments every week, double the number of cancer scanners, develop a new Dentistry Rescue Plan, hire 8,500 additional mental health staff, and ensure the return of the family doctor.

■ NHS: Staff**Phil Brickell:**[\[900640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase levels of retention in the NHS workforce.

Karin Smyth:

Every day, millions of NHS staff go the extra mile to make a broken system work as well as it can for their patients.

As we develop our ten-year plan for the NHS - and the Long Term Workforce Plan that will support it – a critical concern will be ensuring we have the modern, positive, and supportive working environment needed to retain them, motivate them and enable them to provide the high quality care they want to give to patients.

■ NHS: Training**Daisy Cooper:**[\[6524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2024 to Question 3798 on NHS: Training, how many of the rejected or unsuccessful direct entry applicants were not accepted (a) due to the lack of a suitable place and (b) because demand for places exceeded supply in (i) 2021-2022, (ii) 2022-2023 and (iii) 2023-2024.

Karin Smyth:

The Department does not hold the specific information requested. The number of posts available on the Science Training Programme each year is derived from a process of expressions of interest from host bodies, which are reviewed by national and regional commissioners and the National School of Healthcare Science.

Available post numbers are therefore driven by demand for applicants and capacity in the host bodies.

■ Nitazenes**Rachael Maskell:**[\[7807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) ambulance call outs and (b) hospital admissions took place due to the use of nitazenes in each of the last three years.

Rachael Maskell:[\[7808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to raise public awareness of the risks of nitazenes use.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department is actively monitoring the threat posed by synthetic opioids such as nitazenes, and is working to increase awareness of their dangers. Information on synthetic opioids and the dangers they pose is available from the helpline and website Talk to FRANK, the national drug information and advice service supported by the Government.

Education on drug use is also a statutory component of relationships, sex, and health education in England. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and the Department for Education have commissioned lesson plans and other resources to support teachers to deliver quality drug prevention, which are available to schools.

The lesson plans target primary and secondary students, teaching them how to manage influences and pressure, and keep themselves healthy and safe. These resources are in the process of being updated and there will be increased emphasis on the risks of synthetic drugs. Drug and alcohol treatment services and local authority public health teams raise awareness of the risks of drug use through targeted campaigns with their local populations, and the OHID supports them in this. The number of ambulance call outs and hospital admissions due to the use of nitazenes is not collected in the format requested.

■ Nurses

Jim Shannon:

[7775]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of nurses employed in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) England.

Karin Smyth:

The Office for National Statistics has recently produced an article on the data available to compare healthcare workforces across the United Kingdom. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthcaresystem/articles/thehealthcareworkforceacrosstheuk/2024>

To estimate the level of the healthcare workforce across the UK, the report details a range of potential sources, including the Office for National Statistics's published estimates of employment by occupation sector, based on the Annual Population Survey and the Labour Force Survey.

The latest data from the Annual Population Survey and the Labour Force Survey, based on the survey period April 2023 to March 2024, estimates there are 610,200 employed registered nursing professionals in England and 31,500 in Northern Ireland. As this covers registered nursing professionals, it will also include registered midwives. It covers nurses employed in any sector, so will include those working in National Health Service trusts, general practices, social care, charitable bodies, as well as private provision.

These estimates are based on a sample of the population, which means any cross-UK comparisons using this data should be done with an understanding of the potential limitations. Notably, the estimates are impacted by sampling variability across the UK, and there may be bias if certain households cannot be reached, or from respondent error. For Northern Ireland, the impact of small sample sizes means that estimates for specific occupations, such as registered nurses, have greater levels of uncertainty and are not suitable for interpreting differences between the countries of the UK.

■ Ophthalmic Services: Treatment Centres

Daisy Cooper:

[6530]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the value for money of ophthalmic care in independent treatment centres.

Karin Smyth:

It is the responsibility of individual commissioners to commission services and agree contracts most suitable for their local context. Contracts between commissioners and providers must comply with the NHS Payment Scheme, a set of prices and rules used to deliver the most efficient, cost-effective care to patients. These unit prices are consistent across independent providers and National Health Service providers.

■ Ovarian Cancer

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[7844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of people who have been diagnosed with ovarian cancer through the non-specific symptoms cancer pathway in the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

The Department does not hold information on the number of people diagnosed with ovarian cancer through non-specific symptom cancer pathways over the last five years. Data on cancer incidence is published by NHS England and by the National Disease Registration Service, and is available respectively at the following two links:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/cancer-registration-statistics>

<https://www.cancerdata.nhs.uk/>

■ Ovarian Cancer: Diagnosis

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[8461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with ovarian cancer through the non-specific symptoms pathway.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 15 October 2024]: The Department does not hold information on the number of people diagnosed with ovarian cancer through non-specific symptom cancer pathways in the last five years. Data on cancer incidence is published by NHS England and the National Disease Registration Service, with further information available, respectively, at the following two links:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/cancer-registration-statistics>

<https://www.cancerdata.nhs.uk/>

■ Ovarian Cancer: Health Education

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[8460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking with (a) the NHS and (b) stakeholders to help increase awareness of ovarian cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England runs the Help Us Help You campaigns to increase knowledge of cancer symptoms, address barriers to acting on them, and 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 earlier 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 at the NHS website.

■ Pancreatic Cancer: Diagnosis

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[7820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve diagnosis times for pancreatic cancer in Ealing Central and Acton constituency.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is supporting the National Health Service in taking steps to improve diagnosis times for pancreatic cancer across England, including for the Ealing Central and Acton constituency. The Government is committed to meeting all three NHS cancer waiting time standards across England within the next five years. Meeting these will ensure no patient waits longer than they should for diagnosis or treatment.

We know that pancreatic cancer is difficult to diagnose due to the non-specific nature of its symptoms. NHS England is implementing non-specific symptom pathways for patients who have symptoms, such as unexplained weight-loss and fatigue, that do not align to a single tumour type, and pancreatic cancer is one of the most common cancer types diagnosed through these pathways. NHS England is also providing a route into pancreatic cancer surveillance for those patients at inherited high-risk, to identify lesions before they develop into cancer, as well as increasing general practice direct access to diagnostic tests.

In March 2024, NHS England published guidance for providers and systems to implement a timed Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary cancer pathway with the aim to ensure patients receive a diagnosis or that cancer is ruled out within 28 days of urgent referral. The pathway aims to improve delays in diagnosis, with less time between referral and receiving the outcome of diagnostic tests.

■ Procurement: Health Services and Social Services

Jim Shannon:

[7783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of effectiveness of the Government's procurement strategy for (a) health and (b) social care.

Karin Smyth:

The role of the Department's Commercial Directorate is to provide the Department and wider health system with the appropriate commercial strategy, leadership, insight, and advice to enable delivery of the Government's Health Mission, consistently maximising value for money. The directorate is responsible for oversight and assurance of procurement activity in the Health Family, including Arms Length Bodies like NHS England and The UK Health Security Agency, which encompasses approval of high-value or high-risk business cases.

The directorate is also responsible for ensuring that procurement policy is aligned to Cabinet Office requirements, and that Health Family commercial compliance and performance is continually assessed for improvement against the Government's Commercial Functional Standards, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-commercial-function>

The directorate sets an annual commercial savings target against contracts the Department awards and manages. For 2023/24, the directorate has delivered £44.6 million worth of commercial savings and benefits through procurement and contract management activity within the Department.

■ Psychiatric Patients: Homicide

Tom Hayes:

[7105]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure NHS mental health trusts are putting into practice lessons learned from patient homicides.

Stephen Kinnock:

Under the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework, mental health-related homicides are required to be referred to the NHS England Regional Independent Investigation Team for consideration for an independent or locally-led patient safety incident investigation, to understand what happened and how. Organisations are then expected to respond to incidents through a patient safety incident response plan in a way that maximises learning and improvement.

Following the publication of the Care Quality Commission's review of the Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust under section 48 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 in March and August 2024, NHS England accepted all of the review's recommendations and is working with providers to implement them. The Department expects that the review's findings and recommendations will be

considered and applied throughout the country with regular progress updates from NHS England.

As part of this work, NHS England has published national guidance around providing intensive support to people with a serious mental illness and has tasked every mental health provider in England to review the policies and practices in place. NHS England will also develop guidance on what good quality and safe care looks like for community mental health services and share best practice. This will include a review of public and patient safety and the fundamentals of good quality care, such as care coordination, patient and family engagement, risk and safety management, treatment, and effective discharge.

In addition, the forthcoming Mental Health Bill will modernise mental health legislation to make it fit for the 21st Century.

■ Public Health: Finance

Rachael Maskell: [\[7803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of an increase in the public health grant.

Karin Smyth:

Lord Darzi's investigation into the National Health Service set out the impact of past reductions to local government public health funding. We will confirm 2025/26 public health grant allocations as part of the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Skin Cancer: Medical Treatments

Satvir Kaur: [\[8064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve outcomes for skin cancer patients.

Karin Smyth:

To improve outcomes for skin cancer patients, NHS England is undertaking a number of interventions. This includes funding and programme management to support local cancer alliances in achieving the Faster Diagnosis Standard for skin cancer. NHS England provides implementation guidance, as well as collaboration and networking events, to support providers with ways to deliver best practice timed pathways.

Since 2023/24, NHS England has also been rolling out teledermatology services, which allow a virtual review of dermoscopic images. In providers where this has been fully implemented, improvements in workforce capacity have been seen doubling the number of patients that can be reviewed per clinic in some cases, and improving Faster Diagnosis Standard performance. Nationally, as of June 2024, 43% of all urgent suspected skin cancer referrals were managed via teledermatology, with the aim of reaching 50% by the end of the financial year.

■ Statutory Sick Pay

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[900643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the potential impact of the level of Statutory Sick Pay on public health outcomes.

Andrew Gwynne:

The pandemic exposed just how precarious work and life is for those on acute low incomes. No one should be forced to choose between their health and financial hardship. Through the Employment Rights Bill, introduced last week, we are strengthening Statutory Sick Pay so it provides a safety net for those who need it most.

We will ensure all employees receive SSP from their first day of sickness absence. These changes will help to keep people in work, grow the economy and protect public health.

■ Surgery: Waiting Lists

Tim Roca:

[\[900633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the resident doctors pay settlement on waiting lists for elective care.

Karin Smyth:

Resident doctor strikes have cost the taxpayer over £1.7 billion, with almost 1.5 million appointments being rescheduled, increasing waiting times for patients.

The previous Health Secretary hadn't met with junior doctors since March 2023. My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State, called them on day 1, met them on week 1 and resolved the pay dispute in week 3.

Now resident doctors can get on with their work and we will deliver an extra 40,000 appointments per week to bring down waiting lists.

■ Vaccination: Children

Jim Shannon:

[\[7452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the child vaccination rate for (a) MMR and (b) other dangerous diseases.

Andrew Gwynne:

In England, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) works closely with NHS England and the Department and wider health system partners at the national regional and local levels to improve uptake of the routine childhood immunisations and catch-up children who missed out.

Increasing uptake of the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine in order to achieve the World Health Organization target of 95% uptake by the time children reach five years old is a key priority for the National Health Service and a clear commitment in its Long Term Plan, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-term-plan/>

The first UKHSA Childhood Immunisation communication campaign, encouraging parents to ensure their child's vaccinations were up to date, ran from 4 March until mid-April 2024. The current campaign is running from 26 August until 4 October 2024. To raise awareness of potential vaccination benefits and increase awareness of the programmes, UKHSA also provides a comprehensive suite of public facing resources, including information leaflets in multiple languages and accessible formats, including easy read, BSL and braille, and provides comprehensive clinical guidance, including e-learning programmes and training, for healthcare professionals.

Jim Shannon:

[7457]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children have been given a meningococcal vaccine in the last 12 months.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK Health Security Agency measures the coverage of vaccines against meningococcal disease. The latest figures for Cover of Vaccination Evaluated Rapidly (COVER) are for the period from April 2023 to March 2024, and meningitis ACWY (MenACWY) vaccination figures cover the period from September 2023 to August 2024.

The 2023 to 2024 annual published COVER figures at 12 months, given between eight weeks and 16 weeks, for the meningitis B vaccine are 62,0552 out of 68,1961 babies, or 91.0%. The 2023 to 2024 annual published COVER figures at two years, given at 12 months, for the haemophilus influenzae type B and meningitis C vaccine is 64,7263 out of 72,6395 babies, or 89.1%. The 2023 to 2024 annual published COVER figures at two years, given at 12 months, for the meningitis B vaccination booster is 63,7955 out of 72,6395 babies, or 87.8%. A total of 34,4062 out of 72,5289, or 47.4%, of 14-year-olds, those born between 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010, had received the MenACWY vaccine during the 2023 to 2024 academic year. Information on the coverage of vaccines against meningococcal disease is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-immunisation-statistics/england-2023-24>

HOME OFFICE**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Minimum Unit Prices**

Rachael Maskell: [\[7481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to introduce minimum pricing for alcohol.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Under our Health Mission, this government is committed to prioritising public health measures to support people to live longer, healthier lives.

We are continuing to work closely across government to better understand what can be done to address the drivers of alcohol-related harms.

■ Antisocial Behaviour

Rachael Maskell: [\[7473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to identify good practice in interagency working between local authorities, the police and the voluntary sector in tackling anti-social behaviour.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission. We will put thousands of neighbourhood police and community support officers 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.

The Government recognises that effective multi-agency working is crucial to reducing anti-social behaviour and ensuring safer communities. We will continue to work with police, local authorities and the voluntary sector to identify and share best practice.

■ Antisocial Behaviour: Aldershot

Alex Baker: [\[8003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of charge rates for 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 Neighbourhood Police and Community Support Officers into local communities so that residents have a named officer they and crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets by introducing tougher powers including new Respect Orders to tackle repeat offending.

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of notifiable offences recorded by the police in England and Wales, and their investigative

outcomes but it is not currently possible to separately identify those which involve anti-social behaviour.

■ Asylum: Finance

Nick Timothy: [\[7600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the lifetime fiscal (a) cost of and (b) income generated by those granted asylum in the UK.

Dame Angela Eagle:

As has been the case under successive governments, there is no published estimate available of the requested information.

■ Asylum: Stroud

Dr Simon Opher: [\[7592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of finding alternative accommodation for the 88 asylum seekers due to be housed at Tricorn House in Stroud.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to support and accommodate destitute asylum seekers whilst their asylum claims are considered.

We work with local authorities to ensure housing is procured in a fair and equitable manner across England, Scotland and Wales. For the safety and security of those we accommodate and our staff, the Home Office does not comment publicly on sites which may or may not be utilised to accommodate asylum seekers.

■ Crime Prevention

Alex Baker: [\[7648\]](#)

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) Aldershot constituency, (ii) Hampshire, and (iii) England.

Alex Baker: [\[7649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle street crime against women and girls in Aldershot constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The 2024-25 police funding settlement provides funding of up to £18.5 billion. Hampshire Police's funding will be up to £461.9m in 2024-25. This is in addition to £4.2m provided for the 2024-25 pay award which has been allocated outside of the police funding settlement.

Across all funding rounds of the Safer Streets Fund and the Safety of Women at Night Fund, the Hampshire police force area has received over £4.2 million,

supporting 12 projects. This includes just over £820,000 through the latest, fifth round of funding to deliver three projects across various locations, including in Rushmoor, Hart, Portsmouth, and Southampton, which have a focus on preventing Anti-Social Behaviour, violence against women and girls, and neighbourhood crime.

Further funding has been provided through the Hotspot Response Programme, under which Hampshire and Isle of Wight have been allocated (2024-25) around £1.5m to deliver additional high-visibility patrols in the streets and neighbourhoods worst affected by serious violence and Anti-Social Behaviour.

More broadly, 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.

Finally, this Government has put prevention front and centre of our plans to improve the lives of people across the country. 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.

■ **Drugs: Crime**

Jim Shannon:

[7453]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many illegal drugs have been seized in the last 12 months.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office latest published data on drug seizures made by the Police and Border Force for England and Wales can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seizures-of-drugs-in-england-and-wales-financial-year-ending-2023>.

The latest published statistics show that police forces and Border Force made a total of 191,623 drug seizures in England and Wales in the year ending March 2023.

Border Force also release quarterly transparency data which include drug seizures. The latest available data are below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/border-force-transparency-data-q2-2024>

■ **Electric Bikes and Electric Scooters**

Lizzi Collinge:

[7142]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will include measures on (a) the legal use of, (b) enforcement of and (c) education on the risks of using (i) e-bikes, (ii) e-scooters and (iii) similar vehicles in the Crime and Policing Bill.

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. The Government will give police the powers they need to tackle the dangerous and antisocial use of e-vehicles off the streets for good, so that they will be able to quickly destroy those that they seize from offenders. We will set out more information in due course.

Information on the risks of using electric vehicles is available at: [E-cycle and e-scooter batteries: managing fire risk for premises - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-guidance-to-enhance-e-bike-and-e-scooter-safety) and more detailed guidance is available at: www.gov.uk/government/news/new-guidance-to-enhance-e-bike-and-e-scooter-safety.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Berkshire

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: **[8219]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the current availability of fire appliances in (a) Slough and (b) Berkshire.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

■ Fraud

Lee Anderson: **[6493]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to collaborate with financial institutions to help tackle fraud.

Dan Jarvis:

The Government takes the issue of fraud very seriously and is dedicated to protecting the public from this devastating crime. Close collaboration with industry partners, especially the financial industry, is key to ensure that fraud schemes are disrupted and consumers safeguarded.

The Home Office continues a regular dialogue with financial institutions to discuss and implement additional initiatives to combat fraud and protect our citizens. A result of this public-private partnership approach to date have been world-leading schemes such as the Banking Protocol, the Money Mules Action Plan and the Retail Banking Sector Charter. These actions, as well as those in the wider fraud strategy, have contributed to incidences of fraud decreasing by 14% from 2019 levels.

The Government will continue to work hand-in-hand with financial institutions as we continue to develop new and innovative ways of protecting the UK public from the threat of fraud.

■ Gangs: Social Media

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring social media platforms to remove gang scoreboards of (a) knife crimes and (b) other assaults.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Under the Government's Safer Streets Mission, we have committed to ambitious plans to halve knife crime in a decade. As part of this ambition, we are committed to going after the gangs who incite and commit violence on our streets.

The use of social media platforms by Urban Street Gangs to keep 'scoreboards' of serious acts of violence is inhumane and will not be tolerated.

Under the Online Safety Act, Ofcom will have significant powers to help stem the spread of content on social media that incites violence or threats to kill. Once fully implemented, the Online Safety Act will require platforms to take robust action to address illegal content.

We are clear that tech companies must take proactive action to embed public safety in their system designs and prevent users encountering harmful material on their platforms. To ensure companies comply with the legislation, Ofcom will have powers to issue large fines of up to 10% of annual qualifying turnover.

■ Home Office: Civil Servants

John Glen:

[\[6126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 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.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Between 4th July and 4th October 2024, the Home Office made 109 appointments by exception to the Civil Service Commission's published Recruitment Principles.

The legal requirement for appointment to the Civil Service (CS) is for selection to be made on merit based on fair and open competition. Under section 12 of the 2010 Constitutional Reform and Governance Act, the CS Commission has the power to Except a selection from the requirement to appoint on Merit based on a fair and open competition. This must either be justified by the needs of the CS or be necessary to enable the CS to participate in a government employment initiative. Departments must be able to justify why, in any appointment, it has not been possible to select someone on merit through a fair and open competition.

The [Civil Service Recruitment Principles](#) set out the circumstances in which appointments can be made as Exceptions to Fair and Open Merit-based appointments.

The roles appointed to during the period requested were grades AA to Grade7. The following Exceptions were used:

- Exception 1 - Temporary appointments
- Exception 2: Support for government employment programmes
- Exception 3: Secondments
- Exception 5: Former civil servants
- Exception 10: Conversion to permanency of suitable candidates appointed under Exceptions 1 and 2

Summary of salary bands by grade and number of appointments.

GRADE	NUMBER	PAY BAND
Intern	17	£22,446
AA	23	£22,180 (N), £26,180 (L)
AO	39	£24,800 (N), £28,880 (L)
PO3	9	£24,800 (N), £28,880 (L)
EO	17	£28,000 (N), £32,000 (L)
HEO	1	£34,350 (N), £38,350 (N)
SEO	1	£41,600 (N), £45,600 (L)
G7	2	£57,000(N), £61,000 (L)

N = National, L = London

■ Home Office: Industrial Disputes

Nick Timothy:

[\[7924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what industrial disputes are ongoing within (a) her Department and (b) each of the arm's length bodies connected to her Department; how many (i) staff and (ii) contractors are involved in each dispute; what the form of industrial action is in each dispute; which recognised trade union is involved in each dispute; what the substantive matter is that is being disputed in each case; and what steps she plans to take to end each dispute.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Home Office

No recognised trade union currently holds a mandate to call industrial action in the Home Office.

The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) trade union is in dispute with the Home Office regarding the implementation, on 29 April 2024, of a new shift roster for Border Force employees working at the Primary Control Point (PCP) at Heathrow Airport.

PCS had a mandate to call strike action and action short of a strike (overtime ban and work to rule) at Heathrow between March and September 2024. That mandate has now expired, and the Home Office has not yet been notified of a further ballot. The most recent PCS notice of industrial action at Heathrow, issued in August 2024, called on 653 employees to take part in the action. There are no contractors in scope of the dispute.

Border Force management remain open to discussing concerns regarding the roster with PCS with a view to resolving them in a way that meets business needs.

Home Office Arms' Length Bodies

PCS currently has a mandate for strike action in the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This mandate remains valid until 14 November 2024. This mandate is in respect of a Civil Service wide dispute over pay, pensions and job security. The number of DBS employees included in the ballot was 646. No contractors were in scope of the ballot.

No recognised trade union currently holds a mandate to call industrial action in any other Home Office ALB.

■ Home Office: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 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.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 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.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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, and the arrangements relating to the use of these vehicles is set out in the Ministerial Code and the Civil Service Management Code.

The Home Office has been 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.

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

■ Home Office: Public Appointments

John Glen: [\[6128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 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.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Departments do not routinely record and collect the reasons why appointees leave their positions. Since 4 July, no new direct ministerial appointments have been made.

Since 4 July, the following new public appointments, as regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, have been made:

Appointment of six new members of the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group

[New appointments to the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Appointment of Police and National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Bodies member

New member appointed to the police and NCA pay bodies - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

■ Home Office: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

Sir John Hayes: [\[7405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Ministers in her Department have met the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change since 5 July 2024.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Meetings are regularly published in our quarterly transparency returns.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Layla Moran: [\[7525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the exemption criteria for the EU Settlement Scheme, in the context of the exceptional circumstances faced by some applicants during the covid-19 pandemic.

Seema Malhotra:

There is already significant flexibility available to those applying to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) whose circumstances have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, they can be absent from the UK for a period of up to 12 months without breaking their continuity of residence where this is for an important reason, which can include COVID-19.

The relevant published guidance, which provides for further flexibility for EUSS applicants who would otherwise have broken their continuous qualifying period of residence in the UK because of COVID-19, is available at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-eu-settlement-scheme-guidance-for-applicants

■ Internet: Crime

Andrew Cooper: [7659]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the proportion of crime committed online in each of the last three years; and what proportion of reported online crime over that period resulted in someone being charged in each police force area.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish statistics on the proportion of police recorded crime in England and Wales each quarter in their official statistics.

This can be found in Table F11 of ONS' Crime in England and Wales: Other Related Tables (available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeinenglandandwalesotherrelatedtables>).

Data on the proportion of such crimes that result in a charge is not currently available.

■ Migrant Workers: Shipping

Karl Turner: [7744]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Register of licensed sponsors: workers, published on 7 October 2024, how many seafarers were sponsored to work on ships (a) in UK waters, (b) on international routes from UK ports and (c) in the offshore wind industry.

Karl Turner: [7745]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to identify the number of non-UK national workers that were brought to work on the construction and maintenance of offshore wind farms within UK territorial waters under the Offshore Wind Workers Immigration Rules Concession 2017 before it expired on 30 April 2023.

Dame Angela Eagle:

All those who came to the UK under the concession were stamped at the Border rather than through visa routes and therefore no data was collected.

■ Motor Vehicles: Theft**Alex Baker:** [8002]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of vehicles stolen in (a) Aldershot constituency, (b) Hampshire and (c) England in each of the last 12 years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of 'Aggravated vehicle taking' and 'theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle' offences recorded by the police in England and Wales on a quarterly basis. The latest information, to the year ending March 2024, can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

This information is available at the Police Force Area and Community Safety Partnership area level. Information at the constituency level is not held centrally.

■ Passports: Aldershot**Alex Baker:** [8001]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many passport applications have (a) been and (b) not yet been processed from people in Aldershot constituency in the last 12 months.

Seema Malhotra:

The data requested is not held in a reportable format.

■ Passports: Hong Kong**Charlotte Nichols:** [7562]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will issue guidance to UK-based Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) trustees on the use of British National (Overseas) passports by Hong Kongers as documentation to secure the early withdrawal of their retirement savings after permanently departing from Hong Kong.

Seema Malhotra:

This Government is deeply committed to supporting members of the Hong Kong community who have relocated to the UK.

We are aware that individuals who have chosen to take up the British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) visa route are having difficulties in drawing down early their pensions held in the Hong Kong Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF).

Whilst documentary requirements for withdrawing funds early are a matter for the Hong Kong authorities, the Government has raised this issue directly with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the Hong Kong MPF Schemes Authority. We have urged them to facilitate early draw down of funds as is the case for other Hong Kong residents who move overseas permanently and have made clear such discrimination of BN(O)s is unacceptable.

■ Radicalism

Kim Johnson: [\[7571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's planned timetable is for its rapid review of extremism policy.

Kim Johnson: [\[7572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to publish (a) the terms of reference for, (b) details of who will be involved in and (c) details of a consultation process for the review of her Department's counter-extremism strategy.

Kim Johnson: [\[7573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there will a formal consultation process for her Department's rapid review of extremism policy.

Kim Johnson: [\[7574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to (a) monitor and (b) evaluate the (i) fairness, (ii) effectiveness and (iii) proportionality new measures introduced following her Department's rapid review of extremism policy.

Kim Johnson: [\[7575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to ensure that her Department's new counter-extremism strategy effectively distinguishes between (a) legitimate political or religious expression and (b) actions that pose a genuine threat.

Kim Johnson: [\[7576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish an equality impact assessment of the potential impact on groups with protected characteristics of the counter-extremism strategy review.

Dan Jarvis:

The Home Secretary has commissioned a rapid review of extremism and our current approach to tackling this issue. We are reviewing a range of work, as well as engaging and learning from a range of voices across government, academia, communities and international partners.

This review is due to conclude in the autumn and will provide a series of recommendations, action subject to scrutiny and assessment in the usual way.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Alex Sobel: [\[7527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to provide the UNHCR with a renewed quota under Pathway 2 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Seema Malhotra:

The UK has made an important commitment to resettle Afghans fleeing persecution and those who served alongside the UK.

As of the end of June 2024, the latest published Immigration Statistics show that around 30,100 people had been brought to safety from Afghanistan and the region. The latest release is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables#asylum-and-resettlement>

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), designed to support those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for UK values, as well as vulnerable people, has seen 12,131 individuals resettled to the UK, as of 30 June 2024.

Our immediate priority for the ACRS is the relocation of those individuals who have already been identified as eligible for resettlement under our resettlement schemes but have not yet travelled.

■ Sexual Offences

Ellie Chowns:**[8053]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) rapes and (b) other sexual offences were reported to police in (i) Herefordshire and (ii) each neighbouring area in each of the last five years; and what the rate of (A) rape and (B) other sexual offences per thousand population was in each of those years.

Jess Phillips:

Please see the below tables for the number of rape and other sexual offences recorded by the police and the rate per 1,000 population in Herefordshire and all other Community Safety Partnership (CSP) areas within West Mercia Police Force Area in the last five financial years. Offences where information about the CSP area has not been provided by the force have been assigned to the "West Mercia (CSP Unknown)" field.

NUMBER	RAPE OFFENCES				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
CSP					
Herefordshire, 161		195	238	215	196
County of					
North	294	225	306	318	243
Worcestershire					
Shropshire	240	251	264	276	239
South	299	243	343	367	280
Worcester					

NUMBER	RAPE OFFENCES				
Telford and Wrekin	232	245	295	302	286
West Mercia (CSP Unknown)	11	13	16	11	16
RATE	RAPE OFFENCES, RATE PER 1000S POPULATION				
CSP	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Herefordshire, County of	0.86	1.05	1.27	1.14	1.04
North Worcestershire	1.03	0.78	1.06	1.10	0.84
Shropshire	0.75	0.78	0.81	0.84	0.73
South Worcester	0.96	0.78	1.08	1.15	0.88
Telford and Wrekin	1.27	1.34	1.59	1.60	1.51
NUMBER	OTHER SEXUAL OFFENCES				
CSP	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Herefordshire, County of	317	280	410	417	381
North Worcestershire	410	426	566	558	446
Shropshire	466	394	545	521	502
South Worcester	519	463	610	616	529
Telford and Wrekin	446	380	404	463	428
West Mercia (CSP Unknown)	12	17	39	25	27

RATE	OTHER SEXUAL OFFENCES, RATE PER 1000S POPULATION				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
CSP					
Herefordshire, County of	1.70	1.51	2.19	2.21	2.02
North Worcestershire	1.43	1.49	1.96	1.93	1.54
Shropshire	1.46	1.23	1.68	1.59	1.53
South Worcester	1.66	1.48	1.93	1.93	1.65
Telford and Wrekin	2.45	2.07	2.17	2.45	2.26

■ Slavery: Victims

Blair McDougall: [\[7610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential suitability of the private sector for delivering services under a Modern Slavery Victim Care contract.

Blair McDougall: [\[7611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussion she has had with Cabinet colleagues on preparations for the next Modern Slavery Victim Care contract.

Jess Phillips:

The Government has robust internal assurance processes in place to manage and assure projects and programmes. The programme to procure a replacement for the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (Support for Victims of Modern Slavery (SVMS)) is following these assurance processes, which includes approval from and discussion with key Government Departments. The SVMS programme has also spoken to Cabinet Office throughout the preparations for going to market and as part of the approval processes.

The Home Office has undertaken a thorough market health assessment and conducted extensive supplier engagement for the SVMS programme, comprising a mix of Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises (VCSEs), Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and private sector organisations. The Home Office's approach is to keep the opportunity open to different types of organisations – including charities and private sector - to ensure the Government harnesses the full range of capabilities across the supply chain delivering the best outcomes for victims of modern slavery.

By adopting this approach, the SVMS programme will ensure it secures sustainable and resilient solutions that deliver economic and social value for UK taxpayers.

For further information on the Government's project assurance process and business case development guidance please see here: [The Green Book and accompanying guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

■ Trade Unions: Subversion

John Glen: [\[7443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the level of interference in the trade union movement by (a) Russia, (b) North Korea and (c) Iran.

Dan Jarvis:

The Government's first duty is to protect our national security and keep our country safe. We keep potential threats to the UK under constant review and, where necessary, we use all the tools at our disposal to mitigate these threats.

The UK has a strong record of responding robustly to state threats. Alongside our existing operational response, new legislation has been brought in through the National Security Act 2023 to deal with the range of modern state threats, including foreign interference. The Act includes a Foreign Interference Offence, which contributes to the toolkit available to law enforcement and the intelligence agencies to disrupt foreign interference activity, protect the British public and address the evolving threat to our national security.

As a matter of long-standing policy, the Government does not comment on the detail of matters of national security or on individual cases. This Government is committed to tackling the threat of foreign interference, wherever it originates.

■ Undocumented Migrants

Sir John Hayes: [\[7406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate her Department has made of how many people are living in the UK illegally.

Dame Angela Eagle:

By its very nature, it is not possible to know the exact size of the illegal population, or the number of people who arrive illegally, and so the Home Office does not seek to make any official estimates of the illegal population. In June 2019, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published a note on '[measuring illegal migration](#)'.

The Home Office does publish statistics on detected irregular arrivals to the UK as part of the '[Irregular migration to the UK](#)' quarterly statistics release. However, this does not indicate the number of irregular migrants currently in the UK.

■ Visas: Seasonal Workers**John McDonnell:**[\[5828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism's report entitled *We sacrificed everything we had: seasonal workers left without jobs after Home Office decision*, published on 24 August 2024, whether workers who had their visa applications rejected as a result of the Home Office's revocation of Ethero's sponsor licence will be compensated for (a) medical certificates, (b) TLSSContact visa processing fees, (c) flights and (d) other costs incurred.

Seema Malhotra:

There are no current plans to compensate those who are currently in the UK and have been impacted by the revocation of Ethero's Sponsor Licence do not find themselves in a detrimental position so far as the continuity of employment is concerned.

Ethero were removed from the register of licensed sponsors for failing in their obligations towards workers under their sponsorship.

The UK government cannot underwrite the immigration costs of those seeking a visa to come to work in the UK and has no plans to compensate workers for (a) medical certificates, (b) TLSSContact visa processing fees, (c) flights and (d) other costs incurred.

■ Visas: Skilled Workers**Mr Gideon Amos:**[\[8583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the guidance entitled *Immigration Rules*, updated 10 October 2024, whether the rules applicable to a person with a Skilled Workers visa are those (a) currently in place or (b) when a person's leave was granted.

Seema Malhotra:

The most recent changes relating to the Skilled Worker immigration rules will apply to all applications made using a certificate of sponsorship issued from 8 October 2024. These changes were corrections to the salary going rates for the Skilled Worker route which came into force in April 2024.

Changes made to the rules for partner and dependent child of a person will apply to all outstanding applications by Skilled Workers, and their dependents, regardless of the dates the applications were made, so they can benefit from the new provisions.

These changes only affect applications which have yet to be decided. They do not apply to applications which have already been granted.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ British National (Overseas): Employment**

Priti Patel: [\[6177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential barriers to employment for people from Hong Kong who are resident in the UK under the British National (Overseas) visa (a) in general and (b) when that employment requires a Certificate of No Criminal Conviction to be secured from the Hong Kong authorities for the purposes of a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

Alex Norris:

The Government is aware that some Hong Kong British National (Overseas) status holders [BN(O)s] can face barriers to employment in the UK. To support BN(O)s as they integrate into their communities, the department developed a Welcome Programme, which launched in April 2021. Through this programme, BN(O)s are able to access guidance and support on a range of issues including employment, education, housing and English language provision.

The Government has recently announced a “Jobs for Hongkongers” initiative, part of the Hong Kong BN(O) Welcome Programme. This will be delivered by The Growth Company and will support BN(O)s in England to find employment through an 8-week course. Support will be delivered in Cantonese, in person and remotely, allowing access to all who need support. Where a BN(O) requires a Certificate of No Criminal Conviction check, there is guidance on the process and sectoral examples for obtaining alternative checks on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Community Ownership Fund

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[8396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to process Community Ownership Fund round 4 applications.

Alex Norris:

This Government was elected on a manifesto that stressed its commitment to the communities' sector and community ownership through empowering communities to own and run those local assets which mean the most to them.

Communities will rightly be seeking clarity. The Chancellor's July 'Public Spending: Inheritance' speech set out the path to confirming plans for this year and next at the forthcoming Budget on 30 October 2024. Future plans for the next Spending Review period will conclude in Spring 2025.

We understand that this may have caused uncertainty about Round 4 of the Community Ownership Fund. The Government recognises this is challenging and will seek to provide clarity in due course.

■ Devolution: Norfolk**James Wild:** [\[7560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions ministers in her Department had with the hon. Members for (a) Norwich South, (b) Norwich North, (c) South West Norfolk, (d) North West Norfolk, (e) Mid Norfolk, (f) Broadland and Fakenham, (g) North Norfolk, (h) Great Yarmouth, (i) Norfolk and Waveney and (j) Waveney Valley constituency before announcing that it would not be proceeding with the mayoral devolution deal with Norfolk.

James Wild: [\[7561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of her decision not to proceed with the mayoral devolution deal on (a) economic growth, (b) brownfield housing development and (c) adult skills provision in Norfolk.

Jim McMahon:

This Government has recently announced that it will not be proceeding with the existing devolution deal with Norfolk County Council which was agreed with the previous government in December 2022.

This Government strongly believes that the benefits of devolution are best achieved through the establishment of combined institutions with a directly elected leader. Mayors should have a unique role in an institution which allows them to focus fully on their devolved strategic responsibilities, working hand in glove with council leaders who will vitally also focus on the delivery of the essential services for which they are responsible.

Conflating these two responsibilities into the same individual and institution, as is the case under the mayoral Single Local Authority model of devolution, would risk the optimal delivery of both and is not in line with the direction of travel we are setting out ahead of the English Devolution Bill.

I met with the Leader of Norfolk County Council and the Leader Suffolk County Council on 7 October to discuss next steps for devolution in the area.

■ Empty Property**Vikki Slade:** [\[8084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to bring empty properties back into use; whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) introducing (i) incentives and (ii) penalties to encourage property owners to bring empty properties back into use and (b) making a proportion of her target for new housing the bringing into use of empty properties from existing housing stock.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Question UIN 6686 on 14 October 2024.

■ Flags

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the guidance entitled Flying flags: a plain English guide, published on 20 July 2024, which flags related to sexual orientation and gender identity have deemed consent.

Matthew Pennycook:

Flag advertisements which benefit from deemed consent are set out in Class 7 of Schedule 3 to The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulations 2007.

■ Housing: Construction

Blake Stephenson:

[\[6867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, published on 30 July 2024, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of removing beauty as a requirement on support for new housing developments by local communities.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to building more high-quality, well-designed, and sustainable homes and places. There is a clear framework through policy and guidance on how to achieve well-designed places and the principles of good design are set out in the National Model Design Code, as referenced in the National Planning Policy Framework.

In our recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, we were clear that well designed and beautiful development is important as part of the overarching objectives of the planning system and to achieve sustainable development.

However, we proposed to remove a few of the 'beauty' and 'beautiful' references in the Framework where they may result in inconsistency in how it is applied in decision-making, as many find the term subjective and difficult to define.

■ Kent County Council: Finance

Ms Polly Billington:

[\[8535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will make an estimate of the (a) change in funding to Kent County Council (i) in real terms and (ii) as a percentage since 2010 and (b) forecast funding level for 2024 in the event that 2010 funding levels had been maintained in real terms.

Jim McMahon:

This Government recognises that council funding has been under pressure since 2010.

The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25 was worth up to £64.7 billion for local authorities in England. For Kent County Council, the 2024-25 Local Government Finance Settlement made available up to £1.4 billion.

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged. The department will work with local government leaders to ensure they are better able to fulfil their statutory duties.

■ Land: Contamination

James MacCleary: [\[7672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing legislation to require landlords to work with councils to bring decontaminated land back into use.

Matthew Pennycook:

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements in planning policies and decisions, and that opportunities should be taken to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land.

As part of our recent consultation on reforms to the Framework, we set out proposals to broaden the existing definition of brownfield land, set a strengthened expectation that applications on brownfield land will be approved, and make clear that plans should promote an uplift in density in urban areas. On 22 September we published a 'brownfield passport' policy paper inviting views on how we might further prioritise and fast-track building on previously used urban land.

■ Leasehold

Sarah Green: [\[8258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for laying regulations under the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 to increase standard lease terms to 990 years.

Neil Duncan-Jordan: [\[8407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on increasing the rights of leaseholders to challenge the reasonableness of their service charges.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Governments intend to act quickly to provide homeowners with greater rights, powers, and protections over their homes by implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024. These include a new right to a lease extension for leaseholders of both houses and flats, for a term of 990 years at a peppercorn ground rent on payment of a premium, and reforms to drive up the

transparency of service charges to make them more easily challengeable if leaseholders consider them to be unreasonable. We will set out details in due course about the extensive programme of secondary legislation need to bring the Act into force.

■ Leasehold: Fees and Charges

Rachael Maskell: [\[7465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ensure that annual increases in fees paid by leaseholders to management are capped in line with inflation.

Matthew Pennycook:

The level of service charge that leaseholders pay depends on many factors, including the terms of a lease, and the age and condition of a building. As a result, the cost of repairs, maintenance of common areas, and management fees vary considerably. Placing a cap on service charge increases would not only be complex but could prove detrimental to the interests of leaseholders, including those who have collectively enfranchised, by preventing sufficient funds being raised to manage and maintain their buildings effectively. As such, the Government have no plans to implement one.

By law variable service charges must be reasonable and, where costs relate to works or services, the works or services must be of a reasonable standard. Should leaseholders wish to contest the reasonableness of their service charges they may make an application to the appropriate tribunal.

The Government will act quickly to provide homeowners with greater rights, powers, and protections over their homes by implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024, including those designed to increase service charge transparency and to rebalance the legal costs regime and remove barriers for leaseholders to challenge their landlord.

■ Local Plans: Finance

Laura Trott: [\[8472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to Chapter 12, Paragraph 7, of her Department's consultation entitled Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, updated on 24 September 2024, what her planned timetable is for making that funding available to councils; and if she will meet any additional costs.

Matthew Pennycook:

Subject to the outcome of the consultation in question, further details on funding to enable eligible local authorities to progress their plans to examination quickly will be provided in due course.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Senior Civil Servants**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[7517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how frequently she meets directors-general within her Department to discuss progress.

Alex Norris:

The Deputy Prime Minister has regular discussions with director generals in the department. As has been the case under successive administrations, details of internal discussion are not normally disclosed.

■ Political Parties: Donors**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[7509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2024 to Question 3903 on Political Parties: Finance, what her policy is on (a) the regulation of and (b) reporting thresholds for donations to unincorporated donations.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[7510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2024 to Question 3903 on Political Parties: Finance, what recent discussions she has had with representatives of political parties on the development of this policy.

Alex Norris:

As set out in our manifesto, the Government intends to strengthen the rules around donations to political parties to protect our democracy. The policy development work to give effect to this commitment is ongoing, and we will engage with key stakeholders over the course of this work.

JUSTICE**■ Children: Maintenance****Jess Brown-Fuller:** [\[7693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what data her Department holds on the number of parents who (a) applied for a Reciprocal Enforcement Maintenance Order in the last 12 months and (b) are awaiting the outcome of an application for such an order.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The information provided relates to England and Wales. The most recent published figure for applications received by the Reciprocal Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Unit on behalf of the Lord Chancellor is for the calendar year 2023 and is shown in the attached table 6.1. The figure for REMO applications in 2024 will be published in June 2025. Data on those awaiting the outcome of an application is not held centrally.

Attachments:

1. Table [2024-10-15 PQ 7693 Annual Table.xls]

■ Legal Aid Scheme

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[7986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of restoring the scope of cases covered by legal aid to those provided for prior to the Legal Aid, Sentencing, and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[7987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits providing grants to legal aid providers to help increase the accessibility of legal aid.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[7988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she plans to take steps to increase legal aid fee rates.

Heidi Alexander:

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

The Government is committed to ensuring an effective and sustainable legal aid system and is keen to work closely with practitioners and their representative bodies on this. We are carefully considering options for reform following evidence gathered on the health of the system, including, for example, information gathered as part of the Review of Civil Legal Aid.

To support housing legal aid work, we are providing £1.5 million in grant funding for the recruitment of trainee housing solicitors until November 2025.

We also recognise the importance of the broader legal support system, beyond legal aid, in helping people to access justice. We are providing over £10 million of grant funding, up to March 2025, to identify what works best in the delivery and provision of legal support for people with social welfare legal problems. This includes the 'Improving Outcomes Through Legal Support' grant, which supports the work of 59 organisations to sustain and improve access to early legal support and support at court.

It also includes the 'Online Support and Advice' Grant, which ensures the provision of online support across a range of civil, family and tribunal problems.

■ Ministry of Justice: Languages

Chris Hinchliff: [\[7164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when she plans to publish the independent review of her Department's language services.

Heidi Alexander:

The information requested is not available for each individual Greater London Borough and could only be obtained with further data engineering work which would be disproportionate cost.

Information about Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) appeals is published on GOV.UK. www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics

However, it is not available in the specific format requested.

Success rates at appeal in the SEND Tribunal include if a parent or young person is successful at appeal for a part or in full. Hearing information is held on each individual appeal record. Each appeal would need to be accessed, the decision recording the outcome obtained for all records held within each of the 33 London Boroughs for the past 5 years.

■ Prison Officers: Retirement**Grahame Morris:****[7427]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on restarting negotiations with the Prison Officers Association over the pension age of prison officers.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The pension age in all public sector pension schemes is set under legislation by HM Treasury, and the merits of any review in pension age would be for them to consider. The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice is committed to listening and working with officers, staff and trade unions, and Ministers will continue to meet with the Prison Officer's Association and other unions to discuss a range of issues. We highly value our hardworking prison officers and take very seriously the safety of all staff working within prisons, whatever their age.

■ Prisoners' Release**Priti Patel:****[6181]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will publish a daily update on the (a) number of offenders released early as a consequence of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (Requisite and Minimum Custodial Periods) Order 2024 and (b) number of those offenders who have subsequently (i) re-offended and (ii) been returned to custody.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

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. Data on SDS40 releases forms a subset of data intended for future publication.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2024/117/pdfs/ukia_20240117_en.pdf.

Shaun Davies: [\[6701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders released on licence at the 40% point of their sentence were convicted of (a) one and (b) more than one breach of restraining orders.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government inherited a crisis in our criminal justice system, with prisons on the point of collapse. As a result, we were forced to take the difficult but necessary step to move certain release points for prisoners serving eligible standard determinate sentences (SDSs) from 50% to 40%.

Public protection is our priority, so we have important exclusions from this change, notably certain serious violent, sexual, national security and domestic abuse connected offences. These exclusions included the Breach of Restraining Order (BoRO) offence under Section 363 of the Sentencing Act 2020 passed by the previous Government.

It became clear that a repealed piece of legislation was being incorrectly used in a small number of cases. This created an anomaly, which meant 37 offenders were released under a repealed offence. These 37 offenders have now been returned to custody.

Data on SDS40 releases forms a subset of data intended for future publication.

■ Prisoners' Release: Mental Illness

Paul Davies: [\[7688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to support prison leavers with severe mental illness.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We are committed to working with our partners across health and justice to better support prisoners leaving custody.

Our Mental Health Approved Premises Project are piloting a partnership approach to working with people who have mental health challenges. It provides targeted, enhanced mental health support to high-risk prison leavers with the most complex needs, with the aim of building a clear bridge into services in the community. As part of the project, staff can access training to improve their ability to recognise and respond to mental health needs.

We have also recruited over 50 Health and Justice Coordinators and Managers nationwide to improve links between prison and community treatment services, to support continuity of care upon release and NHS England's RECONNECT service, supports prison leavers with vulnerabilities including mental health needs to engage with the right health services in the community through referrals and peer support.

■ Prisons: Overcrowding**Grahame Morris:**[\[7421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to alleviate prison overcrowding.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Reducing prison overcrowding is a significant challenge inherited from the previous Government. The Department's priority is to ensure there is enough capacity in the prison estate in the short and longer term. In July, we were forced to announce a package of measures in order to prevent the criminal justice system from collapsing. This included a change to the automatic release point for those serving standard determinate sentences from 50% to 40%.

We are also committed to delivering 20,000 additional prison places through the construction of a further four new prisons, as well as the expansion and refurbishment of the existing estate, including through temporary accommodation.

Furthermore, we announced our plan to publish a ten-year prison capacity strategy. The strategy will outline the steps that the Government will take to acquire land for new prison sites, and will classify prisons as being of national importance, placing decision making on planning for new prisons in Ministers' hands. The Government is committed to making prisons create better citizens not better criminals, and ensuring that we stop the cycle of reoffending.

■ Renters' Rights Bill**Tom Hayes:**[\[8037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans she has to reform the court system in the light of the Renters' Rights Bill.

Heidi Alexander:

The Renters Rights Bill will abolish section 21 (Housing Act 1988, no fault evictions) and amend the existing section 8 grounds, which will affect the County Court. Courts currently handle section 8 claims, however, legislative changes to section 8 that impact court processes or procedures will be subject to the necessary changes by the relevant Procedure Rule Committee.

The Government has also committed to digitise the court possession service, making it simpler and easier for landlords and tenants to use.

The Bill will also have an impact on the work of the Property Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal. My officials are working with those in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to fully understand the implications and to identify the resources required to deal with cases as they arise.

■ Special Educational Needs: Appeals

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[7461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many appeals against SEND decisions by people in each Greater London Borough were heard at tribunals in each of the last five years; and how many and what proportion of those cases were won by parents.

Heidi Alexander:

The information requested is not available for each individual Greater London Borough and could only be obtained with further data engineering work which would be disproportionate cost.

Information about Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) appeals is published on GOV.UK: www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics.

However, it is not available in the specific format requested.

Success rates at appeal in the SEND Tribunal include if a parent or young person is successful at appeal for a part or in full. Hearing information is held on each individual appeal record. Each appeal would need to be accessed, the decision recording the outcome obtained for all records held within each of the 33 London Boroughs for the past 5 years.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Broadband

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[7567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions his has had with Openreach on plans for full-fibre broadband rollout (a) nationally and (b) in Essex; and whether there has been any change in the speed of the rollout plans since 4 July 2024.

Chris Bryant:

OpenReach has announced commercial plans to deliver full-fibre broadband to 25 million premises in the UK by 2026 and 30 million by 2030.

As part of Project Gigabit, Building Digital UK has signed a framework agreement with Openreach, with a value of up to £800 million, to provide around 312,000 hard-to-reach premises with access to gigabit-capable broadband.

Essex has been included within a call-off under this framework, which we plan to award in the coming months with delivery to commence in late-2025. According to the independent website ThinkBroadband.com, over 82% of premises in Essex have access to gigabit-capable connection, including 64% with full-fibre.

■ Cancer: Screening**Sorcha Eastwood:**[\[7954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the press release of 6 October 2024 entitled *New government tech deals boost the business of cancer detection*, whether (a) that initiative extends to Northern Ireland and (b) people in Northern Ireland will have access to the advancements in cancer detection technology outlined in that initiative.

Feryal Clark:

The cancer detection initiatives announced on 06 October 2024 were part of UK-wide funding calls led by the Office for Life Sciences (OLS), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Northern Ireland companies and universities are engaged in collaborations with the recently announced MANIFEST cancer immunotherapy platform and the National Healthcare Research Hub for Advanced Long-acting Therapeutics. The Government is funding these cancer detection initiatives with a view to these being deployed across the UK, including Northern Ireland.

■ Data Protection and Digital Information Bill**Tom Hayes:**[\[7117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when he will present the Digital Information and Smart Data Bill to Parliament.

Chris Bryant:

We will present a new Data Bill soon.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Arms Length Bodies**Andrew Griffith:**[\[7586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps to reduce the number of arm's-length bodies sponsored by his Department.

Feryal Clark:

Arm's Length Bodies should operate efficiently and should only exist where necessary. The Department operates a review programme and a number of DSIT's ALBs are subject to review every year. These reviews consider the continuing necessity of the ALB. New ALBs are only established when all other delivery mechanisms have been exhausted and are subject to approval by HM Treasury.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Official Cars**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[7011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, 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.

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.

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 Science, Innovation and Technology: Public Appointments**John Glen:****[6110]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, 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.

Feryal Clark:

Departments do not routinely record and collect the reasons why appointees leave their positions, so 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.

I refer the Right Honourable Member to the answer I gave on Monday 9 September to [Question UIN 2400](#). Additionally, since then Martha Lane Fox (Co-Chair), Poppy Gustafsson, Paul Willmott (Co-Chair), Jeni Tennison, Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon, Lou Cordwell, Aaron Maniam, David Eaves, Sarah Hunter, Lisa Harrington, Josie Cluer and Lord Richard Allan have been appointed as members of the Digital Centre Design Panel. An announcement containing further details is published [here](#).

Public Appointments are routinely published in the public domain using the Cabinet Office digital service and the sites of the Public Bodies concerned.

Digital Technology: Disadvantaged**Saqib Bhatti:****[6591]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of developing a digital inclusion strategy on the number of (a) anti-Semitic and (b) anti-Muslim incidents.

Chris Bryant:

It is a scandal that the previous government did not introduce a digital inclusion strategy for ten years.

Digital inclusion is a priority for my department and for government, and work is ongoing to develop our approach to tackling digital exclusion and coordinate across government departments. Digital inclusion means ensuring that everyone has the access, skills, support and confidence to participate in a modern digital society, whatever their circumstances.

Government will work closely with the third sector, devolved administrations, businesses and local authorities, many of whom have already implemented highly successful programmes, to ensure interventions are collaborative and targeted to individual needs.

In developing our plans, we will consider the impact of digital exclusion on all our communities, including Jewish and Muslim communities across the country.

We are working at pace to deliver a Digital inclusion national action plan for publication in early December, we are unable to announce this publicly but want to assure that digital inclusion is a priority for government.

Andrew Griffith: [\[8498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to continue the inter-ministerial group on tackling digital exclusion.

Chris Bryant:

Promoting Digital Inclusion is a priority for me and for Government, which is why we believe it was a disgrace that the previous government did not introduce a new digital exclusion strategy for ten years. Digital inclusion is essential to our Missions, particularly in breaking down barriers to opportunity across the UK and kickstarting economic growth by involving more people in the digital economy. Any announcement about inter-ministerial groups will be made in the usual way, but work is ongoing to develop our approach to digital inclusion and ensure coordination across government departments. This will not just involve ministers talking to each other, but effective action to tackle exclusion.

■ **European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasts: Contracts**

Andrew Griffith: [\[8494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 10 October 2024 to Question 5708 on European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasts: Finance, whether the contract for construction was advertised.

Feryal Clark:

The contract was procured by the Government Property Agency through a framework (CCS RM6088, Construction Works and Associated Services, Lot 5, Construction Works & Associated Services (£80m+) National Framework) which was itself advertised. As part of this process, contractors on the framework were notified of the opportunity to tender. This approach is in line with The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and usual construction industry practice.

■ **European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasts: Finance**

Andrew Griffith: [\[8493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 10 October 2024 to Question 5708 on European Centre for Medium Range

Weather Forecasts: Finance, what estimate his Department has made of the construction cost of the project.

Feryal Clark:

The contract is subject to an ongoing commercial process, and it would therefore not be appropriate to share construction cost estimates.

■ **Higher Education: Research**

Adam Thompson:

[7917]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential implications for its policies of the report entitled Replacing the Research Excellence Framework published by UK Day One on 8 October 2024.

Chris Bryant:

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.

As development of REF 2029 proceeds, the funding bodies will continue to engage with the sector and assess the feedback and evidence received from stakeholders until final guidance for the next exercise is set in 2026.

■ **Quantum Technology: Regulation**

Andrew Griffith:

[8496]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to page 41 of the Information Commissioner's Office report on Quantum Technologies published on 9 October 2024, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the conclusions on post-quantum security.

Feryal Clark:

The government recognises the need to act to both unlock the opportunities of quantum computing and also address the potential risks of this technology.

DSIT works closely with the National Cyber Security Centre to identify the mitigations that are required against the cryptography risks posed by quantum computers.

Following the publication of Post Quantum Cryptography (PQC) standards this summer, NCSC has published details of how it will help organisations plan their migration to PQC. This complements existing cyber security guidance for data security.

NCSC will release further communications over the coming months and continue supporting regulators, such as the Information Commissioner's Office, to manage these risks within their remits.

■ Shared Rural Network

Harriet Cross: [\[7685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that mobile network investment through the Shared Rural Network programme prioritises improving connectivity in rural communities; whether he has made an assessment of the potential (a) effectiveness and (b) environmental impact of the Total Not Spot initiative (i) in Scotland's National Parks and wildland areas and (ii) nationally; and whether he plans to review the allocation of resources between (A) addressing partial connectivity in populated rural areas and (B) installing infrastructure in remote, depopulated locations.

Chris Bryant:

The Shared Rural Network is designed to improve connectivity where people live, work, travel and visit. In very rural parts of Scotland, digital connectivity is vital for visitors, emergency services, lone workers and businesses utilising new technology.

To minimise environmental impact, publicly funded masts will be shared by all four mobile network operators and existing infrastructure utilised wherever possible. At each potential location, an individual assessment will consider a range of factors to strike a balance between improving connectivity and minimising impact on the surrounding landscape. All masts will comply with planning rules for these areas and go through the proper planning process, with local planning authorities responsible for reviewing applications. Achieving a perfect balance between enhanced connectivity and environmental protection will not be easy, but I am keen to see a more sympathetic approach that focuses most on where people really need a secure connection.

■ Social Media: Enforcement

Ben Coleman: [\[7703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to prevent the spread of divisive content on social media; and what enforcement measures he plans to put in place to encourage the compliance of the (a) owners and (b) managers of these platforms.

Feryal Clark:

The Online Safety Act gives social media platforms new duties to protect their users from harmful content and activity. These include extensive duties to protect users from content which stirs up or incites hatred. It also includes duties to protect users from illegal state-backed interference and disinformation. Ofcom is the new regulator for this regime. It will have strong enforcement powers where platforms fail to comply with their duties. This includes powers to impose substantial fines and business disruption measures and also, in certain circumstances, hold senior managers criminally liable.

■ Space Technology: Scotland

Andrew Griffith:

[\[8497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had meetings with the UK Space Agency to discuss the growth of Scotland's space ecosystem.

Chris Bryant:

The Secretary of State for the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology is in regular discussion with the UK Space Agency, our key delivery partner, about Scotland's growing space sector as we recognise its crucial role in delivering our national ambitions for space. The UKSA has also opened an office in Scotland which shows its commitment to support the growth of the Scottish space sector.

■ Universities: Domestic Visits

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[7862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many universities (a) he and (b) other Ministers in his Department have visited since their appointment.

Feryal Clark:

Since taking office in July, we have visited six universities. I have visited Glasgow University, Queens University Belfast and Imperial College London. Members of the ministerial team have made visits to Northumbria University, Imperial College London and businesses partnered with universities such as Birmingham City University.

SCOTLAND

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Scotland

Chris Kane:

[\[8332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the impact of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund on (a) local business in Scotland, (b) social enterprises in Scotland and (c) Stirling and Strathallan constituency.

Ian Murray:

Under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 'Supporting Local Business' investment priority, which includes support for social enterprises, local authorities in Scotland have already spent £10.9m as of April 2024. This includes close to £400,000 spent in Stirling, and more than £270,000 spent in Perth and Kinross.

Year 3 payments have now been paid to local authorities, and we anticipate further investment under this priority in the third year of the fund.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is committed to evaluating and publishing findings on the impacts of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund,

and Scotland is a key component of this evaluation. The UKSPF evaluation strategy clearly sets out the approach to evaluation.

TRANSPORT

■ Northern Trains: Private Prosecutions

Ayoub Khan: [\[8400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will have discussions with Northern Rail on its use of private prosecutions.

Simon Lightwood:

We expect Northern to ensure their policy on fare evasion and prosecutions is clear and fair for passengers at all times and have instructed the operator to review the details of the prosecution cases in question urgently.

■ Port of Ramsgate

Ms Polly Billington: [\[8531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of reopening Ramsgate Port to international trade on levels of (a) capacity pressure experienced by (i) the Port of Dover and (ii) other ports in the South East of England and (b) congestion on the M20.

Mike Kane:

New commercially viable freight-only or passenger-carrying services from ports have the potential to contribute positively to local, regional and national economies. The scale of impacts upon the economy and employment, upon other ports and upon congestion on the M20 and other roads, would depend on the nature, capacity and frequency of the service. Such a service could also contribute to national trade resilience overall.

■ Railways: Concessions

Ayoub Khan: [\[8403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of fare charging arrangements on morning peak rail tickets for (a) 16-25 and (b) 26-30 Railcards.

Simon Lightwood:

Both the 16-25 and 26-30 Railcards are subject to a £12 minimum fare during the morning peak. Changes to the terms and conditions of Railcards are for industry to propose and would need to balance the benefits to certain groups against the impacts on taxpayers.

I am aware of the recent coverage of a number of prosecutions undertaken by one rail operator.

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: Private Prosecutions

Ayoub Khan:

[\[8401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on how many private prosecutions have been undertaken by the Operator of Last Resort against people using Anytime Singles at peak times with 16-25 railcards in each of the last three years.

Simon Lightwood:

DfT Operator of Last Resort Holdings Limited has not brought any private prosecutions in the last three years as prosecutions are carried out by its subsidiary train companies.

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: Standards

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[8462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to improve passenger rail performance.

Simon Lightwood:

Improving railway performance and driving forward rail reform is the Department's top priority. The Secretary of State and Rail Minister are meeting with Train Operating Companies and Network Rail to hold them to account in a joined-up manner across track and train. Great British Railways (GBR) will put passengers back at the heart of our railways and the Secretary of State established Shadow GBR to kickstart those improvements prioritising performance ahead of the formal establishment of GBR.

■ Ruabon Station: Access

Steve Witherden:

[\[7665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that both platforms at Ruabon train station in Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr constituency are accessible to all.

Simon Lightwood:

I regret we are not yet able to comment on next steps regarding Access for All projects at specific stations including at Ruabon railway station. However, please be assured that we are committed to improving the accessibility of the railway and recognise the social and economic benefits this brings to communities. Once we can confirm our approach to the Access for All programme, we will of course ensure that MPs and other stakeholders are informed.

TREASURY**■ Beer and Cider: Excise Duties****Lisa Smart:**[\[7927\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing draught duty relief for (a) beer and (b) cider served in pubs in Hazel Grove constituency.

James Murray:

Pubs make an enormous contribution to our economy and society, and this is recognised in the tax system.

The current alcohol duty system supports pubs through Draught Relief, which ensures eligible products served on draught pay less duty.

The Government is closely monitoring the impact of the recent reforms and rates that took effect on 1 August 2023. As with all taxes, the Government keeps the alcohol duty system under review during its Budget process.

Ms Julie Minns:[\[7935\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing draught duty relief for (a) beer and (b) cider served in pubs in Carlisle.

Ms Julie Minns:[\[7936\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of increasing draught duty relief to 20% on (a) pubs and (b) small independent brewers in Carlisle.

Ms Julie Minns:[\[7937\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she plans to take through the alcohol duty system to support (a) pubs and (b) breweries in Carlisle.

James Murray:

Pubs and breweries make an enormous contribution to our economy and society, and this is recognised in the tax system.

The current alcohol duty system supports pubs and breweries through Draught Relief, which ensures eligible products served on draught pay less duty. The duty

system also supports small producers by providing a tapered duty discount on products below 8.5% alcohol by volume (ABV).

Supporting our high streets is a vital part of our economic growth mission and the Government is committed to working in partnership with businesses and local communities to deliver this.

The Government is closely monitoring the impact of the recent reforms and rates that took effect on 1 August 2023. As with all taxes, the Government keeps the alcohol duty system under review during its Budget process.

■ Chad: Debts Written Off

Munira Wilson: [\[7552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information her Department holds on how much debt relief Chad has received from external private creditors through the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments.

Darren Jones:

Chad agreed a debt treatment with its official bilateral creditors and its main private creditor, Glencore, in November 2022.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the treatment is consistent with the commitments made by Chad and parameters under its IMF-supported program. This is enabling Chad to restore its debt sustainability, while ensuring protection against the volatility of oil prices through contingent treatment mechanisms.

The UK is not a creditor to Chad.

■ Developing Countries: Debts

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[7550\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Institute of International Finance and OECD's debt transparency initiative; and whether she has had discussions with relevant stakeholders on the adequacy of the information on lending activities provided by private creditors to that Initiative.

Tulip Siddiq:

The UK is a strong advocate for enhancing debt transparency including for private sector debt. As part of this, we supported the Institute of International Finance (IIF) and OECD Debt Transparency Initiative, set up in 2021, and the IIF's Voluntary Principles for Debt Transparency, which underpinned it. The UK has taken a lead in ensuring its own lending is transparent and meets G20 best practice, publishing details of all new direct lending quarterly and the stock of debt owed to the UK annually.

The UK continues to engage closely with the private sector and other relevant stakeholders through international fora, such as the Global Sovereign Debt

Roundtable, to promote the importance of transparency, and to explore ways to build on and improve existing efforts.

■ **Football: Regulation and Taxation**

John Glen: [\[7429\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has held recent discussions with the Premier League on (a) statutory football regulation and (b) the taxation of football clubs.

Darren Jones:

I have not held any discussions with the Premier League in my capacity as the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

■ **Fuels: Excise Duties**

Stuart Andrew: [\[7748\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate her Department has made of the potential impact of changes in the level of fuel duty on food prices.

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, including haulage firms involved in food production and transportation.

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.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[8410\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when she plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for East Londonderry of 21 August 2024 on a wages and taxation issue.

James Murray:

HM Treasury has no record of receiving the letter of 21 August 2024 from the Hon Member. Officials have contacted the Hon Member's office to request a copy.

■ **Office of Government Commerce**

Fred Thomas: [\[7039\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will re-establish the Office of Government Commerce.

Darren Jones:

There are no plans to re-establish the Office of Government Commerce (OGC). The principal functions of the OGC are being successfully delivered by the Government Commercial Function including the Crown Commercial Service.

■ **Plastics: Taxation****Wera Hobhouse:** [\[7519\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will include in the forthcoming Budget proposals relating to the plastic packaging tax - chemical recycling and adoption of a mass balance approach consultation, published on 18 July 2023.

James Murray:

The government has confirmed its intent to publish a response to this consultation by the end of the year. Further details of the government's response will be set out in due course.

■ **Private Education: VAT****Tim Roca:** [\[8072\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to introduce VAT on school fees for vocational music and dance schools where the funding is provided by the Music and Dance Scheme.

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 includes vocational music and dance schools where funding is provided by the Music and Dance Scheme.

Where parents or families are paying fees for their child to attend a private music or dance school, they will pay VAT on those fees following this change. The right time to consider any changes to schemes like the Music and Dance Scheme is at the Spending Review.

■ **Public Expenditure: Impact Assessments****Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[6995\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Table 2, page 9 of her Department's publication entitled Fixing the foundations: Public spending audit 2024-25, published in July 2024, for which savings measures set out in that Table her Department has conducted a (a) equality impact assessment and (b) environmental principles assessment.

Darren Jones:

As per standard practice, HMT officials conducted an equality and environmental assessment of all savings measures put forward by Departments within the July

'Fixing the Foundations' statement. In developing proposals, the Treasury took care to consider the equality impacts on those sharing protected characteristics in line with its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

■ **Public Houses: Business Rates**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[7831\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024, to Question 4354, on Public Houses: Business Rates, whether the introduction of a pub smoking ban would be deemed to be a material consideration for the purposes of calculating the Rateable Value.

James Murray:

Schedule 6 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988 states that no account is to be taken of any matter that is directly attributable to a change in legislation when determining a pub's rateable value.

■ **Taxation: Electronic Government**

Blake Stephenson: [\[7615\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate she has made of whether the rollout of Making Tax Digital for Income Tax will be completed by April 2026.

James Murray:

Making Tax Digital (MTD) is an ambitious reform that will support modernisation of the tax system.

The government is working collaboratively with HMRC and external stakeholders to bring the first businesses and landlords into MTD for Income Tax.

Reflecting its status within the Government Major Projects Portfolio, the MTD programme is subject to strong governance and independent assurance by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ **Sanitary Products: Scotland**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[8466\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an assessment of the potential (a) implications for her policies of the effectiveness of the free period products scheme in Scotland and (b) merits of implementing a similar scheme in England.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[8467\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of period poverty on (a) the economy and (b) educational attainment.

Anneliese Dodds:

We recognise that women and girls may suffer as a result of the cost of period products.

The so-called 'tampon tax' has been abolished, and period underwear now receives the same zero-rate of VAT.

A scheme is in place for education settings, with free products available for all who need them, so periods are not a barrier to education. And all hospital patients can also receive free products.

No assessment of period product schemes operating in Scotland has been made.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ AEA Group: Pensions****Esther McVey:**[\[7448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking in response to concerns of former employees of Atomic Energy Agency Technology regarding a redress of their pension.

Emma Reynolds:

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) published a report on the AEAT Pension case in June 2023, which made several recommendations for the government. This work was halted due to the general election and the new government will now consider it.

■ Children: Maintenance**Dave Doogan:**[\[7540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Child Maintenance Service has made of the potential merits of reducing the threshold for unearned income for paying parents from £2,500 to £1,000 in line with HMRC's annual tax-free allowance.

Andrew Western:

The threshold for unearned income was originally set at £2,500 to ensure that this represented a significant source of a paying parent's total annual income. This ensures that minor changes in unearned income do not interfere with the efficiency of the system, increasing costs for the taxpayer.

A review is currently ongoing to look at the child maintenance calculation to ensure it is fit for purpose. Unearned income, including the current threshold, falls within the scope of this review.

■ Cost of Living

Neil Coyle:

[\[8155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential implications for her policies of the report by Christians Against Poverty entitled Deficit budgets: The cost to stay alive, published in September 2024.

Alison McGovern:

We are committed to tackling poverty and good quality work will be the foundation of our approach.

We know that good work can significantly reduce the chances of people falling into poverty, but too many people are being denied the security and dignity that comes with being in good work. The Get Britain Working White Paper, to be set out in the Autumn, will develop measures to reduce inactivity and help people to find better paid and more secure jobs.

Tackling child poverty is at the heart of this Government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity. The Child Poverty Taskforce has started urgent work to publish the Child Poverty Strategy in Spring 2025 and will explore all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty. This will include listening to the voices of children living in poverty and their families.

We need a modern and effective social security system that is fit for purpose which is why we have committed to reviewing Universal Credit and listening to the full range of views on potential changes.

For those most in need, we have extended the Household Support Fund for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual. As has been done for previous schemes, the Fund is available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to provide discretionary support to those most in need with the cost of essentials.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Civil Servants

John Glen:

[\[6120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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.

Andrew Western:

The Department for Work and Pensions does not keep a list of the former employment of each of its civil servants.

■ Employment: Lone Parents

Tom Hayes:

[\[7121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the (a) affordability and (b) availability of childcare on the ability of single parents to look for (i) work and (ii) increased hours.

Alison McGovern:

I am pleased to announce on 7 October we published [Universal Credit childcare costs - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and [Childcare choices for parents working atypical hours - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), which provides some insight into the question.

Parents claiming Universal Credit can be reimbursed up to 85% of their eligible childcare costs each month and we provide financial support with upfront childcare costs when parents move into paid work or increase their working hours. They are also able to access the early education entitlements, as long as they meet the eligibility criteria for each offer.

■ Employment: Rural Areas

Chris Kane:

[\[8333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help increase levels of workforce economic activity in rural areas.

Alison McGovern:

The Government considers the current rate of inactivity to be unacceptably high. With nearly 2.8 million people out of work due to long-term sickness and the inactivity rate above pre-pandemic levels at 21.9% for May-July 2024, unlike most major economies, our overall employment rate has failed to recover to its pre-pandemic level.

This is why we have set a long-term ambition to achieve an 80% employment rate. We will publish a white paper which sets out further details on our plans to tackle economic inactivity, support people into good work, and help them to progress in work. The Get Britain Working White Paper will build on manifesto commitments, setting out how fundamental reform will be delivered in three, interconnected parts:

- o A new public employment and careers service to help get more people into work, and on in their work.
- o New, bespoke joined-up work, health and skills plans for the economically inactive, led by Mayors and local authorities to address the needs of their communities.
- o A youth guarantee for all people aged 18 to 21.

■ Energy: Older People

Paula Barker:

[\[6619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support elderly, disabled people who are ineligible for pension credit with higher energy costs.

Emma Reynolds:

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

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

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

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

Other measures to support pensioners include the State Pension, which is the foundation of income in retirement and will remain so, protecting 12 million pensioners through the Triple Lock. Based on current forecasts, the full rate of the new state pension is set to increase by around £1,700 over the course of this Parliament.

We are also providing support for pensioners through our Warm Homes Plan which will transform homes across the country by making them cleaner and cheaper to run.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

■ Food Supply**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[8463]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the level of food insecurity in (a) England and (b) the South East.

Alison McGovern:

This government is committed to tackling poverty and reducing mass dependence on emergency food parcels.

Statistics on the proportion of people living in food insecure households 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) (opens in a new tab).

■ Household Support Fund

Kim Johnson:

[7866]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the end of the Household Support Fund on the number of people in poverty.

Alison McGovern:

No assessment has been made of the impact of the Household Support Fund on poverty.

The Government announced funding to extend the Household Support Fund for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

An additional £421 million has been provided to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual. The objective of the Household Support Fund is to provide crisis support to vulnerable households in England in most need with the cost of essentials such as food and energy.

The Household Support Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households in need, including households with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people, larger households, single-person households, and those struggling with one-off financial shocks or unforeseen events.

Local Authorities have the discretion to design their own local schemes within the parameters of the guidance and grant determination that the Department for Work and Pensions have set out for the fund. This is because they have the ties and the knowledge to best determine how support should be provided in their local communities.

■ Housing Benefit and Pension Credit: Telford

Shaun Davies:

[6698]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pensioner households claimed (a) pension credit and (b) housing benefit in Telford in each year since 2010.

Emma Reynolds:

Quarterly statistics on pensioners who receive a) pension credit and b) housing benefit from quarter ending February 2010 to quarter ending February 2024 are published on [Stat-Xplore](https://www.gov.uk/stat-xplore).

Housing benefit can be broken down by age group prior to April 2018 and from April 2018 onwards, it can be broken down by working age or pension age.

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

■ Maternity Pay: Multiple Births

Kate Osamor: [\[7492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of maternity pay for mothers of (a) twins and (b) other multiples.

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 mothers to be able to take time away from work. Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance rates are reviewed annually and were raised again by 6.7% in April from £172.48 to £184.03.

Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance 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 recent employment and earnings. They are not intended to assist with the costs associated with the birth of a new child or children.

■ Occupational Health

Neil Coyle: [\[8160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the Occupational Health Taskforce (a) last met and (b) is scheduled to next meet.

Alison McGovern:

As outlined in the previous Government's response to the *Occupational Health: Working Better* consultation (published on 23 November 2023), an expert occupational health taskforce led by Dame Carol Black was established in February 2024 to explore the development of a new voluntary framework for OH provision.

The taskforce last met on 26th April 2024 and Government is reviewing how best to progress the evidence, stakeholder views and insights gathered as part of the policy development previously undertaken for this work.

■ Pension Credit

Chris Hinchliff: [\[7156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of moving the qualifying week for Pension Credit to (a) 30 September, (b) 31 October and (c) 30 November 2024 on the number of eligible claimants.

Emma Reynolds:

There is no qualifying week for Pension Credit. A claim for Pension Credit may be made at any time and may be backdated for up to three months as long as the entitlement conditions are met during that period. This means that a pensioner who was eligible for, but had not claimed, Pension Credit during the qualifying week for the Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2024-25 (16 to 22 September 2024) can still qualify for the payment if they make a successful backdated application for Pension Credit by 21 December 2024.

Chris Hinchliff:[\[7159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the (a) potential merits and (b) viability of auto enrolment for pension credit.

Emma Reynolds:

It is not currently possible to accurately identify people who may be entitled to Pension Credit nor to determine how much they may be entitled to on the basis of the data which DWP holds. Like all means-tested benefits, a person's eligibility for Pension Credit depends on their financial and personal household circumstances - information which, in most cases, DWP does not hold. Entitlement to Pension Credit is only established once a claim is made and award decisions often require the judgment of a decision maker weighing up evidence which cannot be done automatically.

It is however possible to identify certain households as highly likely to be entitled to Pension Credit on the basis of Housing Benefit data which DWP holds. This means we can scale-up last year's 'Invitation to Claim' trial by targeting approximately 120,000 pensioner households who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and who may also be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit. We will be inviting these households to apply for Pension Credit by 21 December, which is the latest date for making a successful backdated claim and still qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment.

■ Pension Credit and Universal Credit: Colne Valley**Paul Davies:**[\[7292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people that applied for Pension Credit in each of the last five years were in receipt of Universal Credit at the time of their application in Colne Valley constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Pension Credit: Eligibility**Nick Timothy:**[\[6736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will ensure data to help identify people eligible for Pension Credit is made available to local authorities.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department already shares extensive data with local authorities for a variety of purposes. Local authorities are allowed to re-use that data under the terms of a data sharing Memorandum of Understanding, subject to them seeking their own legal advice, and subject to them notifying the Department of their intent. This data reuse process can be used to include reusing data originating from DWP to help identify people eligible for Pension Credit.

In order to maximise the take-up of Pension Credit, we are asking local authorities to support our Pension Credit campaign - the Secretary of State and the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all local authorities in August. Many already undertake their own initiatives to identify eligible households and promote take-up; and over 160 local authorities have responded positively to our 'call for action'.

Abtisam Mohamed:[\[7985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the eligibility threshold for Pension Credit.

Emma Reynolds:

The rates of Pension Credit were last reviewed in Autumn 2023 as part of the Secretary of State's annual statutory review of State pension and benefit rates. Following that review, the Pension Credit standard minimum guarantee was increased by 8.5%, in line with the percentage increase in average earnings, to £218.15 a week for a single pensioner and £332.95 a week for a pensioner couple, with effect from 8 April 2024. Other Pension Credit amounts, including the maximum rate of Savings Credit and additional amounts for those with a severe disability or caring responsibilities, were increased by 6.7% in line with price inflation.

The next review will be undertaken later this month, following the publication by the Office of National Statistics of the earnings and prices indices used to inform the review, with the new rates taking effect from 7 April 2025.

■ Pension Credit: Gosport**Dame Caroline Dinéage:**[\[6049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2024 to Question 2857 on Pension Credit: Gosport, if she will make it her policy to collect that data at constituency level.

Emma Reynolds:

Estimates of the number of Pension Credit entitled non-recipients (ENRs) are based on survey data. The survey sample sizes for ENRs are too small to calculate take-up rates in smaller geographical areas. This means that we are unable to collect data at

constituency level using this methodology. Further information around the take-up statistics can be found at: Background information and methodology for financial year ending 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

■ Pension Credit: Publicity

Rachael Maskell:

[7795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the schedule is for the advertising campaign for pension credit sign up.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 14 October 2024]: Alongside our continuing work with key stakeholders, for which the Pension Credit week of action (2 -6 September) was a focal point, DWP has also launched paid marketing activity to promote Pension Credit.

The activity, which is aimed at potential pensioner customers, began on 16 September and includes radio, national and regional press, paid social media and GP and Post Office screens across Great Britain. We are also advertising on podcasts through a paid media partnership, aimed at friends and family who can encourage and support older relatives and friends to apply.

A key message of the campaign this quarter is that those who are eligible and apply for Pension Credit by 21 December could also qualify for the Winter Fuel Payment (or the equivalent in Scotland)

Rachael Maskell:

[7796]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans that pensioners will receive a letter from her Department on eligibility to sign up for pension credit.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 14 October 2024]: Starting this month pensioners in England and Wales will receive a letter informing them of the change in eligibility to the Winter Fuel Payment and encouraging them to check their eligibility for Pension Credit. Similar letters to pensioners in Scotland and Northern Ireland will follow during November.

In November we will also be writing to approximately 120,000 pensioners who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and who may also be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit. We will be inviting these pensioners to claim Pension Credit by the 21 December, which is the latest date for making a successful backdated Pension Credit claim and still qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment.

■ Pension Credit: Take-up

Wendy Morton:

[6276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to her Answer of 11 September 2024 to Question 2913 on Pension Credit: Take-up, how many full-time equivalent (a) staff, (b) new staff and (c) staff reallocated from other roles in her Department are supporting the programme of activity to increase the number of Pension

Credit claims; and for how long additional staff are expected to be allocated to supporting that programme.

Emma Reynolds:

Prior to the Winter Fuel announcement, Retirement Services Directorate (RSD) had 352 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff deployed on Pension Credit claims. Since the announcement, a deployment plan has been agreed to deploy an additional 537 FTE into RSD to support Pension Credit. With a further 156 FTE planned to onboard from recruitment between November 2024 and January 2025. Additional staff will remain for as long as necessary to ensure customers will get a decision on their Pension Credit claim.

Gareth Davies:

[\[6636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the proportion of people who are eligible for Pension Credit who will take up that benefit in the next 12 months.

Emma Reynolds:

No such estimate has been made.

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[6872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the cost of her Department's campaign to encourage people to apply for Pension Credit.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department's paid marketing activity to promote Pension Credit, which includes radio, national and regional press, paid social media and GP and Post Office screens has been live since 16 September and is ongoing.

It is not possible to provide an accurate assessment of the cost of this paid activity until it is concluded.

Chris Hinchliff:

[\[7157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure adequate resources to support the surge in applications for pension credit.

Emma Reynolds:

Prior to the Winter Fuel announcement, Retirement Services Directorate (RSD) had 352 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff deployed on Pension Credit claims. Since the announcement, a deployment plan has been agreed to deploy an additional 537 FTE into RSD to support Pension Credit. With a further 156 FTE planned to onboard from recruitment between November 2024 and January 2025.

■ **Pension Funds: Climate Change**

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[6894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to require pension funds to comply with the climate rules in the Paris Agreement.

Emma Reynolds:

Occupational pension schemes with assets of £1 billion or more have been required to publish annual reports setting out how they are managing climate risks and opportunities in line with the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) since 2022. These reports include, so far as they can, how their portfolio investments are consistent with the Paris Agreement goal of limiting temperature increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

A growing number of financial institutions and companies are setting goals to achieve net zero emissions in their business plans, and developing climate transition plans to map out how they will achieve this. Our manifesto committed to introducing new requirements in relation to transition plans for listed companies and financial institutions, including pension schemes.

■ Pensions Ombudsman**Anna Dixon:**[\[7215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the length of time it takes for cases to be reviewed by the Pensions Ombudsman.

Emma Reynolds:

In November 2023, DWP instigated a peer review of The Pensions Ombudsman (TPO), that considered organisational structure, performance, waiting times and efficiencies. Following the ensuing recommendations, TPO commissioned an internal review which has resulted in their Operating Model Review (OMR).

TPO has begun implementing improvements to its Operating Model enhancing effectiveness and ensuring cases are closed as early as possible. Engaging and influencing the wider pensions industry remains a vital part of TPO strategy. The recent 'How to avoid the Ombudsman' session run by its Stakeholder Engagement team demonstrates TPO willingness to engage industry to reduce the number of complaints it receives.

DWP has invested substantial additional funding to TPO's baseline over the SR period to expand headcount to support the reduction in waiting times.

■ Pensions: Self-employed**Sorcha Eastwood:**[\[6901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of defaulting self-employed people into pension savings.

Emma Reynolds:

Finding effective and enduring solutions to enable self-employed people to achieve greater financial security in later life is a challenge, which the UK like other countries is confronting. Research has highlighted that while self-employments are diverse, the behavioural barriers that were overcome through Automatic Enrolment for employees

persist for self-employed people, in particular low levels of knowledge and inertia make it difficult to get started with retirement saving. In addition, there are specific barriers experienced by many self-employed people, including irregularity of income.

My department has been working with research partners to explore the feasibility of addressing such barriers through building and testing default retirement saving solutions in digital platforms, used by many self-employed people to manage their money.

The second phase of our pensions review will begin later this year, looking at further steps to improve pension outcomes, including assessing pension adequacy.

■ Pensions: Terminal Illnesses

Nadia Whittome: [6647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of allowing people who are terminally ill to withdraw funds from private pensions.

Emma Reynolds:

If you have a private or workplace pension, you may be able to begin taking an income and/or lump sums from your pension at any age due to ill health. This provision is dependent on the rules of the scheme and is a matter for individual schemes and may vary. Scheme members should contact their scheme administrators in the event of ill health to ascertain any benefits that they may be entitled to under the rules of the scheme.

■ Poverty: Children

Irene Campbell: [8555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of child poverty in North Ayrshire and Arran constituency; and what steps she is taking to help reduce child poverty in that constituency.

Alison McGovern:

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 (www.gov.uk).

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.

■ Social Security Benefits: Foreign Nationals

Nick Timothy: [\[7601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people who are not British citizens are claiming benefits, by immigration status and benefit.

Andrew Western:

Non-UK / Irish citizens can only access benefits like Universal Credit if they have an immigration status that provides recourse to public funds. Those without immigration status or with a no recourse to public funds condition on their status are not entitled.

The Department checks immigration status when assessing eligibility, but this information is not collated centrally and hence not readily available. We are, however, exploring the feasibility of developing suitable statistics related to the immigration status of non-UK / Irish customers.

■ State Retirement Pensions

Angus MacDonald: [\[7394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of the differences in the amounts received by recipients of the old and new State Pension.

Emma Reynolds:

We are absolutely committed to supporting pensioners and giving them the dignity and security they deserve in retirement.

It is not possible to make direct, like for like comparisons between State Pension amounts received under the pre 2016 State Pension system and the new State Pension. Under both systems, the amount people are entitled to varies according to their National Insurance record. This is reflected in the average amounts that people receive.

Through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their State Pension increase by around a thousand pounds over the next five years.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Louth and Horncastle**Victoria Atkins:****[7789]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in receipt of the State Pension there are in each district council electoral ward in Louth and Horncastle constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 14 October 2024]: DWP cannot provide data down to a district council electoral ward level. Data on State Pension caseloads for GB is published and this can be found on Stat-Xplore. Users can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest user and, if needed, can access User Guide (dwp.gov.uk) on how to extract the information required.

To be helpful, as of the quarter ending May 2023, there are 28,694 SP claimants in Louth and Horncastle Parliamentary Constituency. The 2024 Parliamentary constituency boundaries were used to calculate this.

Victoria Atkins:**[7790]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the proportion of the general population that are in receipt of the State Pension in each district council electoral ward in Louth and Horncastle constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 14 October 2024]: DWP cannot provide data down to a district council electoral ward level. Data on State Pension caseloads for GB is published and this can be found on DWP Stat-Xplore. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes data on estimates of the population at different geographic boundaries. 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.

To be helpful, as of the quarter ending May 2022, the proportion of the general population of Louth and Horncastle constituency in receipt of the State Pension is 30%. This was calculated using the State Pension caseload for the 2010 Parliamentary Constituency boundaries in the closest quarter (May 2022) to the ONS data used and dividing it by the latest available Parliamentary Constituency population estimates data from the ONS (Mid-year 2022).

Source for Population estimates: [Parliamentary constituency population estimates \(ONS\)](#)

■ State Retirement Pensions: Terminal Illnesses**Nadia Whittome:****[6648]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing people who are (a) under pension age and (b) terminally ill to access their state pension.

Emma Reynolds:

The principle of having a State Pension age that is the same for everybody has the merit of simplicity and clarity and provides an important trigger moment for planning purposes. Unlike some Private Pensions, it has always been the case that nobody can claim their State Pension before they reach State Pension age.

For those nearing the end of their life, the Government's priority is providing people with financial support quickly and compassionately. Special benefit rules enable people who are nearing the end of their lives and have 12-months or less to live to get faster and easier access to certain benefits.

State Retirement Pensions: Uprating**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[6516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of differential uprating levels for (a) the additional state pension under the old pension system and (b) other elements of the state pension on levels of pensioner poverty.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is required by law to undertake an annual review of State Pensions and benefits. Her review for this year will be based on CPI in the year to September 2024, and on earnings growth in the year to May-July 2024.

The Office for National Statistics will publish the average weekly earnings figure for May to July on 15 October and the CPI figure will be published on 16 October. The outcome of the review will be announced in the Autumn – and until the review has been concluded, it would not be appropriate to pre-judge the outcome. The new rates will take effect from April 2024.

The Government remains committed to supporting pensioners, and giving them the dignity and security they deserve in retirement. Through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their State Pension increase by over a thousand pounds over the next five years; the full new State Pension is forecast to increase by around £1,700 this Parliament.

State Retirement Pensions: Women**Victoria Collins:**[\[7067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman entitled Women's State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues, published on 21 March 2024, HC 638; and what steps she plans to take after meeting with the WASPI campaign on 5 September 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

We will need time to review and consider the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

We need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides including the points raised by representatives from the WASPI Campaign who I met on the 5th September.

Once this work has been undertaken, the Government will be in a position to outline its approach.

David Smith: [\[7141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to meet regularly with representatives of the Women Against State Pension Inequality campaign.

Emma Reynolds:

I met representatives from the WASPI campaign on the 5th September. There are currently no future meetings planned.

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[7943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, following her Department's meeting with representatives of the WASPI Campaign on 5 September, whether there is an expected timeline for responding to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman report into changes to women's State Pension age, published on 21 March 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

We need time to review and consider the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

We need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides including the points raised by representatives from the WASPI Campaign who I met on the 5th September.

Once this work has been undertaken, the Government will be in a position to outline its approach.

■ Statutory Sick Pay

Neil Coyle: [\[8153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to meet with the Safe Sick Pay campaign to discuss the rate of Statutory Sick Pay.

Alison McGovern:

My officials met with representatives from the Centre for Progressive Change to discuss measures to strengthen Statutory Sick Pay on the day of the Employment Rights Bill introduction.

As announced in the *Next Steps to Make Work Pay*, the Government will shortly publish a consultation on what the percentage replacement rate for those earning below the current flat rate of Statutory Sick Pay should be. I welcome responses from the Centre for Progressive Change and other stakeholders to this consultation.

■ Unemployment: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:****[7714]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of trends in the number of young people not in education, employment or training in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Alison McGovern:

The department does not hold information on young people who are not in education, employment or training specific to either South Holland and the Deepings and Lincolnshire. Based on data published by the Department for Education, the proportion of 16-17 year olds not in employment, education or training for Lincolnshire is below average in England and can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/participation-in-education-training-and-neet-age-16-to-17-by-local-authority>”

Under our plan to get Britain Working, the new Youth Guarantee will ensure that all young people aged 18-21 in England can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or employment support. This will sit alongside; a new national jobs and careers service to help get more people into work, work health and skills plans for the economically inactive, and the launch of Skills England to open new opportunities for young people. We will set out further detail in the upcoming ‘Get Britain Working’ White Paper.

■ Unemployment: Scotland**Alison Taylor:****[8522]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of long-term youth unemployment in (a) Paisley and Renfrewshire North constituency and (b) Scotland; and what steps she is taking to help tackle long-term youth unemployment in those areas.

Alison McGovern:

It is not possible to obtain estimates of trends in the levels of long-term youth unemployment in Paisley and Renfrewshire North constituency and Scotland because the sample sizes from survey data are too small to provide robust findings for these geographical areas.

Currently we have a national Youth Offer which is available in Jobcentres across Scotland. Through the Youth Offer we provide labour market support to young people aged 16-24 claiming Universal Credit through a range of tailored interventions to help reduce the barriers young people may face, bringing them closer to work or education.

Jobcentre Plus School Advisers target support to young people that schools have identified as being at greatest risk of not being in work or education, or who may be disadvantaged in the labour market.

We understand Scotland have a Youth Guarantee that supports young people access employment, training and education opportunities. Under our plan to get Britain Working, we are in the process of introducing a similar concept through a new Youth Guarantee in England that will ensure all young people aged 18-21 can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or employment support.

Such ambitious plans require input and expertise from a wide range of stakeholders, and we are working closely with the Devolved Governments to share insights into what is currently working across Britain. We will set out further detail in the upcoming 'Get Britain Working' White Paper.

■ Unemployment: Stirling and Strathallan

Chris Kane:

[\[8329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of recent trends in levels of economic inactivity in Stirling and Strathallan constituency.

Alison McGovern:

- The Government has made clear that we consider the current rate of inactivity to be unacceptably high. With nearly 2.8 million people out of work due to long-term sickness and the last Parliament seeing the biggest increase in economic inactivity in forty years, our inactivity rate is above pre-pandemic levels at 21.9% for May-July 2024 and, unlike most major economies, our overall employment rate has failed to recover to its pre-pandemic level. In Stirling and Strathallan constituency the estimated economic inactivity level amongst 16-64 year olds stood at 11,700 from April 2023-March 2024.
- This is why we have set an ambition to get to an 80% employment rate, alongside raising living standards and tackling insecurity at work. We have announced our intention to publish a White Paper which will set out the Government's planned changes to tackle economic inactivity, support people into good work and help them to progress.
- The White Paper will set out fundamental reforms including:
 - o A new public employment and careers service to help get more people into work, and on in their work.
 - o New, bespoke joined-up work, health and skills plans for the economically inactive, with input from mayors, local councils, the NHS, businesses, colleges and the voluntary sector to deliver real employment opportunities for local people
 - o A youth guarantee for all people aged 18 to 21 to ensure that they can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or employment support

■ Universal Credit: Disability

Marsha De Cordova:

[6449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to improve employment support for disabled Universal Credit claimants.

Alison McGovern:

As part of the get Britain working plan, more disabled people and those with health conditions will be supported to enter and stay in work, by devolving more power to local areas so they can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer that suits the needs of the people they serve. Forthcoming White Papers will develop policy in this area.

Good quality work is generally good for health and wellbeing, so we want everyone to get work and get on in work, whoever they are and wherever they live. We want people to avoid poverty, and for this to happen we must ensure that disabled people and people with health conditions have the opportunity to work and save for as long as they wish and are able to.

Disabled people and people with health conditions are a diverse group who need access to the right work and health support, in the right place, at the right time. We have a range of specialist initiatives to support individuals to stay in work and get back into work, including disabled Universal Credit claimants. Measures include support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres, Access to Work grants and the Work and Health Programme, as well as joining up health and employment support around the individual through Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies and Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care.

Employers play a key role in increasing employment opportunities and supporting disabled people and people with health conditions to thrive as part of the workforce. Our support to employers includes increasing access to Occupational Health, [a digital information service for employers](#) and the Disability Confident scheme.

■ Universal Support

Steve Darling:

[8516]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Universal Support programme; and what steps she is taking to ensure that funding is targeted towards the areas of highest deprivation.

Alison McGovern:

The Universal Support funding has supported the expansion of Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care and additional support through Work and Health Programme Pioneer.

For Work and Health Programme Pioneer, between September 2023 and May 2024, the Official Statistics publication [Work and Health Programme statistics to May 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) shows that 17,000 individuals were referred with 11,000 starting on the programme. By May 2024, so far 1,700 people had achieved first

earnings from employment and 290 people had achieved a sustained work job outcome.

Data on Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care will be published in due course.

We will shortly announce further details about a new supported employment programme, which, using the funding originally intended for the main Universal Support programme, will be co-designed with local authorities. Once fully rolled out across England and Wales, the programme will support up to 100,000 disabled people, people with health conditions and those with complex barriers to employment to help them get into and on in work per year. As local areas understand local needs best, they will be able to make choices about which eligible groups to prioritise for support.

■ Winter Fuel Payment

Lee Anderson:

[\[6475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on what evidential basis she set levels of means-testing for the Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

Pension Credit (and the other qualifying income-related benefits payable to pensioners) is the most practical proxy to target Winter Fuel Payments at those on a low-income. Linking entitlement to Pension Credit ensures that we can pay almost all eligible pensioners automatically, without the need to claim the WFP. This means that the Winter Fuel Payment will be better targeted to low-income pensioners who need it.

We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need. The government will work with external partners and local authorities to boost the take-up of Pension Credit and to target additional support to the poorest pensioners.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we are urging pensioners to come forward and check their eligibility for Pension Credit to ensure as many people in need as possible have access to this support. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them.

Kim Johnson:

[\[6596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish her Department's assessment of the compatibility of its policy to introduce means-testing for the Winter Fuel Payment with the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Emma Reynolds:

An equality analysis was produced as part of Ministerial decision making in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

This was published on 13 September and can be found online here: [DWP Freedom of Information response - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

By convention, such analyses are not published alongside secondary legislation. However, in view of the close public interest in this issue Ministers decided, exceptionally, to publish in this case.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Ashfield

Lee Anderson: [\[6483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people that will be affected by the proposed changes to pensioners' eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment in Ashfield constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

It is estimated that around 15,800 pensioners in Ashfield Constituency (2024 boundaries) will be impacted by the decision to amend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment. This is based on February 2024 Pension Credit statistics which are available via [DWP Stat-Xplore](#) and the [Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) which are available via GOV.UK.

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of people claiming Pension Credit in Ashfield Constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in Ashfield Constituency. It is possible to use the Pension Credit statistics, to give a minimum estimate of the number who may be eligible for Winter Fuel Payments. Therefore, the above estimation is essentially the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients who are not claiming Pension Credit pre-policy change, as an estimate of those who will no longer receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

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

The published Pension Credit figures refer to households, so the number of individuals in respect of whom Pension Credit is paid will be higher (i.e. taking account of households where a claimant has a partner and / or dependents.)

In addition, while Pension Credit claimants constitute the majority of those that will be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, pensioners who claim other qualifying means-tested benefits will also be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment. It is not, however, possible to include those on other qualifying means-tested benefits in these figures.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Essex

Priti Patel: [\[6154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of changing the eligibility criteria for the winter fuel payment on (a) the number of additional patients that will require NHS treatment as a consequence of that decision and (b) other NHS services in Essex.

Emma Reynolds:

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

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the Government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control. This means that the Winter Fuel Payment will be better targeted to low-income pensioners who need it.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1st October 2024 until 31st March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Pension Credit**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[7385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether pensioners who qualify for pension credit after 22 September 2024 and before 31 December 2024 are entitled to receive the winter fuel payment during winter 2024-25.

Emma Reynolds:

A claim for Pension Credit may be backdated for up to three months as long as the entitlement conditions are met during that period. This means that a pensioner who was eligible for, but had not claimed, Pension Credit during the qualifying week for the Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2024-25 (16 to 22 September 2024) can still qualify for the payment if they make a successful backdated application for Pension Credit by 21 December 2024.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Polygamy**James Wild:**[\[6563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 4(1)(a)(ii) of the Social Fund Winter Fuel Payment Regulations 2024, what estimate she has made of the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients that are members of a polygamous marriage.

Emma Reynolds:

No such estimate has been made as the requested information is not available.

■ Workplace Pensions

Claire Hanna:

[\[6607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral evidence provided by the Minister for Pensions to the Work and Pensions Committee on defined benefit pension schemes on 10 January 2024, Session 2023-24, HC 144, what plans she has to review the (a) indexation, (b) 90% compensation cap and (c) potential merits of other changes to the Pension Protection Fund; and whether she plans to consult on potential changes to that Fund during this Parliament.

Emma Reynolds:

I have heard about the problems experienced by Defined Benefit pension scheme members adjusting to an income in retirement which may be less than they were expecting following the insolvency of their employer. I recognise the importance of these issues for members and will consider this further in the coming months.

Pension Protection Fund compensation payments based on benefits accrued on or after 6 April 1997 are increased in line with the Consumer Price Index, capped at 2.5 per cent. Before 6 April 1997, there was no general statutory requirement for defined benefit pensions to be increased when in payment, apart from any Guaranteed Minimum Pension element earned on or after 6 April 1988.

There is no cap to Pension Protection Fund compensation. Compensation is calculated at the date of employer insolvency and, at that date, is initially either 100 per cent of their accrued pension benefits for members over their scheme's normal pension age or 90 per cent of their accrued pension benefits for members below their scheme's normal pension age.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DEFENCE

■ **Army Structural Change – The Royal Army Medical Service**

Minister for the Armed Forces (Luke Pollard):

[\[HCWS131\]](#)

The Government is committed to ensuring a combat credible Army that is structured to meet its purpose - protecting the nation and helping it prosper by fighting and winning battles from land and I am today announcing the Government's decision to amalgamate the Army's current three healthcare Corps into a new modern Corps called "The Royal Army Medical Service".

In 2021, *Future Soldier* set in motion changes to the Army. The Army has continued to adapt *Future Soldier* to account for changes in the strategic environment by refining its structures as an evolution of the plan, in response to the changing threat picture and global context.

As part of this *Future Soldier* modernisation programme, the Army has created a new Corps, The Royal Army Medical Service, which is an amalgamation of the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), the Royal Army Dental Corps (RADC) and the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC). This amalgamation has no impact on workforce numbers.

The amalgamation will ensure that the next generation of the Army will continue to be supported by a modern Corps capable of delivering expeditionary healthcare. The underlying ethos of its founding Corps will remain.

The Royal Army Medical Service will deliver modernised, multi-disciplinary healthcare offering significant scope for institutional optimisation and improved organisational culture with a shift to a unified, inclusive, and representative Corps. There will no longer be corps-specific limitations, allowing personnel to work across all areas of the Royal Army Medical Service. It seeks to maximise the talents of its people to enhance the Army's fighting power and build on the successes of its forebears.

The Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC) will remain an independent Corps outside of the Royal Army Medical Service due to their legal and operational combatant status which differs to the special protected status of the RAMC, RADC and QARANC.

The amalgamation will deliver improvements for those serving, reduce administrative inefficiencies and promote the world-class work of those who serve in the Royal Army Medical Service. On behalf of the Government can I thank all those who serve in the new Royal Army Medical Service for their professionalism, dedication and care they offer.

■ **Formal Response to the Service Complaints Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2023 on the Service Complaints System**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Veterans) (Al Carns):

[[HCWS136](#)]

I am pleased to place in the Library of the House today the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) formal response to the Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Force's annual report for 2023 on the fairness, effectiveness and efficiency of the service complaints system.

The Ombudsman's report assessed the Service Complaints system and the work of her office in 2023. The response sets out MOD's comments to the report and includes a summary of our position on recommendations that remain open from previous annual reports.

The MOD values the strong independent oversight that the Ombudsman brings to the Service Complaints system and remains committed to having a system in which our personnel can have confidence.

Attachments:

1. Formal Response Annual Report 2023 [20240912-SCOAF AR 2023 Formal Response-Annex A-O.docx]

■ Service Police Complaints Commissioner's Annual Report for 2023**Minister for Veterans and People (Al Carns):****[[HCWS138](#)]**

I am pleased to lay before Parliament today the Service Police Complaints Commissioner's Annual Report for 2023 on the Service Police Complaints system.

This report is published by Margaret Obi and covers the operation of the Service Complaints system and the delivery of her functions in her first year as the Commissioner.

The findings of the Report will now be considered fully by the Ministry of Defence, and a formal response to the Commissioner will follow once that work is complete.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Strengthening our electricity security and supporting decarbonisation****Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Energy) (Michael Shanks):****[[HCWS134](#)]**

I am tabling this statement to inform members of the publication of a Policy Update, a Consultation Response, Consultation and Call for Evidence on 15 October 2024. This is in support of making Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030 and accelerating progress to net zero.

The Government is committed to delivering clean power by 2030 and accelerating progress towards net zero, whilst ensuring the security of supply. Making Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030 is one of the Prime Minister's five missions. To deliver this mission, we will rely even more on renewable power. The Government has set a target to double onshore wind, treble solar and quadruple offshore wind by 2030.

This will result in a wholesale shift in our long-term power system. The variable nature of renewables makes it critical that we have sufficient flexible capacity that can be ramped up quickly when generation from renewable sources is low, such as on dark, still days. The National Energy System Operator (NESO) estimates that the GB electricity system could require 40 to 50GW of long duration flex capacity in 2030.¹ This will require accelerated deployment of low carbon flexible technologies. The government is already investing in low carbon technologies to support the transition away from unabated gas.

Since its introduction in 2014, the Capacity Market (CM) has acted to secure sufficient capacity to ensure consistent and reliable electricity generation. The [Policy Update](#) I am publishing today sets out the remaining proposals to reform the Capacity Market from the [2023 Phase 2 consultation](#),² aimed at aligning with the government's 2030 Clean Power and Net Zero goals and improving security of supply. This document sets out policies to remove barriers for low carbon technology to participate in the CM, which should accelerate investment in these technologies. This includes supporting low carbon projects with longer build times to access support from the Capacity Market, enabling low carbon technology with lower capital investment requirements to access longer-term Capacity Market contracts and reducing admin barriers for low carbon technologies.

Whilst low carbon technologies are scaling up, we will continue to need existing flexible capacity, including unabated gas. The running hours of gas generators have already significantly reduced, and we expect that the amount of unabated gas we need will continue to decline as we deploy more low carbon technologies. Our aim is to move unabated gas into a backup role, primarily to ensure security of supply.

We intend to ensure that gas plants can decarbonise once low carbon flexible technologies are available. To support the decarbonisation of unabated gas, I am today publishing a [government response to the Decarbonisation Readiness Consultation](#) which will soon be followed by an accompanying Statutory Instrument. This will require that new build and substantially refurbishing unabated gas and other combustion power plants in England be built in such a way that they can readily decarbonise through either conversion to hydrogen-firing or by retrofitting carbon-capture technology within the plant's lifetime.

Finally, I am also publishing a **Capacity Market [Consultation](#) and a [Call for Evidence](#)** on proposals to maintain security of supply and enable flexible capacity to decarbonise. We are seeking views on changes to the Capacity Market to:

- Support the economic case for works to extend the life of ageing plants by lowering the scale of planned works needed to access three-year Capacity Market agreements.
- Provide assurance that all substantially refurbishing or new combustion power plants participating in the 2026 Capacity Market auction have a credible plan to decarbonise before they become operational, whether through converting to hydrogen firing or carbon capture.

- Introduce exit pathways for unabated gas generators with multi-year Capacity Market agreements to transfer from the Capacity Market to bespoke support, enabling the plants to decarbonise.

These reforms will give owners and investors in gas power stations the certainty they need about future operations and their pathway to decarbonise. They come after the Government recently reached commercial agreement on the UK's first carbon capture and industrial-scale hydrogen plants, technologies which will be critical in helping gas developers decarbonise their assets in future.

1. The NESO's modelling was commenced prior to the general election and does not assume the delivery of clean power by 2030, however, these results are still likely to be informative of the level of flexible capacity the GB system could need at this time.

2 DESNZ, '[Capacity Market 2023: Phase 2 proposals and 10 year review – consultation](#)', October 2023

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Innovative Finance Facility for Climate in Asia and the Pacific (IFCAP)

Minister of State for Minister for Development (Anneliese Dodds): [\[HCWS137\]](#)

It is normal practice, when a Government Department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Minister concerned to present a Departmental Minute to Parliament giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until 14 parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the statement, except in cases of special urgency.

I have today laid a Departmental Minute which describes a new liability, the Innovative Finance Facility for Climate in Asia and the Pacific (IFCAP), which the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is undertaking to unlock additional climate finance in Asia and the Pacific. The liability is a guarantee of \$280m (£210m) to the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) IFCAP guarantee facility. The guarantee will have no upfront cost to the UK. The length of this liability is 25 years. A copy of the Departmental Minute to Parliament has been placed in the House Library.

I have separately notified the Chairs of the Public Accounts Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee, and International Development Committee of the UK's intention to undertake this liability.

There is huge demand for finance, especially for climate transitions, in Asia. The ADB has pledged to become the 'climate bank of Asia', and in line with UK asks, announced an ambition to commit \$100bn at COP26 to climate finance projects between 2019-2030. This will require a doubling of its climate finance commitments in the second half of this decade compared to 2019-2023.

IFCAP is a mechanism developed by the ADB that will support this ambition. Through IFCAP, the UK and other development partners will provide guarantees to the ADB.

Together, this will unlock up to \$11bn of new affordable climate finance from the ADB to middle-income countries in Asia and the Pacific – of which \$1.2bn is directly as a result of the proposed UK guarantee. The additional climate finance unlocked by IFCAP will help to mitigate carbon emissions in some of the highest-polluting countries globally, and support resilience to natural disasters in the most climate-vulnerable populations.

The UK guarantee would pay out through the ODA budget, up to a limit, the value of any missed repayment within six months if there were to be a default to the ADB by a country in the portfolio of loans guaranteed under IFCAP. The maximum total payout would be \$280m (£210m), and the annual estimated payout for IFCAP is £6m per year over the 25-year lifetime of the guarantee. The guarantee provides powerful credit relief to the ADB, allowing them to increase climate finance by up to \$4.50 for every \$1 guaranteed through IFCAP.

The impact of the guarantee on FCDO's risk exposure has been scrutinized and approved by the FCDO Accounting Officer. FCDO officials have worked with the Government Actuaries Department to model the risk of the guarantee. In the event that the guarantee is called, FCDO will have sufficient time to make the necessary budgetary arrangement to fulfil the requirements of the guarantee. Authority for any expenditure required will be sought through the normal supply procedure.

If any Member has questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Full report on the operational effectiveness of the Care Quality Commission

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): [\[HCWS133\]](#)

The full findings of the review into the operational effectiveness of the Care Quality Commission (CQC), conducted by Dr Penny Dash, have today been published on gov.uk. I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to Dr Dash for the swift and thorough job she has done on the review.

An interim report of Dr Dash's work, published in July 2024, summarised her emerging findings to allow for early conversations on the necessary changes to improve CQC. Those findings were shocking, and led to my conclusion that the organisation was not fit for purpose. This full report expands on that work and incorporates feedback from recent discussions with user groups and a larger number of staff.

The findings of the review highlight 10 key conclusions and provide specific recommendations for improvement, which I fully support. Notably, the review recommends CQC should:

1. Rapidly improve its operational performance.
2. Rebuild expertise within the organisation and relationships with providers in order to resurrect credibility.
3. Review the Single Assessment Framework to make it fit for purpose.

4. Clarify how ratings of providers are calculated and make the results more transparent.
5. Continue to evolve and improve its assessments of local authorities.
6. Formally pause its assessments of Integrated Care Systems (ICS).

The review also recommends that the Department of Health and Social Care should strengthen its arrangements for sponsorship of CQC, a recommendation upon which my Department has already acted.

Significant work is already underway to act on these findings. Last week, CQC announced that Sir Julian Hartley will be appointed as the new Chief Executive of CQC. This is a significant step forward as Sir Julian's experience of turning round large, complex health organisations will be vital as CQC embarks on its improvement plan. He will be supported by sector expertise through the appointment of a number of Chief Inspectors.

Following the publication of the interim report, CQC commissioned Professor Sir Mike Richards to undertake a review of the Single Assessment Framework. Findings from the first part of Sir Mike's report will also be published by CQC today so both reports can be read together.

In response to the recommendations that are additional to the interim report, we are working with CQC and the adult social care sector to ensure that local authority assessments evolve in a way that maximises their value in driving outcomes for people who draw on care and support, and their carers. I agree with Dr Dash's recommendation to pause ICS assessments, which have not yet launched, to allow CQC to focus on getting the basics right before introducing new functions. I am working on next steps.

By implementing Dr Dash's recommendations, CQC will be better positioned to fulfil its mandate of ensuring that everyone receives safe, high-quality care. A strong regulator is critical to the safety and effectiveness of our health and care system, and I am personally determined that its performance improves so that it can regain the confidence of both the public, and the health and care system.

Following the conclusion of this review, I have asked Dr Dash to lead a review of patient safety in the wider health and care landscape in England, for which I am also publishing the terms of reference today on gov.uk. The primary task of this review is to assess whether the current range and combination of patient safety organisations delivers effective leadership, listening, learning, and regulation to the health and care system in relation to patient and user safety.

Subject to the outcome of this second review, I will also ask Dr Dash to conduct a third review on quality and its governance. Further detail on this third review will be forthcoming in due course.

■ Response to the Phase 1 report of the Fuller Inquiry

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): [\[HCWS132\]](#)

On 28 November 2023, the report of [Phase 1](#) of the Fuller Independent Inquiry was published. Phase 1 of the Inquiry looked into how David Fuller's appalling crimes in the mortuaries at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust remained undetected for so long.

I wish to express my deepest sympathies to the victims' families and reassure them that lessons will be learnt.

The Inquiry found highly concerning failings in the Trust's running, management, and oversight of the mortuaries, and that it was due to this uncontrolled environment that David Fuller was able to offend undetected. Management, governance and regulation failures, alongside poor compliance to standard policies and procedures, and a persistent lack of curiosity, all contributed to the creation of the environment in which David Fuller was able to offend for 15 years without ever being suspected or caught.

The 17 recommendations - 16 for the Trust and the remaining one for Kent County Council and East Sussex County Council - made by the Inquiry in Phase 1 aim to prevent anything similar happening again at the Trust.

Today I am updating the House on the response to those recommendations. The Trust published an [assurance statement](#) in February 2024 on the implementation of the recommendations from the Phase 1 report. This sets out the progress made to implement the Inquiry's recommendations.

The range of actions taken by the Trust include requiring that non-mortuary staff and contractors are always accompanied by another staff member when visiting the mortuaries; controlling access to mortuaries using swipe cards; mandating contractors to renew security clearances every three years; and installing CCTV coverage monitoring access to and from mortuary areas. The Trust Board is also providing greater oversight and assurance of legally regulated activity in the mortuary.

I am also reassured that NHS England's South East regional team held monthly oversight meetings with the Trust between November 2023 and April 2024 (in partnership with Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board) to ensure progress against the Inquiry's recommendations and to review evidence of the Trust's progress in delivering their action plan. Ongoing compliance with the Inquiry's recommendations will be monitored by NHS England through regular regional oversight meetings with the Trust, and through other channels as appropriate.

Kent County Council and East Sussex County Council have reviewed contractual arrangements with the Trust and confirmed that the contracts include terms requiring that licensing and regulatory requirements are met to ensure the deceased are at all times treated with dignity and respect.

Phase 2 of the Independent Inquiry will consider whether procedures and practices in hospital and non-hospital settings, where deceased people are kept, are sufficient to safeguard the security and dignity of the deceased.

In light of the disturbing events in Hull earlier this year, which brought into sharp focus the lack of regulation and oversight in the funeral sector, we have agreed that the Inquiry will today publish an interim report on the findings from their funeral sector module. This will provide recommendations on safeguarding the security and dignity of the deceased in that sector.

The Government is committed to preventing any similar atrocities happening again and ensuring that the deceased are safeguarded and treated with dignity.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Introduction of the HM Armed Forces Veteran Card for use as voter identification

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Local Growth (Alex Norris):

[\[HCWS139\]](#)

To encourage participation in our democracy, this Government is committed to ensuring all legitimate voters have the ability to vote in our elections.

Working alongside my friend the Minister for Veterans and People, Alistair Carns OBE MC MP, we are pleased to today, 15 October, lay the statutory instrument *The Voter Identification (Amendment of List of Specified Documents) Regulations 2024* required to add the HM Armed Forces Veteran Card (“Veteran Card”) to the list of photographic identifications accepted in polling stations as voter ID, thereby fulfilling a key manifesto commitment.

Voter identification

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, using data gathered at polling stations along with public opinion survey results and qualitative research with electors and the electoral sector. We will be taking into account the findings and recommendations of the Electoral Commission, due this Autumn, as part of this review and publishing our full report next year. Any reforms to Voter ID in the future will always respect and promote the rights of Veterans.

Reviews and major changes to electoral law, if done right, take time, research and careful consideration, and we will be bringing forward firm proposals on the wider voter ID policy in due course. However, there are some clear gaps in the existing provisions – such as the current absence of the Veteran Card from the accepted voter ID list – on which we can make quick progress while the evaluation is ongoing to improve consistency and widen participation.

At the heart of our security are the men and women who serve and risk their lives for this country. It was unacceptable that the previous Government failed to add the Veteran Card to the list of accepted voter identifications. Including the Card, alongside the already accepted Ministry of Defence identification card (the MOD90 card), will bring parity between veterans and serving armed services personnel with regards to the ID they can

use in polling stations. We recognise that the Veteran Card is a powerful symbol of veterans' service and its addition to the list is one of the things this Government is doing to honour their contribution. The addition of the Veteran Card supports them engaging in the elections process and in exercising their democratic rights. We would like to thank those who have campaigned to make this change a reality.

Progress on wider electoral reform

The Government has set out its commitment to strengthen the integrity of elections and encourage wide participation in the democratic process. Fulfilling our commitment on the Veteran Card is only the first step in that journey. We are also making progress in several other areas to deliver on these promises. Work has begun on what is required to extend the franchise for all UK elections to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote, and legislation for this will be introduced in due course, strengthening our democracy and empowering young people to participate in it.

It is not only young people who should be encouraged to participate. While Electoral Commission reports show consistency in the accuracy and completeness of electoral registers over recent years, we know there remains a significant number of people missing from our registers and we will tackle this unacceptable participation gap by taking action to improve rates of electoral registration. We are exploring a wide range of options to deliver on this commitment, including through the use of data and online services to support Electoral Registration Officers increase registration levels.

We are clear that electoral reform will require careful consideration and engagement with both the electoral sector and with citizens themselves.

Alongside widening participation, the Government is committed to protecting the integrity of and public trust in our electoral processes. Effective regulation and enforcement of how our politics are financed plays a key role in maintaining this trust. Foreign money has no place in the UK's political system, which is why the law is clear that foreign donations to political parties are not permitted in the UK. However, as threats and challenges evolve, we must continue to do likewise: more can and should be done to ensure our political finance framework remains robust. We therefore committed in our manifesto to strengthening the rules around donations to political parties, and, working closely with the Electoral Commission, are considering a range of measures to achieve this. Firm proposals will be brought forward in due course.

Fixing the foundations of elections delivery

The Government is committed to supporting Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers and their teams in their delivery of our democracy. We have heard and understood the consistent message from the electoral sector that electoral law is outdated and difficult to work with and that while elections continue at present to be delivered effectively, that is not without risk and comes at a personal and professional cost to elections teams.

The Government therefore will, alongside the work to deliver manifesto commitments, look to identify and address the biggest challenges and pain-points in the current system

for electoral registration and conduct. We will do this in partnership with the elections sector, using the large body of evidence that already exists and the reflections of the sector on the reality of delivery of recent polls, to ensure we prioritise the right issues and identify solutions that work.

We will continue to provide Parliament with updates on our progress across all of these workstreams to strengthen our democracy and uphold the integrity and resilience of our elections.

TREASURY

■ Financial Services Policy Update

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Tulip Siddiq):

[\[HCWS135\]](#)

The government's response to its consultation concerning enhancements to the Special Resolution Regime noted that the Bank of England would consider whether any changes to its indicative minimum requirements for own funds and eligible liabilities (MREL) thresholds would be appropriate [1]. Today, the Bank of England has published a consultation on "Amendments to the Bank of England's approach to setting a minimum requirement for own funds and eligible liabilities (MREL)". This consultation sets out the Bank's intention to ensure the MREL regime remains proportionate and evolves over time, reflecting the enhancements delivered in the Bank Resolution (Recapitalisation) Bill as well as other wider developments, and taking into account feedback from industry.

The government welcomes the publication of these proposals for consultation and recognises the importance of ensuring the MREL regime maintains financial stability while being calibrated in a way that supports competition and competitiveness within the UK's financial services sector. In this context, the government notes the interaction between some of the proposals set out by the Bank on its approach to setting MREL and the Bank Resolution (Recapitalisation) Bill, and welcomes the Bank's proposal to take the new mechanism for recapitalisation into account when setting MREL for firms with a preferred transfer resolution strategy. This will contribute towards ensuring the MREL regime is proportionate, while remaining consistent with the government's intention that the mechanism is primarily focused on the resolution of smaller banks.

The government is clear that the primary intent of the Bill remains to provide a new mechanism to help address the failure of smaller banks when resolution by means of a transfer to a private sector purchaser or a Bank of England owned bridge bank is in the public interest. The government and the Bank are also in agreement that the Bank should not assume use of the new mechanism when setting a preferred resolution strategy of bail-in and corresponding MREL requirements for larger banks, or to rely on the mechanism when resolving such larger banks unless in exceptional circumstances. The Bank's consultation also confirms this position.

The government intends to update the Special Resolution Regime Code of Practice to make this point clear and has published draft updates on gov.uk. [2] These and any

subsequent updates will be subject to consultation with the Banking Liaison Panel to ensure appropriate engagement with industry.

The government notes that one of the Bank of England's MREL proposals will require changes to secondary legislation. The government will therefore engage with industry on the necessary changes. Subject to feedback on the Bank's consultation and the government's engagement with industry, the government will look to make the changes necessary to facilitate these proposals.

[1] [Enhancing the Special Resolution Regime: Government Response to Consultation](#),

[2] [Special Resolution Regime Code of Practice](#)