



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 16 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:37 P.M., 16 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	7	■ Morgan McSweeney	12
BUSINESS AND TRADE	7	■ Office for National Statistics: Remote Working	13
■ Dolphins and Whales: Hunting	7	■ Prime Minister: Civil Servants	13
■ Electric Bicycles: Imports	7	■ Propriety and Constitution Group: Recruitment	13
CABINET OFFICE	7	■ Public Appointments	13
■ Admiralty House: Civil Servants	7	■ Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment	14
■ Civil Servants: Foreign Nationals	8	■ Special Advisers	14
■ Civil Servants: Pay	8	■ Special Advisers: Pay	15
■ Council of the Nations and Regions	9	■ Waste Management: Industrial Disputes	15
■ Cybersecurity	9	CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	15
■ Debts	10	■ Abrar Islamic Foundation and Dar Alhekma Trust	15
■ Domestic Abuse: Staffordshire	10	■ Arts: Newcastle-under-Lyme	16
■ Extended Ministerial Offices	10	■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Arden Strategies	16
■ Government Departments: Families	10	■ Gambling: Addictions	16
■ Government Departments: Policy	11	■ Youth Services: Tiverton and Minehead	17
■ Import Controls	11	DEFENCE	17
■ Mariana Mazzucato	11	■ Armed Forces: Asbestos	17
■ Ministers: Members' Interests	12	■ Armed Forces: Coeliac Disease	18
■ Ministers: Official Gifts	12		
■ Ministers: Training	12		

■ Armed Forces: Private Education	18	■ Hinkley Point C Power Station and Sizewell C Power Station: Compensation	30
■ Armed Forces: Uniforms	19	■ Landfill: Renewable Energy	30
■ Challenger Tanks: Procurement	19	■ Local Net Zero Forum	30
■ LGBT Veterans Independent Review	19	■ National Grid: East of England	31
■ Ministry of Defence Police: Finance	20	■ Oil and Natural Gas: Production	31
■ Ministry of Defence: Paternity Leave	20	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	32
■ Skynet	21	■ Agriculture: Finance	32
■ Veterans: LGBT+ People	21	■ Agriculture: Floods	32
EDUCATION	23	■ Air Pollution	32
■ Alternative Education: Travellers	23	■ Animals: Exports	33
■ Children: Mental Health	23	■ Biodiversity	33
■ Extended Services: Closures	24	■ Boats: Runnymede and Weybridge	34
■ Grammar Schools	24	■ Cats: Animal Breeding	34
■ Numeracy: Adult Education	24	■ Cetaceans: Faroe Islands	34
■ Schools: Admissions	25	■ Dogs: Imports	35
■ Special Educational Needs	26	■ Floods: Government Assistance	35
■ Special Educational Needs: Hertfordshire	26	■ Larger Eight-toothed European Spruce Bark Beetles	36
■ Teachers: Unemployment	26	■ Members: Correspondence	36
ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	27	■ Packaging: Litter	37
■ Community Energy	27	■ River Thames: Assets	37
■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Paternity Leave	28	■ River Thames: Flood Control	38
■ Electricity: National Grid	28	■ Rivers	38
■ Energy: Housing	29	■ Rivers: Pollution	38
■ Great British Energy: Glasgow	29	■ Sewage: Lincolnshire	39
		■ Sewage: Sheffield	39
		■ Sugar Beet: Neonicotinoids	40
		■ Weedkillers: Licensing	40

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	40	■ GP Surgeries: Capital Investment	52
■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty	40	■ Health Professions: Abuse and Discrimination	52
■ Eritrea: Human Rights	41	■ Health Services and Social Services: Long Covid	53
■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Legal Profession	41	■ Health Services: Finance	53
■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Non-governmental Organisations	42	■ Heart Diseases and Strokes: Health Services	53
■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Official Cars	42	■ HIV Infection: Diagnosis	54
■ Nigeria: Religious Freedom	43	■ Hospices: Finance	54
■ Russia: Oil	43	■ Kidney Diseases: Transplant Surgery	56
■ Sudan: Humanitarian Aid	43	■ Long Covid	57
■ Ukraine: Economic Situation	44	■ Members: Correspondence	57
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	45	■ Mental Health Services: Death	57
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	45	■ NHS England	58
■ Blood Cancer	45	■ NHS: Buildings	58
■ Blood Cancer: Mortality Rates	45	■ Pancreatic Cancer: Research	59
■ Brain Cancer: Research	47	■ Pharmacy: Health Services	61
■ Cardiovascular Diseases: Research	47	■ Prostate Cancer: Screening	61
■ Care Workers: Vacancies	48	■ Respiratory System: Health Services	62
■ Carers: Health	48	■ Social Services	62
■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome	48	■ Social Services: Private Sector	63
■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services	49	■ Social Work: Newbury	63
■ Food: Advertising	50	■ Surgery: Beckenham and Penge	64
■ Gambling: Mental Health Services	51	■ Winter Fuel Payment: Hospitals	64
■ General Practitioners	51	HOME OFFICE	65
■ General Practitioners: Stratford and Bow	52	■ Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs: Recruitment	65
		■ Antisocial Behaviour	65
		■ Asylum: Employment	65

■ Asylum: Gender Based Violence	66	■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Civil Servants	79
■ Asylum: Hotels	67	■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Official Cars	80
■ Community Policing	67	■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Paternity Leave	81
■ Crime Prevention	67	■ National Security Council	81
■ Crime: Prosecutions and Victims	67	■ Outdoor Advertising	82
■ Demonstrations	68	■ Retail Trade: Macclesfield	82
■ Domestic Abuse	68	■ Right to Buy Scheme	82
■ Domestic Abuse: Armed Forces	69	■ Social Rented Housing: Construction	83
■ Hate Crime: Staffordshire	69	■ Social Rented Housing: Poverty	84
■ Home Office: Paternity Leave	69	JUSTICE	84
■ Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022	70	■ Coroners	84
■ Police: Finance	70	■ Courts: Correspondence	85
■ Police: Misconduct	71	■ Gender Based Violence	86
■ Police: Standards	71	■ Ministry of Justice: Paternity Leave	86
■ Police: Training	72	■ Prison Officers: Industrial Disputes	87
■ Prostitution: Washington and Gateshead South	73	■ Prison Sentences	87
■ Protest	74	■ Prisoners on Remand	88
■ Slavery: Victims	74	■ Prisoners' Release	88
■ UK Border Force: Standards	75	■ Prisoners' Release: Electronic Tagging	88
■ Visas: Applications	76	■ Prisoners: Rehabilitation	89
■ Visas: Ukraine	76	■ Prisons: Contracts	89
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	77	■ Prisons: Nitazenes	89
■ Commonhold and Leasehold: Reform	77	■ Prisons: Private Sector	90
■ General Elections	77	■ Witnesses: Complaints	90
■ Leasehold	77		
■ Local Government: Hampshire	78		
■ Local Government: Productivity	79		

NORTHERN IRELAND	90	■ Shipping: Safety	99
■ Northern Ireland Office: Paternity Leave	90	TREASURY	99
■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland	91	■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties	99
SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	91	■ Banks: Lincolnshire	100
■ Animal Experiments: Universities	91	■ Council Tax: Wales	100
■ Artificial Intelligence: Research	92	■ Developing Countries: Debts	102
■ Broadband: Rural Areas	92	■ Holiday Accommodation: Taxation	102
■ Calling Line Identification	92	■ Ian Corfield	102
■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Paternity Leave	93	■ Monetary Policy	102
■ Internet: Safety	93	■ New Businesses: Investment	103
■ Life Sciences: Research	94	■ Pension Funds: British National (Overseas)	104
■ Medicine: Animal Experiments	94	■ Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland	105
■ National Security Online Information Team: Staff	94	■ Public Houses: Business Rates	105
■ Pornography: Victims	95	■ Retail Trade: Investment	105
■ Pornography: Washington and Gateshead South	95	■ Shareholders	106
■ Semiconductors: Manufacturing Industries	96	■ Stocks and Shares	106
■ Shared Rural Network	96	■ Tax Avoidance	106
SCOTLAND	96	■ Tax Avoidance: Prosecutions	107
■ Voluntary Organisations: Scotland	96	■ Taxation: Gifts and Endowments	107
TRANSPORT	97	■ Treasury: Arden Strategies	107
■ Active Travel	97	■ Treasury: Paternity Leave	108
■ M25: Repairs and Maintenance	98	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	108
■ Railways: Finance	98	■ Equality Act 2010	108
■ Railways: Hampshire	98	WORK AND PENSIONS	109
■ Railways: Prosecutions	98	■ AEA Group: Workplace Pensions	109
■ Railways: Rural Areas	99	■ Carer's Allowance	109
		■ Cost of Living: Lone Parents	110
		■ Food Poverty	110

■ Housing Benefit: Young People	111	■ Winter Fuel Payment: Ashfield	124
■ Hygiene: Poverty	111	■ Winter Fuel Payment: Bridgwater	124
■ Jobseeker's Allowance: Young People	112	■ Winter Fuel Payment: Broxbourne	125
■ Pension Credit	113	■ Winter Fuel Payment: Essex	126
■ Pension Credit: North West Norfolk	116	■ Winter Fuel Payment: War Widow(er)s	127
■ Pension Credit: Park Homes	117	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	129
■ Pension Credit: Publicity	117	BUSINESS AND TRADE	129
■ Pension Credit: South Cotswolds	118	■ UK accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership – Entry into Force	129
■ Pension Credit: Take-up	118	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	130
■ Pensioners: Income	119	■ Voluntary Report on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law at Domestic Level	130
■ Pensioners: Low Incomes	119	TRANSPORT	130
■ Poverty: Children	120	■ Motor Insurance	130
■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud	120	WORK AND PENSIONS	131
■ State Retirement Pensions	120	■ DWP Carer's Allowance	131
■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad	121		
■ Supported Housing: Housing Benefit	121		
■ Universal Credit: Lone Parents	121		
■ Winter Fuel Payment	122		

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

■ **Dolphins and Whales: Hunting**

Alex Mayer:

[\[7963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions the Joint Committee established by the bilateral Free Trade Agreement between the Faroe Islands and the United Kingdom has had about whale and dolphin hunts.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Government is strongly opposed to the hunting of whales and dolphins. The Department for Business and Trade utilises the opportunities provided by the UK-Faroe Islands Free Trade Agreement to engage the Faroese government on this important matter. The UK-Faroe Islands Free Trade Agreement Joint Committee meets annually, and UK officials highlight our strong opposition to the practice at every opportunity, including at the last meeting in February 2024.

■ **Electric Bicycles: Imports**

Olly Glover:

[\[8082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the initial findings of the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) relating to the import of e-bikes, whether he plans to accept the TRA's recommendations on that matter; and what his planned timetable is for making a decision on potential UK trade defence measures against e-bikes from China.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

On 22 May 2023 the Trade Remedies Authority initiated transition reviews of the existing anti-dumping and anti-subsidy trade remedy measures on electric bicycles originating from China.

As both reviews remain ongoing, I cannot comment further. The Trade Remedies Authority will publish relevant information on the public file as the review progresses.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Admiralty House: Civil Servants**

John Glen:

[\[7757\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants are allocated Admiralty House as an office workplace; and at which department or public body those civil servants are employed.

Georgia Gould:

There are no civil servants currently assigned to Admiralty House as an office workplace.

■ **Civil Servants: Foreign Nationals****Sir John Hayes:**[\[5529\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants working in Whitehall are not UK nationals.

Georgia Gould:

Data regarding the nationality of candidates working in Whitehall is not held centrally by the Cabinet Office.

■ **Civil Servants: Pay****Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[7344\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what was the total salary cost of the civil service in each year between 2010 and 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office does not hold actual outturn salary cost information for all Civil Service departments and organisations since 2010.

However, estimated nominal Civil Service salary costs have previously been calculated for the years 2010 to 2024. These are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1

YEAR	ESTIMATED NOMINAL SALARY COST (£ BILLIONS)
2010	12.7
2011	12.4
2012	11.6
2013	11.4
2014	11.6
2015	11.7
2016	11.6
2017	11.8
2018	12.4
2019	13.2
2020	14.0

YEAR	ESTIMATED NOMINAL SALARY COST (£ BILLIONS)
2021	15.4
2022	16.6
2023	17.8
2024	19.7

Source: Civil Service Statistics

Figures are based on Civil Service salaries as at 31st March in each year, and have been adjusted for missing values. They have not been adjusted for inflation (i.e. they are nominal values).

■ Council of the Nations and Regions

Chris Law: [\[8163\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who the Envoy to the Regions and Nations will report to.

Chris Law: [\[8164\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the salary is 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.

■ Cybersecurity

John Glen: [\[8423\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 2 September 2024 to Question 2301 on Cyber-Security: EU law, what assessment the Cyber Security Centre has made of the potential cyber risks to the (a) public and (b) private sector posed by the requirement for kernel level software access in the context of the CrowdStrike incident; and whether the Government plans to (i) take steps to transfer responsibilities connected with competition concerns to the Competition Markets Authority and (ii) amend the position in relation to kernel level software access.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The government is conducting a lessons learned review of the July 2024 global IT outage and will share its findings in due course.

■ Debts**Andrew Cooper:** [7054]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent estimate his Department has made of the level of household debt in (a) Mid Cheshire constituency, (b) Cheshire and (c) England.

Georgia Gould:

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

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

Attachments:

1. [Letter from the National Statistician](#) [PQ7054.pdf]

■ Domestic Abuse: Staffordshire**Adam Jogee:** [7998]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate she has made of the number of reported domestic violence incidents in Staffordshire.

Georgia Gould:

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

A response to the Hon gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 8th October is attached.

Attachments:

1. [Letter from the National Statistician](#) [PQ7998 (1).pdf]

■ Extended Ministerial Offices**John Glen:** [6069]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of Extended Ministerial Offices.

Georgia Gould:

Extended ministerial offices were introduced in 2013 and discontinued in 2016. The Government prioritises providing a quality service to ministers and is, more broadly, developing a strategic plan for a more efficient and effective civil service.

■ Government Departments: Families**John Glen:** [4705]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on applying the family test to new policies.

Georgia Gould:

The family test guidance is owned by the Department for Work and Pensions. The Cabinet Office will follow that guidance in any policy development. DWP is responsible for encouraging its implementation across government.

Government Departments: Policy**John Glen:**[\[7763\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that the exemptions in his Department's Guidance on using the Evaluation Registry do not unduly limit scrutiny of Government interventions.

Georgia Gould:

The Evaluation Task Force continues to work with Departments to ensure good quality, proportionate evaluation of all policies, programmes and projects is carried out. The guidance on exemptions to using the Evaluation Registry has not changed since the Rt Honourable member was a minister in the department.

Import Controls**John Glen:**[\[7758\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether changes have been made to the Border Target Operation Model since 5 July 2024; and what his latest estimate is of the (a) timetable and (b) budget for the introduction of related controls.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

Implementation of the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) is ongoing. On 7 October HMRC announced that the waiver on Safety and Security declarations for EU imports would be extended until 31 January 2025. HMRC readiness activity is now underway. On 8 October my noble friend Baroness Hayman of Ullock laid legislation to extend the Transitional Staging Period until July 2025 for the implementation of import checks and controls on certain sanitary and phytosanitary goods entering Great Britain from certain countries.

There is no specific budget allocated to BTOM. The implementation and updates are the responsibility for each Department and where appropriate for the Devolved Governments.

Mariana Mazzucato**John Glen:**[\[7760\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Mariana Mazzucato is employed as a Government special adviser.

Georgia Gould:

No.

■ Ministers: Members' Interests

John Glen: [\[7756\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2870 on Ministers: Members' Interests, whether the established process for the declaration and management of ministers' private interests requires Ministers to declare which trade union they are a member of.

Georgia Gould:

Published Lists of Ministers' Interests, which are available on GOV.UK, set out the categories of interests that ministers are required to declare to their permanent secretaries and the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests.

■ Ministers: Official Gifts

John Glen: [\[7761\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how changes to the Ministerial reporting regime will affect (a) gifts and (b) hospitality (i) under and (ii) over £300.

Georgia Gould:

Information on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality by ministers, including details on reporting, will be set out in the Ministerial Code.

■ Ministers: Training

John Glen: [\[7755\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4677 on Ministers: training, if he will publish the induction briefing that was provided to Ministers in his Department on ethics and standards.

Georgia Gould:

Guidance for ministers on propriety is, ultimately, set out in the ministerial code. This will be published shortly.

■ Morgan McSweeney

John Glen: [\[5576\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1240 on Morgan McSweeney, who line manages Mr Sweeney in his capacity as a special adviser.

Georgia Gould:

It is a longstanding policy to not comment on individuals.

■ Office for National Statistics: Remote Working

John Glen: [\[6058\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what is the headquarters occupancy data for the Office of National Statistics, across each week in the most recent month for which data is available.

Georgia Gould:

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

■ Prime Minister: Civil Servants

John Glen: [\[6081\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Department's policy is on the (a) advertisement of and (b) process for appointment of senior civil service roles.

Georgia Gould:

The Department's policy is to advertise senior civil service roles externally by default, unless there is an exemption. The Civil Service Commission Recruitment Principles (2018), which are published online, set out how external competitions for Deputy Director, Director and internal or external competitions for Director General and Permanent Secretary roles are processed.

■ Propriety and Constitution Group: Recruitment

John Glen: [\[7437\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2024 to Question 4638, whether he plans to provide details of that individual's (a) name and (b) position in the next edition of his Department's organogram published on gov.uk.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office senior staff organogram shows all roles at SCS1 level and above. As was the practice under the previous administration it does not include the names of individuals at SCS1 level (Deputy Director), which is the level of this post.

■ Public Appointments

John Glen: [\[6098\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department issues to (a) Departments and (b) arm's length bodies on publication of the names of people who have unsuccessfully applied for (i) public appointments and (ii) other posts.

Georgia Gould:

The Cabinet Office does not issue guidance on the publication of the names of people who have unsuccessfully applied for roles. It would generally not be appropriate to publish the names of unsuccessful candidates.

■ Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment

John Glen: [\[4656\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1261 on Senior Civil Servants, whether each of these roles were (a) externally advertised and (b) subject to open competition; and how many senior civil servants have been appointed without external advertisement and open competition since 30 May 2024.

Georgia Gould:

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 requires that selection to the Civil Service must be on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition.

Information on all Senior Civil Service appointments is not collated centrally. Departments can run campaigns outside of the central recruitment services through their own Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) or processes, or make appointments from existing reserve lists and it would be for individual departments to provide that level of detail with accuracy.

There may be instances where a role may meet the requirements for use of a Civil Service Commission exception. As part of this, the Civil Service Commission requires that departments provide a quarterly return on their use of Exceptions at SCS2 and above. This information can be found on the CSC website.

John Glen: [\[7762\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2024 to Question 4642 on Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment, what the process is by which a recruitment principles exception application to the Civil Service Commission is authorised within Departments.

Georgia Gould:

Each department will have its own process for authorising the use of exceptions, in accordance with the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles 2018 and the Civil Service Management Code. Details of these processes are not held centrally.

■ Special Advisers

John Glen: [\[5306\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the criteria are for completing a probationary period for special advisers; and who is responsible for determining whether those criteria have been met.

Georgia Gould:

Information on the probationary period for special advisers is set out in sections 5 and 6a of the Model Contract for Special Advisers, which is published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). There have been no changes to the provisions from when the Rt Hon member was a Minister in the department.

■ Special Advisers: Pay

John Glen:

[\[5297\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff has a role in the determination of salary levels for special advisers.

Georgia Gould:

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

■ Waste Management: Industrial Disputes

Gregory Stafford:

[\[7377\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department holds data on the number of days of strike action by council waste and recycling workers in each of the last three financial years.

Georgia Gould:

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

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

Attachments:

1. [Letter from the National Statistician](#) [PQ7377 (1).pdf]

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Abrar Islamic Foundation and Dar Alhekma Trust

Greg Smith:

[\[8471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will have discussions with the Charity Commission on the potential merits of opening an investigation into the eligibility for charitable status of (a) Dar Alhekma and (b) the Abrar Islamic Foundation.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Charity Commission for England and Wales ('the Commission') has a statutory function to identify and investigate misconduct and mismanagement in charities, and we are confident that it has the expertise to do so effectively. The Commission assesses concerns in accordance with its published regulatory and risk framework, and has a wide range of powers to investigate and remedy the abuse of charities. Any evidence that a registered charity is engaged in misconduct or mismanagement should be referred to the Commission.

The Commission has open regulatory compliance cases into both the Abrar Islamic Foundation and the Dar Alhekma Trust, and will determine if there is a need to take

action. As a civil regulator, the Commission is not a prosecuting authority and any allegations of criminal conduct should be referred to the Police.

The Charity Commission has been clear that the promotion of extremist views in charities is unacceptable, and that it will respond robustly where there proves to have been wrongdoing.

■ Arts: Newcastle-under-Lyme

Adam Jogee:

[8000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the (a) strength and (b) success of the creative industries in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

Chris Bryant:

This Government recognises and welcomes the success of the creative industries in Newcastle-under-Lyme, and is committed to supporting our world-leading creative industries, and their growth in regions across the UK.

The Office for National Statistics includes Newcastle-Under-Lyme as part of the Stoke-On-Trent 'Travel To Work Area,' and indicates that 3,777 people were employed in the creative industries in 2021, an increase of 5% since 2017.

The second wave of the £50 million Creative Clusters competition will be announced in the coming months, which will provide Newcastle-Under-Lyme, and the surrounding area, the opportunity to further develop themselves as a creative cluster. This would build on many of the strengths already present in the region, including video games, digital production and crafting.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Arden Strategies

Sir John Hayes:

[7716]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether Ministers in her Department have met representatives of Arden Strategies since 5 July 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

Neither the Secretary of State nor other DCMS ministers have held meetings with representatives of Arden Strategies in their ministerial capacity to date. Ministers attend non-governmental events which Arden Strategies representatives may also attend.

■ Gambling: Addictions

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[8018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential societal cost of problem gambling.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government recognises the impact harmful gambling can have on individuals and their families. We recognise that there are limitations in the existing evidence on

the societal cost of gambling harm and that there is a need for better data and further research on this topic. As stated in its manifesto, the Government is committed to strengthening the protections for those at risk and working with industry on how to ensure responsible gambling. We are considering the best available evidence from a wide range of sources to inform decisions on how best to fulfil the manifesto commitment to reducing gambling-related harm.

■ **Youth Services: Tiverton and Minehead**

Rachel Gilmour:

[\[8055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding her Department has provided to youth groups in Tiverton and Minehead constituency in the two latest periods for which data is available; and if she will take steps to increase that funding.

Stephanie Peacock:

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.

This is in addition to the DCMS investment of over £500 million in youth services to ensure every young person has access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer. Within the Tiverton and Minehead constituency, DCMS has directly provided funding for Duke of Edinburgh to be run within schools, encouraging young people to develop skills, build confidence, and make a difference in their communities through volunteering, access to the outdoors, and skills development.

DEFENCE

■ **Armed Forces: Asbestos**

Steve Race:

[\[6743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress his Department has made on implementing the recommendations of the report by the Defence Safety Authority entitled Service Inquiry into the alleged exposure of UK Defence Personnel to asbestos during overseas exercises and training since 2018, published on 18 August 2022.

Al Carns:

Significant progress has been made against the implementation of the recommendations made in the Service Inquiry.

The Ministry of Defence's Directorate of Defence Safety has provided further guidance to reinforce managers responsibilities for controlling asbestos risks and protecting our people in its policy - Management of Health and Safety in Defence.

Further work is underway to ensure that the intent of the recommendations is also applied to encompass any other potential environmental and industrial hazards, which are not addressed by the updated guidance. This activity will further strengthen Defence safety policy to ensure the safety of our personnel while deployed on exercise both within the UK and overseas. The safety and welfare of our people continues to be of the utmost importance.

■ **Armed Forces: Coeliac Disease**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of removing the prohibition on coeliac disease sufferers serving in the Armed Forces.

AI Carns:

The Department is assessing current policies and identifying those which obstruct individuals from joining the Armed Forces. It is essential that new entrants to the Armed Forces are medically fit to meet the various challenges of Service life and the roles in which they will be expected to deploy.

Candidates with coeliac disease are currently unable to join the Armed Forces as it is not possible to provide a gluten-free diet throughout a Service career especially when on operations. Coeliac disease is a condition with the potential for significant illness if a gluten free diet is not maintained.

If an application is rejected on medical grounds, a candidate can appeal the decision with additional medical information. There is also an executive waiver process where the employing Service may, exceptionally, recruit someone who is below the normal entry standards.

■ **Armed Forces: Private Education**

Damian Hinds:

[\[5992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many children of military service personnel are educated in independent schools under the Continuity of Education Allowance programme, by region.

AI Carns:

The Ministry of Defence does not hold data on region or type of school for those Service personnel who claim Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA); however, I can confirm that 2,678 Service personnel claimed CEA for 4,021 Service children in Academic Year 2023-24.

■ **Armed Forces: Uniforms**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to identify alternatives to the bearskins worn by the Household Division's Regiments of the Foot Guards.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence is committed to the use of human-made materials to replace natural fur items where they provide a suitable, safe, affordable, and sustainable alternative. Therefore, the Department is open to considering faux fur alternatives that meet the required criteria through accredited testing results, particularly given the public interest in this area.

However, to date, and to the Department's knowledge, an alternative has yet to meet the standards required to provide an effective replacement for the bearskin ceremonial caps.

■ **Challenger Tanks: Procurement**

Danny Kruger:

[\[5406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of changes to the Defence spending uplift on the Challenger 3 programme.

Luke Pollard:

Funding for specific programmes is considered as part of the Department's annual budget setting process. The Strategic Defence Review will report in the first half of next year and will set out recommendations on capabilities.

■ **LGBT Veterans Independent Review**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[5391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Departments plans to implement all recommendations in the LGBT Veterans Independent Review, published on 19 July 2023; what his planned timetable is for the implementation of recommendations; and how much compensation he plans to provide to affected people.

Al Carns:

The Government acknowledges the historic policy prohibiting homosexuality in the Armed Forces was regrettable, wrong and completely unacceptable. The treatment of LGBT Serving personnel between 1967 and 2000 was wholly unacceptable and does not reflect today's Armed Forces.

All 49 recommendations made in Lord Etherton's report have been accepted and to date, 32 of the 49 recommendations have already been implemented, demonstrating the Government's commitment to supporting our veterans and the LGBT+ community. Full details about these recommendations and the non-financial restorative measures already available can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lgbt-veterans-apply-for-restorative-measures>

Lord Etherton's report demonstrated the broad range of ways that personnel were impacted by the Ban. The financial redress scheme has been designed with this in mind, intending to provide a sense of closure to all those affected. Defence has worked with experts across Government to design an appropriate scheme where applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis, enabling appropriate distribution of the available funds. Defence cannot confirm the estimated number of applicants, nor the average payment amounts that can be expected.

The Government will continue to finalise the details of the scheme and is committed to providing an update as soon as possible. Further updates on the development of the financial redress scheme will be added to the LGBT Veterans: Support and next steps GOV.UK page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/lgbt-veterans-support-and-next-steps>

I hope this helps explain Defence's position and reassures you that we are committed to welcoming back LGBT veterans into the Armed Forces community, where they have always belonged.

■ Ministry of Defence Police: Finance

Dame Caroline Dinage:

[6042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Ministry of Defence Police budget is in the (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26 financial year; and whether he undertook a risk assessment before determining the budget for the next financial year.

AI Carns:

The annual budget for the Ministry of Defence Police is as follows:

Financial year 2024-25 = £182.7 million.

Budgets for 2025-26 for all Government Departments will be set through the ongoing Spending Review.

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

■ Ministry of Defence: Paternity Leave

Shaun Davies:

[7911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in (a) his Department and (b) the armed forces was in each of the last three years.

AI Carns:

Our records show that between 2021 and October 2024, Ministry of Defence employees have taken paternity leave for the birth or adoption of a child.

The average working days taken (AWDT) for civilian and military personnel is shown in the tables below.

CALENDAR YEAR	AWDT CIVILIAN PERSONNEL
2021	13.3
2022	12.7
2023	12.9
2024 Jan-Oct	12.5

Data covers the entire civilian workforce (includes DE&S and SDA)

Data includes Paternity Leave, Paternity Leave Birth and Paternity Leave Adoption

CALENDAR YEAR	AWDT MILITARY PERSONNEL
2021	13.6
2022	13.7
2023	13.6
2024 Jan-Oct	13.7

Data includes Paternity Leave, Paternity Leave Birth and Paternity Leave Adoption

- including any unpaid and deferred elements

■ Skynet

James Cartlidge:

[\[6344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact of the time taken to deliver SKYNET 6A's launch on the value of the Service Delivery Wrap PFI awarded to Team Aurora.

Luke Pollard:

The single event integration costs for Skynet 6A are factored into the overall contract price for the Service Delivery Wrap and that is unaffected by any movement in the launch date.

■ Veterans: LGBT+ People

Mike Martin:

[\[5769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to remove the £50 million cap on reparation payments to LGBT veterans, in the context of the value of average payments that would be provided to those veterans under that cap.

AI Carns:

We deeply regret the treatment of LGBT Service personnel between 1967 and 2000, which was wholly unacceptable and does not reflect today's Armed Forces. We are fully committed to ensuring this issue receives Parliamentary scrutiny.

We have already implemented 32 of the 49 recommendations from the LGBT veterans review and we are working with experts across Government to establish an appropriate financial redress scheme. We will provide more details later this year.

Ruth Cadbury:**[8161]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the amount of compensation available to LGBT veterans following the LGBT Veterans Independent Review, published in May 2023.

AI Carns:

The Government acknowledges the historic policy prohibiting homosexuality in the Armed Forces was regrettable, wrong and completely unacceptable. The treatment of LGBT Serving personnel between 1967 and 2000 was wholly unacceptable and does not reflect today's Armed Forces.

All 49 recommendations made in Lord Etherton's report have been accepted and to date, 32 of the 49 recommendations have already been implemented demonstrating the Government's commitment to supporting our veterans and the LGBT+ community.

Full details about these recommendations and the non-financial restorative measures already available can be found at the following link:

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Lord Etherton's report demonstrated the broad range of ways that personnel were impacted by the Ban. The financial redress scheme has been designed with this in mind, intending to provide a sense of closure to all those affected. Defence has worked with experts across Government to design an appropriate scheme where applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis, enabling appropriate distribution of the available funds.

I hope this helps explain Defence's position and reassures you that we are committed to welcoming back LGBT veterans into the Armed Forces community, where they have always belonged.

Ruth Cadbury:**[8162]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel were court-martialled due to their sexuality in the most recent period for which data is available prior to 2001.

AI Carns:

Due to the broad range of offences applied to same-sex sexual acts and the record keeping practices prior to 2000, there is no way of conducting a search for data on

sexuality based convictions. Court martials were held on a single Service basis until 2009, with the results of such cases being recorded in district court martial books and individuals' Service records until the introduction of the Joint Personnel Administration database in 2006. Therefore, the data from prior to 2006 is not centrally held in a way which would enable this type of analysis.

The Government encourages anyone who was convicted based on their sexuality to apply for a disregard through the Home Office's Disregard and Pardon scheme.

EDUCATION

■ Alternative Education: Travellers

Kim Johnson:

[7868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to Institute for Public Policy Research's report entitled *Who is losing learning*, the case for reducing exclusions across mainstream schools, published on 5 September 2024, what steps her Department is taking to reduce recent trends in the number of Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveler pupils placed in alternative provision.

Stephen Morgan:

The government has committed to taking a community-wide approach to improving inclusion of all children in mainstream schools, whatever their background. The department will see alternative providers working with mainstream schools to provide high quality early interventions and targeted support for children and young people that is targeted at their specific needs, which will ultimately reduce the numbers of referrals into alternative provision.

■ Children: Mental Health

Rachael Maskell:

[7799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to ensure schools take account of the NHS five steps to mental wellbeing in their education provision.

Stephen Morgan:

The department is working to support children and young people to thrive and achieve at school as a critical part of its mission to break down barriers to opportunity. That is why this government is working to ensure the right support is available to every young person that needs it, which includes providing access to specialist mental health professionals in every school. The government will also be putting in place new Young Futures hubs, including access to mental health support in schools, and will recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults.

Additionally, we recognise that mental health is built over a lifetime and know that the NHS's 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing guidance can provide a useful framework for

children and young people to learn how to develop good habits for their mental wellbeing. Schools may choose to take account of the 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing when considering their education provision, alongside the department's guidance on the 8 principles of a whole school or college approach to promoting mental health and wellbeing. The guidance can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoples-emotional-health-and-wellbeing>.

■ Extended Services: Closures

Sarah Coombes: [7932]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many after-school childcare providers have closed since 2020.

Sarah Coombes: [7933]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps she to prevent the closure of private after-school childcare providers.

Stephen Morgan:

The department does not hold this information.

This government recognises the vital work that private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers, including childminders, undertake to deliver before-school, after-school and holiday childcare. The government knows that they are an important part of the system, bringing expertise, resources and capacity to the provision of school aged childcare. Local authorities are currently working in close collaboration with PVIs as part of the wraparound childcare programme to deliver new and expanded wraparound childcare places, so that parents can work and receive education and training, making everyone better off, not just the few.

■ Grammar Schools

Joy Morrissey: [7848]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy not to amend the (a) status of existing grammar schools and (b) right of local areas to operate academic selection.

Catherine McKinnell:

There are 163 grammar schools in England that are located across 35 local authority areas. The government does not plan to allow any new grammar schools to open nor to legislate to remove the right of existing grammar schools to select by ability.

■ Numeracy: Adult Education

Alex Burghart: [7837]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Multiply maths initiative.

Catherine McKinnell:

Multiply is the government's UK wide programme for improving adult numeracy. Multiply provision spans from supporting to build confidence with numbers through to full maths qualifications.

The department provides funding to all local areas in England to deliver adult maths programmes with a focus on improving the functional numeracy of adults, breaking down barriers to participation in adult basic skills, and improving labour market outcomes. The following information therefore relates to the Multiply programme in England.

Local areas have welcomed the programme and the flexibility to deliver innovative approaches to drive learner demand. As of April 2024, over 120,000 learners have participated in a Multiply course in England. There was a 5.8% increase in adult participation in education and training in 2022/23 and an increase of 4.6% in 2023/24. Local areas have informed us that most of this rise is driven by Multiply courses.

The extensive Multiply programme evaluation is ongoing and will conclude in winter 2025/26.

Schools: Admissions**Damian Hinds:****[8420]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of which primary planning areas will have a ratio of pupil numbers forecast to estimated capacity of (a) greater than one, (b) one, (c) at or above 0.97 and below one and (d) at or above 0.95 and below 0.97 for the 2025-26 academic year; and what steps she (i) has taken and (ii) plans to take to increase capacity in each area.

Damian Hinds:**[8421]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of which secondary planning areas will have a ratio of pupil numbers forecast to estimated capacity of (a) greater than one, (b) one, (c) at or above 0.97 and below one and (d) at or above 0.95 and below 0.97 for the 2025-26 academic year; and what steps she (i) has taken and (ii) plans to take to increase capacity in each area.

Damian Hinds:**[8422]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of which secondary planning areas will have a ratio of Year 7 pupil numbers forecast to estimated capacity of (a) greater than one, (b) one, (c) at or above 0.97 and below one and (d) at or above 0.95 and below 0.97 for the 2025-26 academic year; and what steps she (i) has taken and (ii) plans to take to increase capacity in each area.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on school place planning estimates for the 2025/26 academic year, including pupil forecasts and estimated capacity, are published at planning area level in the annual School Capacity statistics publication. This can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>.

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places sits with local authorities. The department provides capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support local authorities to provide school places, based on their own pupil forecasts and school capacity data. We have already announced allocations up to 2025/26, for places needed by September 2026. Allocations can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-need-allocations>.

■ Special Educational Needs

Liz Jarvis:

[7896]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help reduce delays by local authorities in delivering education, health and care plans.

Catherine McKinnell:

I refer the hon. Member for Eastleigh to the answer of 14 October 2024 to Question [7369](#).

■ Special Educational Needs: Hertfordshire

Lewis Cocking:

[R] [7922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to allocate new (a) funding and (b) resources to support children with special educational needs and disabilities in schools in Hertfordshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is providing schools with extra funding of almost £1.1 billion in the 2024/25 financial year through the new Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG), to support them with overall costs, including the costs of supporting their pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Of this total, special schools and alternative provision settings will be receiving over £140 million through the CSBG.

The additional funding through the CSBG comes alongside high needs funding for children and young people with complex needs, which totals over £10.75 billion in 2024/25, including the funding through the separate teachers' pay and pension employer contribution grants. Hertfordshire County Council is receiving a high needs funding allocation of £193.2 million, including funding for previous teachers' pay and pension costs, and a CSBG allocation of over £2.3 million.

Budgets for the 2025/26 financial year have not yet been set which means that decisions on the high needs and schools national funding formulae as well as the publication of allocations for that year are not to the usual timescales. The department will publish information as soon as possible after the Budget in October.

■ Teachers: Unemployment

Sarah Coombes:

[7930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number of qualified teachers who were unemployed on 8 October 2024.

Sarah Coombes:

[7931]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support unemployed teachers into teaching jobs.

Catherine McKinnell:

High quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education.

This government is focused on supporting qualified teachers, be they newly qualified or returning to the profession, and helping them find teaching jobs that help both them and their pupils achieve the best possible outcome. The department has established its own vacancy listing service for state-funded schools in England, Teaching Vacancies, to provide an effective and simple process for teachers to find the right jobs. Schools can list all their vacancies on the service, including support staff roles, for free. Over 85% of state-funded schools now use this service to advertise teaching roles. Support is also provided to jobseekers on searching, applying and interviewing for a school that feels like the right fit.

For qualified teachers returning to the profession, the department offers additional support, including the Return to Teaching Advisory (RTTA) service, specialised events, and the Return to Teaching webpage. The RTTA provides tailored support from a one-to-one adviser who can help with the application and interview process, increasing classroom readiness and finding suitable vacancies. This year, we have seen an increase in the number of teachers returning to teach in state-funded schools in England; 17,388 (FTE) teachers returned this year, which is 669 more than last year (16,719).

The department does not hold data on the number of qualified teachers who are unemployed. The School Workforce Census measures the number of qualified teachers employed in the state sector and does not cover those employed by the independent sector. Further data on the teacher workforce is available through the publication of the School Workforce Census data, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2023>.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Community Energy

Abtisam Mohamed:

[7971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to build growth in community energy.

Abtisam Mohamed:

[7972]

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

Michael Shanks:

Community energy will play an essential role in meeting our mission for clean power by 2030, and Government recognises the important role community groups, including those in Sheffield play. Great British Energy will provide support to deliver the Local Power Plan, putting local authorities and communities at the heart of restructuring our energy economy. The Local Power Plan will help crowd-in investment while ensuring benefits flow directly back into local communities.

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Paternity Leave**Shaun Davies:**[\[7902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in his Department was in each of the last three years.

Michael Shanks:

The average length of paternity leave in days taken by staff in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) was 9.6 during 2023 and 9.8 during 2024.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) was established in February 2023. Data before this time is unavailable.

Electricity: National Grid**Richard Tice:**[\[7989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the cost of stability services to the electricity grid was in each of the last five years.

Richard Tice:[\[7990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the cost of stability services to the electricity grid in each of the next five years.

Michael Shanks:

According to data provided by the National Energy System Operator (NESO), the costs of procuring stability services in the Balancing Mechanism for the last five years are as follows:

2019/20 £211m

2020/21 £348m

2021/22 £176m

2022/23 £112m

2023/24 £83m

Based on actions introduced to address the high stability costs faced in 2020/21, NESO do not expect stability costs to increase significantly from 2023/24 levels over the next five years.

NESO also incurs stability costs through its stability network services procurement project. NESO has awarded tenders to five providers across seven sites, securing

stability services until 31st March 2026. With a total contract exposure of £328m, NESO expects to save consumers between £52m to £128m over this period as a result of having to take fewer Balancing Mechanism actions to address system stability.

■ Energy: Housing

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[7973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department has taken to develop a warm homes plan.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government's Warm Homes Plan will transform homes across the country by making them cheaper and cleaner to run, rolling out upgrades from new insulation to solar and heat pumps. We have already announced the new Warm Homes: Local Grant to help low-income homeowners and private tenants with energy performance upgrades including insulation, as well as the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund, to support social housing providers and tenants. More detail will be provided next spring.

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[8076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his planned timetable is for adopting Standard Assessment Procedure 10.2, in the context of the Home Upgrade Grant 2 project; and whether residents that have missed out on solar batteries will be able to apply for their system to be upgraded.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

We are introducing improvements to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) modelling in early 2025, known as Reduced Data Standard Assessment Procedure 10 (RdSAP 10), to improve accuracy. EPC assessors will soon be able to record if a consumer has installed solar batteries. The Home Upgrade Grant (HUG 2) will run until March 2025 and will be succeeded by the Warm Homes: Local Grant (WH:LG). Details of the policy on retreating low-income households that received upgrades under HUG 2 were published on 23rd September as part of the WH:LG guidance.

■ Great British Energy: Glasgow

Maureen Burke:

[\[7960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to announce more detail on the establishment of Great British Energy offices in Glasgow.

Michael Shanks:

We are currently focused on making Great British Energy's Aberdeen Headquarters a reality. Once Great British Energy is set-up in Aberdeen, we will work towards opening sites in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and we will provide further detail on this in due course. We are committed to delivering these additional sites, that will enable Great British Energy to tap into a wider labour market, maximising skills and expertise across Scotland.

■ Hinkley Point C Power Station and Sizewell C Power Station: Compensation**Carla Denyer:** [\[7946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the first bullet point on page 23 of EDF Energy Holdings Limited Annual Report and Financial Statements 31 December 2023, what estimate he has made of the amount of compensation that will be paid from Sizewell C to Hinkley Point C; and how that cost will be allocated between (a) private investors, (b) the UK Government and (c) electricity consumers.

Michael Shanks:

Under the terms of a contractual agreement between HPC and SZC, which was agreed at the time of the Final Investment Decision on HPC, a payment is payable from SZC to HPC if SZC takes a positive FID. This payment reflects benefits for SZC, including the significant learning and 'avoided First-of-a-Kind' costs that SZC will gain from being a 'second-of-a-kind' replica of HPC.

The payment would be financed by the investors in SZC and would be added to the cost base of SZC, and is therefore included in the Government's Value for Money assessment of the SZC project.

The value of the payment to HPC is intended to be broadly equal to £3/MWh in Net Present Value terms, reflecting the size of the reduction in the strike price at HPC if a positive FID on SZC is taken.

Taking into account the lower HPC strike price, the overall effect of the payment on GB electricity consumers would be broadly neutral.

■ Landfill: Renewable Energy**Wera Hobhouse:** [\[7833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to extend support for landfill gas to energy operators beyond 2027.

Michael Shanks:

Government is aware that support under the Renewables Obligation Scheme, including some that landfill gas generators hold, concludes from 2027 onwards. We are speaking with a variety of generators to understand the impact that the conclusion of support will have on their future operations. This will inform considerations about whether further support is required.

■ Local Net Zero Forum**Carla Denyer:** [\[7944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero in the debate on COP29: UK Priorities on Tuesday 10 September 2024, Official Report, Col 232WH, what the membership is of the Local Net Zero Forum; when the next meeting will take place; and what topics will be on the agenda.

Kerry McCarthy:

The Government is committed to strong collaboration with local government on net zero, as demonstrated by having recently signed up to CHAMP - the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships for Climate Action.

The previous government ran the Local Net Zero Forum of which terms of reference, membership and meeting minutes can be found on the Local Net Zero Forum gov.uk page. The Government is currently reviewing the approach and will set out plans in due course.

■ National Grid: East of England**Patrick Spencer:****[8600]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Norwich-to-Tilbury pylon route on the local agricultural sector.

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 including assessment of any agricultural impacts. The Government sets the rules for a robust and independent planning process that communities participate in.

The Government cannot comment on specific projects which will come before the Secretary of State for a final decision. Depending on the specifics of each case, network operators are required to have an agreement with landowners impacted by transmission infrastructure projects on their land, including payment of appropriate compensation.

■ Oil and Natural Gas: Production**Wera Hobhouse:****[7834]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take legislative steps to ban the routine (a) flaring and (b) venting of oil and gas by 2030.

Michael Shanks:

The UK has committed to the World Bank's 'Zero Routine Flaring by 2030' Initiative, and has additionally committed to end routine venting by 2030. In the North Sea Transition Deal the UK industry committed to accelerate compliance ahead of 2030.

With support from Government, industry is on track to meet these ambitious targets.

According to the North Sea Transition Authority, flaring reduced by 49% between 2018 and 2023, and methane emissions fell by more than 50% in the same period.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Finance**

Alex Easton: [\[8586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he will maintain levels of spending under the agriculture budget; and what steps he is taking to ensure that changes in the level of that budget support nature recovery.

Daniel Zeichner:

The farming budget beyond this year will be part of the Government's spending review. The Chancellor will set out the Government's spending plans on 30 October alongside the Budget.

The Government is committed to championing farmers while protecting the environment. We said we would provide stability for farmers and we are delivering on this commitment. We will optimise Environmental Land Management schemes so they produce the right outcomes for all farmers - such as small, grassland, upland and tenanted farms - while delivering food security and nature recovery in a just and equitable way.

■ Agriculture: Floods

Blake Stephenson: [\[7941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to (a) maintain and (b) extend flooding support schemes for farmers.

Daniel Zeichner:

We are aware of the ongoing challenges farmers have been facing following the winter storms and 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 eligible farmers that were identified in the original fund from April have been offered payment. More information on the expanded Farming Recovery Fund will be made available soon.

The more recent flooding seen in September 2024 is not at the scale where we would expect to open the Flood Recovery Framework, Property Flood Resilience Grant of Farming Recovery Fund Schemes.

■ Air Pollution

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[7788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to introduce new clean air targets in line with World Health Organisation guidelines; and if he will fund (a) local and (b) regional authorities to tackle the worst areas of air pollution in the course of this parliament.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is committed to meeting current legal targets for air quality, including the targets recently set under the Environment Act 2021, and will review the policy measures needed to achieve them. We will deliver a comprehensive Clean Air Strategy, including a series of interventions to reduce emissions so that everyone's exposure to air pollution is reduced.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality guidelines are intended to inform the setting of air quality standards and are not ready-made targets for direct adoption as they do not consider achievability or individual countries' circumstances. However, we will consider WHO guidelines as part of an evidence led process when considering future targets.

Animals: Exports**Mr Lee Dillon:**[\[8390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to introduce a ban on all live animal exports.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Act 2024 came into force on 22 July 2024. The Act bans the export of cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and horses for fattening or slaughter from Great Britain, stopping stress, exhaustion and injury caused by this unnecessary trade. It applies to journeys from, and transiting journeys through, Great Britain to destinations outside the UK, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man. We are putting in place Regulations to ensure the ban is implemented effectively and enforced robustly. The Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Enforcement Regulations 2024 have been laid before Parliament.

Exports for all purposes other than slaughter or fattening, such as for breeding, competitions and shows, or scientific research, continue to be permitted.

Biodiversity**Ben Goldsborough:**[\[8031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting Controlled Environment Facilities from Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.

Ben Goldsborough:[\[8032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the impact of Biodiversity Net Gain regulations on Controlled Environment Agriculture.

Mary Creagh:

Following consultation in 2022, exemptions to the biodiversity net gain requirement set out within the regulations are narrow and focussed. This keeps the policy

ambitious, whilst being proportionate and deliverable for developers and local authorities.

My officials engage widely with stakeholders involved in delivering biodiversity net gain to increase our understanding of overall implementation. We will continue to engage with the horticulture sector and others, with evidence from industry to substantiate any suggested improvements to the requirement being crucial.

■ **Boats: Runnymede and Weybridge**

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[8232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information his Department holds on when the Environment Agency plans to take enforcement action against illegal moorings in Runnymede and Weybridge constituency.

Emma Hardy:

Environment Agency (EA) officers have been actively patrolling the Desborough Cut area and have mapped all trespassing vessels, including wrecks and abandoned boats. As of 27 September 2024, there are 29 vessels in total in this area. These include both registered and unregistered vessels.

The EA is currently working to secure the necessary legal resources and additional funding to support the potential cases arising from a targeted operation at Desborough Cut. They have also engaged contractors to survey the sunken vessels once river conditions allow for safe access, which will help in assessing the cost of their removal and disposal. They will look to recharge an owner where possible.

■ **Cats: Animal Breeding**

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[7849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure welfare standards in cat breeding.

Daniel Zeichner:

Under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 (the Regulations), 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.

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.

■ **Cetaceans: Faroe Islands**

Alex Mayer: [\[7964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the Faroese Minister for Fisheries on cetacean hunts.

Emma Hardy:

The UK strongly opposes the hunting of all cetaceans other than some limited activities by indigenous people for clearly defined subsistence needs. The UK reaffirmed its strong support for the global moratorium on commercial whaling at the September International Whaling Commission meeting with Danish Government in attendance, where we co-sponsored a resolution on International Legal Obligations in Commercial Whaling. We also raised the UK opposition to cetacean hunting at official level in September as part of the UK-Faroe Islands fisheries intersessional. Ministers and senior officials will continue to raise the issue with the Faroese at every appropriate opportunity.

■ Dogs: Imports**Cat Smith:**[\[6307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to ban the import of dogs with cropped ears.

Clive Jones:[\[7077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to bring forward legislative proposals on banning the import of dogs with cropped ears.

Daniel Zeichner:

Ear cropping has rightly been banned in the UK for over 15 years. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, it is an offence in England and Wales to carry out a non-exempted mutilation e.g., where a surgical procedure is not carried out for medical purposes, such as the cropping of a dog's ears. While the practice is illegal in the UK, we recognise that the current legislative framework can be abused by traders who import these dogs from abroad.

As outlined in our manifesto, the Government is committed to ending puppy smuggling. We will clamp down on unscrupulous traders who prioritise profit over welfare. We are considering the most effective ways to deliver this and will be setting out next steps in due course.

■ Floods: Government Assistance**Freddie van Mierlo:**[\[8075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to provide grants for people whose (a) property and (b) business has been (i) flooded and (ii) significantly impacted by flooding.

Emma Hardy:

The Government recognises that flooding is devastating for those affected. Protecting communities from flooding is a key priority for this Government.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) co-ordinates the Government's Flood Recovery Framework (FRF). The FRF, which

includes support for businesses and households, and Defra's Property Flood Resilience grant scheme (PFR) can be activated in response to large scale and widespread flooding.

Where flooding results in localised impacts, local authorities should provide support as needed. Affected householders should ask their insurance provider if they are eligible for Build Back Better within their claim, which can provide for flood resilient repairs over and above the cost for like-for-like reinstatement of actual flood damage.

The Government is determined to turbocharge the delivery and repair of flood defences, improve drainage systems and develop natural flood management schemes. That is why the Government set up the Flood Resilience Taskforce to improve coordination of the national and local flood response and strengthen preparedness ahead of the winter flood season. We are investing over £1.25 billion this year to scale up national resilience through building new and improving existing flood defences.

■ Larger Eight-toothed European Spruce Bark Beetles

Alex Mayer:

[\[8314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the damage caused by the eight-toothed spruce bark beetle to trees in (a) Central Bedfordshire and (b) the UK.

Mary Creagh:

The eight-toothed spruce bark beetle is a quarantine pest of spruce tree species and is not native to the UK. The Forestry Commission have a nationwide surveillance programme in place to monitor for incursions of this pest, which spreads naturally from Europe. A demarcated area is in place over south-east England which implements robust measures to detect and eradicate outbreaks and prevent potential spread.

The demarcated area does extend to a small part of Bedfordshire, but there have been no outbreaks in this region. All outbreaks to date have been detected on stressed, dying and dead spruce trees, which are more vulnerable to the pest.

There is an estimated 725,000 hectares of spruce in Great Britain, but less than 1% of this is within the demarcated area.

■ Members: Correspondence

Daisy Cooper:

[\[8226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to reply substantively to the correspondence of 23 January 2024 from the Hon. Member for St Albans on behalf of her constituent, his Department's reference MC2024/01885, relating to the revocation of registration of exempted dogs, followed up on 22 March 2024, 9 July 2024 and 9 September 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

Correspondence MC2024/01885 is undergoing clearance processes and will be issued shortly. MC2024/01885 was one of a very large number of correspondences on this topic received by the department which contributed to delays in responses. Following dissolution of Parliament on 30 May, this case was closed and has been reopened following the election.

■ Packaging: Litter**Deirdre Costigan:**[\[6783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations on the proposed introduction of litter payments under the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme.

Mary Creagh:

Defra is working with the Devolved Administrations on future amends to the Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, including the management of binned waste and litter within this scheme.

■ River Thames: Assets**Dr Ben Spencer:**[\[8233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish an audit of the state of (a) operation and (b) maintenance of publicly owned assets on the River Thames.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency (EA) manages many of the publicly owned assets along the non-tidal Thames, ranging from flood defences, navigation infrastructure, river gauging stations and some of the Thames Path bridges. These assets are managed in accordance with the EA's Asset Management Strategy 2023-2033 to ensure safe, reliable and sustainable assets that support a healthy natural environment and climate resilient communities. To underpin this strategy the EA is developing a strategic asset management plan for all the assets on its navigable waterways. This plan will set out the required performance of those assets for reducing flood risk, maintaining water resources, and supporting navigation.

The EA regularly inspects its assets to determine their condition and to inform its programme of planned maintenance and investment. Currently 92% of the 203 flood risk assets along the non-tidal Thames are at or above their target condition, and of the 1,062 primary navigation assets, 89% of those recently inspected were at or above their target condition.

The EA will share with the hon. Member the progress it has made and its plans to ensure these assets continue to provide the services communities require.

■ River Thames: Flood Control

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[8408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the Development Consent Order application process to speed up the delivery of the River Thames Scheme.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State is aware of the importance of the River Thames Scheme in reducing flood risk and enhancing resilience for communities along the Thames. The Development Consent Order (DCO) application process plays a critical role in ensuring that large-scale infrastructure projects, such as this, are thoroughly assessed for environmental, social, and economic impacts before moving forward.

While the Government acknowledges the importance of delivering key infrastructure projects more efficiently to address pressing challenges such as flood protection, any amendments to the DCO process must balance the need for efficiency with the necessity of proper due diligence. This ensures that projects are delivered responsibly, with full consideration of environmental impacts, stakeholder input, and community needs.

The Government is continually reviewing planning and infrastructure processes, and any specific changes to the DCO process would require careful evaluation to avoid unintended consequences, such as compromising the rigor of environmental assessments or public consultation.

■ Rivers

Liz Jarvis: [\[8264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to include the protection of chalk streams the review of the water sector.

Emma Hardy:

Ministers are currently working through priorities and options for future reform.

■ Rivers: Pollution

Ellie Chowns: [\[7166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the report by the Soil Association entitled Stop Killing our Rivers, published on 12 March 2024.

Emma Hardy:

The levels of water pollution are unacceptable. Cleaning up England's rivers, lakes and seas is a priority for the Government. Working with farmers to reduce agricultural pollution is key to delivering against this priority.

We continue to work with farmers through a suite of proportionate and effective regulations, advice and incentives to deliver improvements.

■ **Sewage: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[7713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to upgrade sewage infrastructure in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Emma Hardy:

For too long, investment has not kept pace with the challenges of an ageing infrastructure system, a rapidly growing population, and climate change. Water companies are now expected to deliver £88 billion of investment between 2025 and 2030 across England and Wales. This will improve more than 2,500 projects to reduce spills from storm overflows and upgrades to over 1,500 wastewater treatment works.

Sewage infrastructure upgrades are the responsibility of the water company. As part of the Environment Act 2021, a duty exists for water companies in England to produce Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (DWMPs).

■ **Sewage: Sheffield**

Abtisam Mohamed:

[\[7970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent sewage discharges into rivers in Sheffield.

Emma Hardy:

The Government has taken immediate and substantial action to address water companies who are not performing for the environment or their customers. In July, we announced swift action to begin resetting the water sector, including ringfencing vital funding for infrastructure investment and placing customers and the environment at the heart of water company objectives.

In September, the Government introduced the Water (Special Measures) Bill to give regulators new powers to take tougher and faster action to crack down on water companies damaging the environment and failing their customers. These are the first critical steps in enabling a long-term and transformative reset of the entire water sector.

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

■ Sugar Beet: Neonicotinoids**Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[6811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of granting a further derogation for the use of (a) Cruiser and (b) other neonicotinoids on sugar-beet crops in 2025.

Emma Hardy:

Pesticides are strictly regulated based on the risks and benefits of use. Decisions on Emergency Authorisation applications for use of neonicotinoids on sugar beet for 2025 will be taken in line with the legal requirements of Regulation 1107/2009 (Article 53) and with full consideration of the available evidence and advice.

This Government will change existing policies to ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides that threaten bees and vital pollinators.

■ Weedkillers: Licensing**Rachel Gilmour:**[\[8054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will restore the license for ASOLUX; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the restoration of that license on the growth of bracken in (a) the Quantocks and (b) Exmoor within the Tiverton and Minehead Constituency.

Emma Hardy:

Asulox is a herbicide containing the active substance asulam, which is not approved for use in the UK. For some years, use of Asulox to control bracken has been allowed under strictly controlled conditions under emergency authorisation arrangements. In 2023 the company behind asulam decided to cease supporting further applications for emergency authorisation and has not applied for UK approval of asulam. There are therefore no plans to restore the licence for Asulox or assess the potential impact of its restoration.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty****Alicia Kearns:**[\[7857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he held meetings with representatives of the Chagossian community in the period between his appointment as Foreign Secretary and 7 October 2024.

Stephen Doughty:

As Minister for the Overseas Territories, I have met with members of the Chagossian community twice since the election. The Foreign Secretary has not yet had the opportunity to do so. We recognise the importance of the British Indian Ocean Territory / Chagos Archipelago to Chagossians and we have put their interests at the heart of this Agreement. Under this agreement, Mauritius will (for the first time) be

free to develop a resettlement programme on the islands, other than Diego Garcia. We will also finance a new trust fund for Mauritius in support of Chagossians, as well as increase our support to Chagossians in the UK and around the world, through new and existing projects. All Chagossians remain eligible for British citizenship & to make home in UK. Mauritius and the UK will now work to start a new programme of visits for Chagossians to the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia.

■ Eritrea: Human Rights

Alex Easton:

[\[8058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions officials in his Department have had with their counterparts in Eritrea on (a) Christians imprisoned and (b) possible violations of (i) freedom of religion or belief and (ii) other human rights in that country; and what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help prevent unwarranted arrests in Eritrea.

Anneliese Dodds:

We consistently raise the need to improve the human rights situation with the Eritrean Government. We advocate for national service reform and the end of arbitrary detentions, including detentions based on religion or belief. Eritrea is a priority country in the FCDO Annual Human Rights Report and we support the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Eritrea, voting in favour of his mandate renewal in July 2024. As we have stated at the Human Rights Council, all those who have been unjustly incarcerated must be released.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Legal Profession

Graham Stuart:

[\[8412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many full time equivalent personnel there are working in his Department's legal directorate.

Catherine West:

As of 30 September 2024, there were between 100-119 staff working in Legal Directorate.

Graham Stuart:

[\[8413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many qualified lawyers are working in his Department's legal directorate.

Catherine West:

As of 30 September 2024, there were between 70-89 lawyers working in Legal Directorate.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Non-governmental Organisations

Graham Stuart: [\[8414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department employs staff on secondment from human rights NGOs.

Catherine West:

Staff on inward secondment to the FCDO are not on the FCDO Payroll, however there are invoicing arrangements in place between the FCDO and some host organisations. The FCDO does not currently have any staff on inward secondment from human rights NGOs.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[7002\]](#)

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

Catherine West:

There are no cars currently dedicated for specific Ministers, or other officials in the FCDO. The FCDO does not use the Government Car Service.

The FCDO Car Service is provided by London Car Service (LCS) which is managed by FCDO Services. Given the number of FCDO ministers, and the complexity of FCDO ministerial travel requirements, the FCDO operates a service based on available internal capacity within the allotted LCS provision, which is supplemented by private sector provision to meet demand peaks in a cost-effective manner.

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

The FCDO Car Service is variable based on demand, and monitored throughout the year. The spend in FY23/24 was £224,221.

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[7003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, 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.

Catherine West:

The FCDO does not use the Government Car Service. The FCDO Car Service is provided by London Car Service (LCS) which is managed by FCDO Services. Given the number of FCDO ministers, and the complexity of FCDO ministerial travel

requirements, the FCDO operates an on-demand service based on available internal capacity within the allotted LCS provision, which is supplemented by private sector provision to meet demand peaks in a cost-effective manner.

The arrangements relating to the use of the FCDO Car Service is set out in the Civil Service Management Code. There has been no change in this policy since the general election.

■ Nigeria: Religious Freedom

Jim Shannon:

[\[7781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Nigerian counterparts on (a) violence by non-state actors and (b) freedom of religion for minority communities.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK continues to champion freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all in Nigeria, and beyond. No one should live in fear because of what they do, or do not believe in. We work to uphold the right to FoRB through our position at the UN, G7 and other multilateral fora and bilaterally in Nigeria. The UK Government remains committed to supporting Nigeria to address ongoing security challenges, including violent extremism and intercommunal violence, which continue to impinge on the rights of Nigerians to FoRB. In September, the Foreign Secretary had an initial conversation with his Nigerian counterpart on security issues and will be seeking to engage proactively on FoRB in upcoming discussions.

■ Russia: Oil

Sarah Green:

[\[8504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his (a) G7 and (b) EU counterparts on increasing enforcement of the price cap policy on Russian oil.

Stephen Doughty:

The action taken by the UK and partners to limit Russian energy revenues is having a significant impact, with Russia forced to shoulder a 24 per cent reduction in oil and gas revenues in 2023 compared to 2022. We are working to close loopholes and crack down on ever more desperate forms of sanctions circumvention, including by sanctioning vessels which use reckless practices in an attempt to undermine our impact. The UK has led in the G7 to target oil and LNG tankers, and we will continue to work closely with EU and G7 counterparts to monitor the effectiveness of the Oil Price Cap.

■ Sudan: Humanitarian Aid

Stephen Gethins:

[\[6299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take with his US counterpart to promote expanded humanitarian access

to Sudan; and what steps he has taken to remove barriers to humanitarian assistance in that country.

Anneliese Dodds:

The conflict in Sudan has created the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with famine now declared in Zamzam IDP camp in Darfur. 25.6 million people are facing crisis, emergency and famine levels of food insecurity across Sudan. The UK continues to put pressure on the Sudanese authorities to keep the Adre border open and allow for humanitarian assistance to reach those most in need. The UK works closely with key international partners, including the US, to bring an end to the conflict, protect civilians and press for improved humanitarian access. The UK welcomes the formation and work of the newly formed ALPS (Aligned for Advancing Lifesaving and Peace in Sudan) group. The UK will continue to work with the US to put pressure on the warring parties to open up humanitarian access to ensure life-saving assistance can reach people in need. In August, I visited the region where I saw the impact of the conflict in Sudan on South Sudan - a country already facing its own humanitarian emergency. Here, I met with those who had fled both violence and hunger, re-iterating the true cost of this conflict and also met with bilateral partners including the US Ambassador to South Sudan. Lord Collins also co-hosted a side event at UNGA focused on tackling conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in Sudan. This event spotlighted the situation for women and girls on the ground, explored the gaps in the ongoing response to CRSV, including the role of the international community in supporting and facilitating local and women-led efforts, and highlighted the urgent need for accountability.

■ **Ukraine: Economic Situation**

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[8022]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure macroeconomic stability in Ukraine.

Stephen Doughty:

Since February 2022 the UK has provided fiscal assistance worth £4.1 billion via guarantees for World Bank lending to support Ukraine's economic stability. This includes multi-year assistance worth \$3 billion, which will be delivered in yearly \$1 billion tranches. This is part of a collective G7 effort over Ukraine's International Monetary Fund programme.

As G7 leaders announced in June, we are working together to implement 'Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration' loans, which will provide approximately \$50 billion in additional funding.

An overview of UK support is published on gov.uk

[<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-support-to-ukraine-factsheet/uk-support-to-ukraine-factsheet>].

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Perran Moon:**[\[900638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to NHS mental health services.

Stephen Kinnock:

Around one million people are waiting to access mental health services, and vacancy rates for mental health trusts are around 10% - the highest of any NHS sector.

This government will fix our broken NHS so people can be confident of accessing high quality mental health support when needed.

This includes recruiting 8,500 more mental health workers, introducing specialist mental health professionals in every school, rolling out Young Futures hubs in every community and modernising the Mental Health Act.

Ruth Jones:[\[900645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support independent community pharmacies.

Stephen Kinnock:

As identified by Lord Darzi's review, primary care is under pressure and in crisis.

The previous government did not conclude the consultation on the funding and contractual arrangements for community pharmacy in England. However, I am looking at this as a matter of urgency.

This Government is committed to better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and developing an independent pharmacy prescribing service

■ **Blood Cancer****Luke Taylor:**[\[8300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the recommendations made in the UK Blood Cancer Action Plan, published by Blood Cancer UK on 4 September 2024.

Karin Smyth:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for Liverpool Walton to question [4539](#) on 19 September 2024.

■ **Blood Cancer: Mortality Rates****Satvir Kaur:**[\[8369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the survival rate of blood cancer patients.

Satvir Kaur: [8370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the (a) speed and (b) accuracy of blood cancer diagnoses.

Satvir Kaur: [8371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on regional variations in (a) the speed of diagnosis and (b) health outcomes for blood cancer patients.

Karin Smyth:

We will get the National Health Service diagnosing cancer earlier and treating it faster, including blood cancer. This is supported by NHS England's key ambition on cancer, to meet the Faster Diagnosis Standard, which sets a target of 28 days from urgent referral by a general practitioner or screening programme to patients being told that they have cancer, or that cancer is ruled out.

The Department is committed to implementing the recommendations of Lord O'Shaughnessy's review into commercial clinical trials, making sure that the United Kingdom leads the world in clinical trials, and ensuring that innovative, lifesaving treatments are accessible to NHS patients, including those with blood cancer.

Making improvements across different cancer types is critical to reducing disparities in cancer survival. Early cancer diagnosis is also a specific priority within the NHS's wider Core20Plus5 approach to reducing healthcare inequalities.

Professor Lord Darzi has undertaken an independent investigation into the state of the NHS, the findings of which will feed into the Government's 10-year plan to build a health service that is fit for the future. The Government will therefore set out any further priorities on cancer and health in due course.

The National Disease Registration Service, through the National Cancer Registration and Analysis Services (NCRAS), collects information on how many people in England have cancer. Blood cancer is included as a distinct category, labelled haematological neoplasms. The National Disease Registration Service's website also shows the number of people treated for different tumour types by treatment type, as well as survival rates, mortality rates, and data on urgent suspected cancer referrals. Further information is available at the following link:

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

All cases of cancer diagnosed and treated in the NHS in England are registered by the NCRAS. This creates a clinically rich data resource that is used to measure diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes for patients diagnosed with cancer. The data held by the NCRAS supports service provision and commissioning in the NHS, clinical audits, and public health and epidemiological research, all of which contribute to improved outcomes for those diagnosed with cancer.

■ Brain Cancer: Research

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[6521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on allocating funding to brain cancer research.

Andrew Gwynne:

Research is crucial in tackling cancer, which is why the Department invests over £1.5 billion per year in health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). NIHR research expenditure for all cancers was £121.8 million in 2022/23. The NIHR spends more on cancer than any other disease group, reflecting its high priority. We are committed to furthering our investment and support for high-quality brain tumour research.

In the five years between 2018/19 and 2022/23, the NIHR directly invested £11.3 million in research projects and programmes focused on brain tumours across 15 awards. In addition, our wider investments in NIHR research infrastructure, including facilities, services, and the research workforce, are estimated to be £31.5 million, between 2018/19 and 2022/23, and have enabled 227 brain cancer research studies to take place in the same period. In total NIHR investments have enabled 8,500 people to participate in potentially life-changing research in the National Health Service over this time.

In September 2024, the NIHR launched new funding opportunities for a Brain Cancer Research Consortium and a major new funding call to generate high quality evidence in brain tumour care, support, and rehabilitation.

■ Cardiovascular Diseases: Research

Tom Hayes:

[\[7116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department will take steps to fund new research into (a) prevention and (b) treatment of cardiovascular disease.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government, through the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR), is committed to funding high quality, timely research that leads to improved outcomes for patients and the public, and that makes the health and social care system more efficient, effective, and safe. Research evidence is vital for improving treatments and outcomes for people, including those with cardiovascular disease. The Department is proud to invest £1.5 billion per year on health research through the NIHR.

Over the past five financial years, from 2019/20 to 2023/24, the NIHR has invested £145.4 million on cardiovascular disease (CVD) and stroke research directly through NIHR research programmes. Our wider investments in NIHR infrastructure, strengthening specialist facilities, the workforce, and support services to enable research in the health and care system, have enabled significant CVD and stroke research funded by other funders to take place.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including CVD. As with other Government funders of health research, the NIHR does not allocate funding for specific disease areas.

■ Care Workers: Vacancies

Deirdre Costigan: [\[8284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle staffing shortages in the care sector.

Stephen Kinnock:

The adult social care workforce is growing, with Skills for Care data showing that in 2023/24 there were 1.705 million filled posts, an increase of 70,000 since 2022/23. Whilst this represents an improvement, the Government recognises the scale of reforms needed to make the adult social care sector attractive, to support sustainable workforce growth, and to improve the retention of the workforce.

On 10 October 2024, recognising the central role of our amazing care workforce, we took a critical step, introducing the legislation that will establish the first ever Fair Pay Agreement for care professionals. Fair Pay Agreements will empower worker, employer, and other sector representatives to negotiate pay, terms, and conditions in a regulated and responsible manner. Fair Pay Agreements will help to address the recruitment and retention crisis in the sector, in turn supporting the continued delivery of high-quality care.

■ Carers: Health

Tom Gordon: [\[8261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the (a) physical and (b) mental health challenges faced by unpaid carers.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to ensuring that families have the support that they need. We want to ensure that people who care for family and friends are better able to look after their own physical and mental health and wellbeing.

People, including unpaid carers, with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they deserve, which is why we will fix the broken system to ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health. This includes recruiting 8,500 more mental health workers, introducing specialist mental health professionals in every school, rolling out Young Futures hubs in every community, and modernising the Mental Health Act.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[8113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that the 2021 NICE Guideline for ME/CFS is implemented.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[8114]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the safety of NHS care for patients with (a) severe and (b) very severe ME.

Andrew Gwynne:

The 2021 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidelines on the diagnosis and management of myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), provides recommendations on principles of care for people with severe ME/CFS, including hospital care, and adapting a multidisciplinary approach with access to a range of health and social care professionals based on needs.

The NICE's guidelines are not mandatory, but the Government does expect healthcare commissioners to take the guidelines fully into account in designing services to meet the needs of their local population, and to work towards their implementation over time.

No specific assessment has been made of the adequacy of the safety of National Health Service care for patients with severe and very severe ME/CFS, but there are steps that the Government is taking to improve care for patients with ME/CFS, including those with severe and very severe ME/CFS.

The Department has funded the £3.2 million DecodeME study with the Medical Research Council to understand the causes and consequences of, and find treatments for, ME/CFS. This study aims to understand if there is a genetic component to the condition and, in doing so, increase our understanding of ME/CFS to support the development of diagnostic tests and targeted treatments.

The public consultation on the interim delivery plan for ME/CFS was run in 2023. It has been a priority since July 2024 to publish the response to the 2023 consultation on the ME/CFS interim delivery plan. Departmental officials are in the process of finalising a report summarising the responses, for publication. The consultation responses, alongside continued stakeholder engagement, will inform the development of the final delivery plan, which we aim to publish in the winter of 2024/25. The plan will focus on boosting research, improving attitudes and education, and bettering the lives of people with this debilitating disease, including those with severe and very severe ME/CFS.

■ **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services**

Dr Ben Spencer:

[8478]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies for the (a) care and (b) treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) of the report entitled Maeve Boothby O'Neill: Prevention of Future Deaths Report, published on 8 October 2024.

Andrew Gwynne:

Our deepest sympathies go out to Maeve's family and friends in this tragic case. Every patient deserves to have their condition understood and treated to the highest standard, and this is a heart-wrenching example of a patient falling through the cracks.

The Department has received a Prevention of Future Deaths (PFD) report, which we are currently reviewing. It is important that we learn the lessons from every PFD report, and we will consider the report carefully before responding appropriately.

We are committed to improving the care and support for all those affected by myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). It is a priority to publish the response to the 2023 consultation on the ME/CFS interim delivery plan. The consultation responses, alongside continued stakeholder engagement, will inform the development of the final delivery plan, which we aim to publish in the winter of 2024/25.

■ Food: Advertising**Dr Beccy Cooper:**[\[8601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of physical advertising for unhealthy food products on levels of child obesity.

Andrew Gwynne:

No assessment has been made of the potential impact of outdoor physical advertising for less healthy food and drink products on levels of child obesity. However, the Government welcomes recent action at a local level to ban junk food marketing across public transport networks and public spaces that are controlled locally.

Supporting people to stay healthier for longer is at the heart of the Government's Health Mission. This includes taking bold action to tackle the childhood obesity crisis and create the healthiest generation of children ever.

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 9:00pm 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, which will come into force United Kingdom-wide 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.

■ Gambling: Mental Health Services

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[\[8019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the processes for supporting patients presenting to General Practitioners with mental health disorders attributable to gambling.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to supporting improvements to the existing treatment system, ensuring people experiencing gambling-related harm are able to access the right care at the right time.

NHS England now operates 15 specialist gambling treatment clinics, up from two in 2019, with representation across every region in England. Through these clinics, the National Health Service has capacity to treat up to 3,000 people experiencing gambling-related harms each year.

General practitioners are responsible for ensuring their own clinical knowledge remains up-to-date and for identifying learning needs as part of their continuing professional development. This activity should include taking account of new research and developments in guidance, such as that produced by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), to ensure that they can continue to provide high quality care to all patients.

The NICE is currently developing a gambling-related harms guideline, focused on identification, assessment, and management of people who may be harmed by gambling. Publication is expected later this year.

■ General Practitioners

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[8406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a maximum number of appointments each GP can undertake in one day.

Stephen Kinnock:

We hugely value the critical role that general practitioners (GPs) play, and GPs are delivering more appointments than ever before. No evaluation has been conducted to determine the merits of introducing a maximum number of appointments each GP can undertake. GPs are independent businesses who are contracted by National Health Service commissioners to perform essential medical services. As a result, individual practices are responsible for the daily operations of their business outside of their contractual obligations, including determining the number of clinics and appointments offered to patients. This is because each practice is best placed to understand their own workforce and workloads.

■ General Practitioners: Stratford and Bow**Uma Kumaran:** [\[8065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of GPs in Stratford and Bow constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are working to increase the general practice (GP) workforce in England, including in the Stratford and Bow constituency. 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.

■ GP Surgeries: Capital Investment**Munira Wilson:** [\[7851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a time series of the capital grants allocated to General Practices for refurbishment and replacement by NHS England under the Primary Care capital grants policy, since 2015.

Karin Smyth:

The information requested is not held centrally. We have commissioned NHS England for this information and will provide an update once we receive the reply.

■ Health Professions: Abuse and Discrimination**Abtisam Mohamed:** [\[8326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps support healthcare professionals who face (a) discrimination and (b) abuse.

Karin Smyth:

Discrimination and abuse are unacceptable in any workplace, and have no place in the National Health Service. All employers across the NHS should have robust policies in place on how these behaviours should be handled and what support should be made available to staff.

In January 2021, and in conjunction with the Social Partnership Forum, NHS England developed and published a national Violence Prevention and Reduction Standard. This supports employers in their efforts to provide a safe and secure working environment for NHS staff, with a focus on risk management, training, and support for those impacted by incidences of violence or aggression.

NHS England has also developed an NHS Civility and Respect programme to tackle bullying and harassment in the NHS, and to create positive working environments.

■ Health Services and Social Services: Long Covid

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[8222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of Long Covid on the health and social care workforce.

Andrew Gwynne:

The most recent data from the Office for National Statistics estimated that for the 4-week period ending 5 March 2023, 4.41% of healthcare workers and 5.33% of social care workers had self-reported long COVID symptoms of any duration.

■ Health Services: Finance

Seamus Logan:

[\[8597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to take steps to reduce the discrepancies in the UK's health spending relative to other countries in North West Europe.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to properly funding the National Health Service. However, money alone will not be enough, and it must come with reform. As Lord Darzi's report sets out, health system models in other countries where user charges, like social or private insurance, play a bigger role can be more expensive. That means it is important to look beyond simple international comparisons of funding. The budget later this month will finalise the funding position for the NHS in 2024/25 and 2025/26, with the 10-year plan and phase two of the Spending Review next year setting out the details of the reform needed in response to Lord Darzi's report findings, as well as providing funding certainty.

■ Heart Diseases and Strokes: Health Services

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[8279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent the causes of (a) heart disease and (b) stroke.

Andrew Gwynne:

Cardiovascular disease (CVD), including heart disease and stroke, is a leading cause of avoidable disability and premature death in the United Kingdom. This is why the Government has set a goal for fewer lives being lost to the biggest killers, including from CVD, and why the NHS England Long Term Plan (2019) sets out a number of actions that aim to help prevent up to 150,000 heart attacks, strokes, and dementia cases by 2029.

The Government continues to support the delivery of the NHS Health Check programme, England's CVD prevention programme, to people aged 40 to 74 years old. This programme identifies people at risk of CVD, supports people to reduce their risk, and prevents approximately 400 heart attacks or strokes each year. To improve access and engagement with the life-saving programme, we are developing a digital

NHS Health Check which will be ready for testing in early 2025 and will enable people to undertake a check at home. We are also trialling the delivery of heart health checks to over 130,000 people in workplaces across the country.

Community pharmacies also provide a free blood pressure check service for anyone over 40 years old. In cases where this results in a high reading, pharmacists can make sure people receive the right National Health Service support to reduce their blood pressure and risk of death or serious disability.

We are also taking action on primary prevention to tackle the behavioural risk factors for heart disease and stroke such as smoking and obesity. Action includes introducing the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, implementing the advertising regulations for less healthy food and drink on television and online, and empowering councils to block the development of new fast-food shops outside schools.

We know there is more to do to prevent the causes of CVD, including heart disease and stroke. The Department and NHS England are working together to achieve the Government's ambition for fewer lives lost to the biggest killers, including CVD, and we will share more in due course.

■ HIV Infection: Diagnosis

Neil O'Brien: [\[7537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of (a) women and (b) men who received care for a diagnosed HIV infection were born in (i) the UK, (ii) Europe, (iii) Northern Africa, (iii) Eastern Africa, (iv) Middle Africa, (v) Southern Africa, (vi) Western Africa, (vii) Africa, (viii) Asia, (ix) Oceania, (x) Northern America, (xi) Latin America and the Caribbean and (xii) an unknown location, in each year since 2014.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 10 October 2024]: The information requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Hospices: Finance

Steve Darling: [\[8518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of variation in funding hospices receive across England.

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[8606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to increase hospice funding.

Stephen Kinnock:

We want a society where every person receives high-quality, compassionate care from diagnosis through to the end of life. The Government is determined to shift more healthcare out of hospitals and into the community, to ensure that patients and their

families receive personalised care in the most appropriate setting, and palliative and end of life care, including hospices, will have a big role to play in that shift.

Palliative care services are included in the list of services an integrated care board (ICB) must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

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

No assessment has been made on the level of variation of hospice funding. Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. The amount of funding charitable hospices receive varies by ICB area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth and range of palliative and end of life care provision within their ICB footprint.

Steve Darling:

[8520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact of hospice funding on people's experiences of death and dying.

Clive Jones:

[8575]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the impact of hospice funding on people's experience of death and dying in Wokingham.

Stephen Kinnock:

We want a society where every person receives high-quality, compassionate care from diagnosis through to the end of life. The Government is determined to shift more healthcare out of hospitals and into the community, to ensure patients and their families receive personalised care in the most appropriate setting, and hospices will have a big role to play in that shift.

Palliative care services are included in the list of services an integrated care board (ICB) must commission. This promotes a more consistent national approach and supports commissioners in prioritising palliative and end of life care. To support ICBs in this duty, NHS England has published statutory guidance and service specifications.

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

No assessment has been made of the impact of hospice funding on people's experiences of death and dying. Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing NHS services. The amount of funding charitable hospices receive varies by ICB area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth and range of palliative and end of life care provision within their ICB footprint.

■ Kidney Diseases: Transplant Surgery

Daisy Cooper: [\[6538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to help reduce waiting lists for a kidney transplant.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) manage the NHS Organ Donor Register and National Transplant Register in the United Kingdom. They are working to reduce the number of patients on the waiting list by revising the National Organ Retrieval Service to improve its efficiency, supporting clinical teams to increase the use of extended criteria donors, implementing new technology to improve non-use rates, and growing the UK Living Kidney Sharing Scheme to enable more centres to share kidneys across the country.

The Department, NHSBT, and NHS England are working together to improve utilisation of all solid organs following recommendations from the Organ Utilisation Group 2023 report. This includes considering how Assessment and Recovery Centres could be established and where deceased donor kidneys are perfused and assessed, with the potential to increase kidneys for transplantation by up to 400 per year.

Daisy Cooper: [\[6539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the conclusions of the report entitled Transplant care in the UK: a patient perspective, published by Kidney Care UK in July 2024, if he will take steps to ensure that eligible kidney disease patients facing kidney failure are pre-emptively placed on transplant waiting lists before undergoing dialysis.

Andrew Gwynne:

NHS England's Service Specification for Renal Transplantation identifies transplant as the optimal treatment option for patients with stage five chronic kidney disease (CKD 5) and mandates that all commissioned providers should assess the benefits and risks of transplantation with patients, six months ahead of commencing dialysis treatment.

In 2022, NHS England's Renal Services Transformation Programme produced a toolkit to support renal providers across England to transform care for patients with kidney disease. This includes principles around improving transplantation services and increasing pre-emptive transplantation rates for patients. The toolkit also includes a self-assessment questionnaire, with four key principles, to support renal providers

to improve transplantation services for patients with CKD 5. Providers in England are supported by the NHS England commissioned Renal Clinical Networks to improve patient care, with all networks having identified transplantation improvement workstreams and clinical leads.

The Department, NHS Blood and Transplant, and NHS England are working together to improve utilisation of all solid organs following recommendations from the Organ Utilisation Group 2023 report. This includes equity of access to transplant for all patients across the country.

■ Long Covid

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[8224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to update the 2021 NICE guideline for long covid.

Karin Smyth:

We have no plans to instruct the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to review its guideline on managing the long-term effects of COVID-19. The NICE develops its guidance independently and keeps its published guidelines under active surveillance so that it is able to update its recommendations in light of any significant new evidence. Decisions on updates to existing guidance are made by the NICE's Prioritisation Board, in line with NICE's published common prioritisation framework. The NICE does not currently have plans to update its guideline on managing the long-term effects of COVID-19.

■ Members: Correspondence

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[5624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 7 August 2024 from the hon. Member for Tooting on children's cancer services in the South East.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 14 October 2024]: We replied to the hon. Member's letter on 16 September 2024. We apologise for the delay in replying, as this was due to Conference.

■ Mental Health Services: Death

Tom Hayes: [\[7106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to fund research on mental health patient (a) homicide and (b) suicide.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR funds a range of research in mental health, including research relating to homicide and suicide. This includes a study which aims

to understand whether and how a 'Distress Brief Intervention' can reduce suicidal ideation, suicidal behaviour and self-harm among those presenting to front line services in distress and a study to understand the extent of suicidal ideation, homicidal ideation, and self-harm in parent carers.

The NIHR welcomes high quality funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including mental health patient homicide and suicide.

■ NHS England

Jim Shannon:

[\[7784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take with NHS England's (a) clinical chairs and (b) device working groups to refine the process for the inclusion of new devices and range extensions within the existing national catalogue; where those processes are published; and what steps he is taking to ensure clarity for external stakeholders.

Andrew Gwynne:

Under the Specialised Service Devices programme, clinical chairs and advisors in the device working group are continuing work to refine the inclusion process for new devices, while also developing range extensions within the existing national catalogue. This is alongside continuing work on device category specifications.

Device working groups will develop a clinical utilisation methodology designed to reduce unwarranted variation in the extensive range of available devices, while NHS Supply Chain will deliver price reductions in devices purchased.

■ NHS: Buildings

Jim Shannon:

[\[7774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the quality of (a) hospital, (b) specialist centre and (c) other NHS buildings.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to delivering a National Health Service that is fit for the future, providing high-quality health and social care for those in need. This means providing strategic, value for money investments into capital schemes that improve the quality of hospitals, specialist centres, and other NHS buildings.

Integrated care boards and trusts have been allocated £4.2 billion this year to prioritise for local capital schemes that maintain and improve their NHS estate. An additional £3.9 billion is being provided through national programmes that aim to modernise and transform the NHS estate, facilitating digital improvements, and providing funding for new urgent care centres and mental health facilities. Decisions regarding future investment in the NHS are subject to the upcoming Spending Review, where the short and long-term needs of the NHS estate will be assessed.

Steve Darling:

[8271]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of NHS estates are rated condition A in each NHS estate in the South West.

Karin Smyth:

As part of the management of their estate, National Health Service trusts regularly assess the physical condition of their estate. Facilities rated as category A are considered new and able to perform adequately throughout their full lifespan.

The Estates Related Information Collection (ERIC) survey collects data from trusts on the quality of their estate annually. However, it does not collect the number or proportion of the NHS estate that is ranked as category A. The ERIC does collect data on backlog maintenance, the projected cost of bringing all the buildings on each NHS site into acceptable condition. The latest data is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/estates-returns-information-collection-summary-page-and-dataset-for-eric-202223>

■ **Pancreatic Cancer: Research**

Victoria Collins:

[7071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase funding available for pancreatic cancer research.

Andrew Gwynne:

Research is crucial in tackling cancer, which is why the Department invests over £1.5 billion per year in health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR's research expenditure for all cancers was £121.8 million in 2022/23, and the NIHR spends more on cancer than any other disease group.

The NIHR has committed £4.3 million in research on pancreatic cancer since 2018/19. This includes research exploring whether a standard surveillance programme after pancreatic cancer surgery would improve survival rates, and what impact surveillance would have on quality of life and healthcare providers.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including pancreatic cancer. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality. The NIHR welcomes further high-quality proposals to inform approaches to preventing and treating pancreatic cancer.

Andrew Cooper:

[8013]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve research into treatments for pancreatic cancer; and how much funding his Department has allocated to pancreatic cancer research in each of the last 14 years.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 14 October 2024]: Research is crucial in tackling cancer. The Department spends £1.5 billion each year on research through its research delivery arm, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), with cancer the largest area of spend at more than £121.8 million in 2022/23. NIHR spends more on cancer than any other disease group, reflecting its high priority.

NIHR have committed more than £7.6 million to pancreatic directly funded cancer research, across 15 research projects, since 2010/11. The NIHR continues to welcome funding applications for research into all cancer types. Funding applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition.

The following table shows the amount of funding allocated to pancreatic cancer research in each year since 2010/11 committed by NIHR:

YEAR	TOTAL (£,000)
2010/11	3,100
2011/12	
2012/13	
2013/14	
2014/15	66.5
2015/16	291
2016/17	66.5
2017/18	2,000
2018/19	
2019/20	149.5
2020/21	440.7
2021/22	544.3
2022/23	150
2023/24	839.5

Additionally, NIHR infrastructure funding supports the country's leading experts to develop and deliver high-quality translational, clinical, and applied research that is funded by the NIHR's research programmes, other public funders of research, charities and the life sciences industry. In doing so, our investment plays a crucial role in underpinning the research funded by our partners.

As part of our commitment to driving more and better research into less survivable cancers, the Government awarded £2 million to new interdisciplinary research teams tackling hard to treat cancers, via the Medical Research Council's two-day cancer 'sandpit' strategic funding opportunity in 2023 focused on technological innovation for understanding cancers, including pancreatic, with the poorest survival rates.

■ Pharmacy: Health Services

Liam Conlon:

[\[8542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his policy is on the role of pharmacies in (a) delivering healthcare and (b) improving health outcomes in the community.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are committed to expanding the role of community pharmacies. We want to develop and better utilise the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to improve access to care in local communities and address inequalities.

That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists. In preparation, NHS England is piloting the use of prescribing by community pharmacists in a range of pathways that will enable them to play an increased role in delivering clinical services in primary care.

Pharmacies have demonstrated their reach into their local communities, particularly in delivering preventative healthcare like vaccinations and advice on minor illness. The Government is committed to shifting more care from the hospital to the community, and pharmacies will play a vital role in that.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Shaun Davies:

[\[8265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve screening for prostate cancer.

Andrew Gwynne:

Screening for prostate cancer is currently not recommended by the UK National Screening Committees (UK NSC). This is because of the inaccuracy of the current best test, the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). A PSA-based screening programme could harm men, as some of them would be diagnosed with a cancer that would not have caused them problems during their life. This would lead to additional tests and treatments which can also have harmful side effects; for example, incontinence of faeces and urine and impotence.

The UK NSC is undertaking an evidence review for prostate cancer screening and plans to report within the UK NSC's three-year work plan.

The evidence review includes modelling the clinical cost effectiveness of several approaches to prostate cancer screening; this includes different potential ways of screening the whole population from 40 years of age onwards and targeted screening

aimed at groups of people identified as being at higher-than-average risk, such as black men or men with a family history of cancer.

■ Respiratory System: Health Services

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[7787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that respiratory conditions are prioritised in the new 10 year plan for the NHS.

Andrew Gwynne:

The 10-Year Health Plan will consider the changes needed to meet the three health mission goals, which are: a fairer system where everyone lives well for longer; a National Health Service that is there when people need it; and fewer lives lost to the biggest killers.

We will carefully be considering policies with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders, as we develop the plan.

■ Social Services

Deirdre Costigan: [\[8282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on implementation of a National Care Service.

Deirdre Costigan: [\[8283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timeline is for implementation of a National Care Service.

Deirdre Costigan: [\[8285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) disabled and (b) elderly people are consulted before delivery of a National Care Service.

Deirdre Costigan: [\[8286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that the National Care Service supports the needs of people from diverse (a) cultural and (b) linguistic backgrounds.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government is committed to building a National Care Service based on clear, consistent national standards, that will improve the quality of care. On 10 October 2024, recognising the central role of our care workforce, we took a critical step, introducing the legislation that will establish the first ever Fair Pay Agreement for care professionals.

We will set out the next steps in due course for a process that engages with adult social care stakeholders, including cross-party members and a diverse range of people with lived experience of care, to build consensus towards a National Care Service.

■ Social Services: Private Sector

Sir Ashley Fox:

[7621]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the Care Quality Commission of (a) inspecting and (b) rating private care providers who have not been rated in the last four years.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 14 October 2024]: The Care Quality Commission's (CQC) cost over the last four years for fee funded activity was between £220 million and £230 million. The CQC doesn't break down the cost of activity between private and public providers, however, as shown in the CQC's Annual report and accounts 2022/23, approximately 50% of the CQC's income comes from private providers, as specified on page 16 of the report. The CQC's accounts report for 2022/23 is available at the following link:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/annual-report-and-accounts-202223>

The CQC's fees are for the cost of regulation, rather than solely for the volume of inspection activity, therefore, the information is not available in the format requested.

We recognise that Dr Penelope Dash's interim report says that updating ratings can be too slow. The CQC is working with Professor Sir Mike Richards and Professor Vic Rayner, the Chair of the Care Provider Alliance, to review longer-term improvements to their single assessment framework and how they use it. Other changes to the single assessment framework, such as how CQC score quality statements will allow the CQC to assess and inspect more services while ensuring their ratings are robust. Over the next four weeks the CQC will begin external engagement on aspects of the Single Assessment Framework that require rapid activity to ensure stakeholders are involved and shaping the CQC's response to the recommendations.

■ Social Work: Newbury

Mr Lee Dillon:

[8607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of trends in the level of social work vacancy rates in Newbury.

Stephen Kinnock:

We do not hold information for specific localities, and therefore no assessments have been made. We are committed to the recruitment and retention of social workers, through our existing initiatives like bursaries and the Assessed and Support Year in Employment, which helps build a supply of social workers with the right skills, knowledge, and values.

■ Surgery: Beckenham and Penge**Liam Conlon:**[\[8539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for elective surgeries in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Karin Smyth:

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for the Government, as we get the National Health Service back on its feet. Equality of both access to care and outcomes will be at the heart of building an NHS that is fit for the future.

We have committed to achieving the NHS Constitutional standard that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment by the end of this Parliament. As a first step to achieving this, we will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week across the country, and will increase the number of computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, and other tests, that are needed to reduce elective and cancer waits.

Dedicated and protected surgical hubs are also helping to reduce elective surgeries' wait times by focusing on high volume low complexity surgeries, as recommended by the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and transforming the way the NHS provides elective care. There is one surgical hub within the King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, the Orpington Hospital Elective Surgical Hub. This stand-alone hub opened in December 2013 and is a single specialty hub focusing on trauma and orthopaedics. Patients from the Beckenham and Penge constituency can be referred to this surgical hub for elective surgeries.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Hospitals**Jerome Mayhew:**[\[900641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of introducing means-testing for the Winter Fuel Payment on hospital admissions.

Karin Smyth:

This is not a decision any Government would want to make, but we inherited a £22 billion black hole in the nation's finances. Difficult decisions are required.

We continue to stand behind vulnerable households by:

- Increasing the state pension by around £460 for over 12 million pensioners in April, because of our commitment to protect the triple lock.
- Delivering the £150 Warm Home Discount for low-income households and providing £421 million to extend the Household Support Fund.

We are encouraging pensioners to check their eligibility for Pension Credit to ensure as many people as possible have access to support they're entitled to. We have seen a 152% increase in claims since announcement.

An equality assessment was published by DWP on the 13th of September.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs: Recruitment**

Charlotte Nichols:

[7855]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to proceed with the recruitment process for members of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, as announced by the previous government on 2 August 2023.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Appointments to the Advisory Council and the Misuse of Drugs are made by Ministers in accordance with the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the principles set out in the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

[Governance Code on Public Appointments - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/governance-code)

Ministers are considering the recruitment options, and a decision will be taken in due course.

■ **Antisocial Behaviour**

Tom Hayes:

[8039]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle antisocial behaviour.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

We will put thousands of new neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities, so that residents have a named officer they can turn to when things go wrong.

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

■ **Asylum: Employment**

Dr Simon Opher:

[8506]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of giving asylum seekers the right to work whilst their application is being processed.

Seema Malhotra:

Asylum seekers who have had their claim outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own, can apply for permission to work. Those permitted to

work are restricted to jobs on the Immigration Salary List. This list is based on expert advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee.

Whilst we keep all policies under review, there are no immediate plans to change the existing policy. It is important that we distinguish between individuals who need protection and those seeking to work here who can apply for a work visa under the Immigration Rules.

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system after it has been put under unprecedented pressure. We will ensure that the system operates fairly and with quicker processing of claims. This will see recognised refugees being able to work, whilst failed asylum seekers can be removed.

■ Asylum: Gender Based Violence

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[8397]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle violence against women and girls in the asylum system.

Jess Phillips:

The health and safety of asylum seekers is of paramount importance to the Home Office. We are committed to delivering an asylum process that is gender sensitive – building on the wider Government strategy to tackle violence against women and girls.

All decision-makers receive mandatory training on considering asylum claims and must follow published Home Office policy guidance, including specific guidance on gender issues, which covers specific forms of gender-based persecution.

The Home Office works closely with partners on a range of initiatives, including those which are reflected in our gender asylum policy guidance, for example providing information about safeguarding and signposting to support services and provision of gender specific interviewers and interpreters. You can find this guidance here: [Gender issues in asylum claims: caseworker guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gender-issues-in-asylum-claims-caseworker-guidance).

Our providers maintain high standards and follow established standard procedures to manage the safety, security and wellbeing of those we accommodate.

The Home Office has published the Asylum Support Contracts Safeguarding Framework at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-support-contracts-safeguarding-framework> (opens in a new tab).

This framework sets out a joint, overarching approach, as well as the key controls and reporting mechanisms in place, across the Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts, for safeguarding arrangements.

A 24/7 helpline provided by Migrant Help is available to raise any concerns.

■ Asylum: Hotels

Tom Hayes:

[\[8044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on reducing the use of hotels as contingency asylum accommodation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes our accommodation sites, as the Home Office continues to identify a range of options to minimise the use of hotels and ensure better use of public money, whilst maintaining sufficient accommodation to meet demand.

■ Community Policing

Tom Hayes:

[\[8038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of levels of neighbourhood policing.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Secretary has made a clear commitment to strengthen neighbourhood policing through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, which includes the addition of thousands more neighbourhood police personnel, as part of the Government's Safer Streets mission. Funding for 2025/26 will be subject to the Spending Review.

■ Crime Prevention

Tom Hayes:

[\[8041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to prevent crime.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government has put crime prevention front and centre of our safer streets mission, which aims to halve violence against women and girls, halve knife crime, and restore confidence in the policing and justice system over the next decade.

In addition, the 2024-25 police funding settlement will provide up to £18.5 billion of funding for the policing system, supporting the police to undertake crime prevention.

■ Crime: Prosecutions and Victims

Tom Hayes:

[\[8040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve (a) charge rates of people accused of crime and (b) support for victims of crime.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office recognises that charge volumes and rates have been persistently low for too long. That's why we have set out our Safer Streets mission to rebuild confidence in policing and the criminal justice system.

The Home Office is working with the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to improve criminal justice outcomes and to support collaboration between the two agencies in order to increase the number of cases being charged and prosecuted, and reduce the time taken to reach this point.

The Government is committed to ensuring victims of crime have the information and support they need. That is why we will implement the reforms in the Victims and Prisoner Act 2024; making sure that victims know about their rights in the Code and that agencies deliver them and placing greater responsibility on local commissioners to collaborate on funding for support services.

The Ministry of Justice provides funding for vital victim and witness support services, to help victims cope and recover from the impact of crime, through a mix of local and nationally commissioned services.

■ Demonstrations**Abtisam Mohamed:**[\[7976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to protect the right to peaceful protest.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government is committed to protecting and preserving the fundamental rights to freedom of assembly and expression because peaceful protest is a vital part of our democratic society.

The Government committed to undertake expedited post-legislative scrutiny on all aspects of the Public Order Act 2023 next year. That review will also consider the Public Order Act 1986 (Serious Disruption to the Life of the Community) Regulations 2023.

■ Domestic Abuse**Tom Hayes:**[\[8048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the (a) effective management and (b) monitoring of serial preparators of domestic abuse.

Jess Phillips:

This government has committed to using every tool available to target prolific perpetrators of domestic abuse from early intervention to the counter-terror style targeting of the most serious offenders by the police.

The government has committed to using the approaches normally reserved for counter terrorism and serious organised crime to target perpetrators and keep victims

safe. Working closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing, the Home Secretary will oversee the development of a new national approach to the use of data-driven tools to identify and manage the most harmful and prolific perpetrators of violence against women and girls.

The Domestic Abuse and Stalking Perpetrator Intervention Fund currently provides up to £39 million over two years until April 2025 to 27 Police and Crime Commissioners to commission domestic abuse and stalking perpetrator behaviour change intervention programmes in their local areas. The fund aims to support sustainable behaviour change and robust disruption to reduce reoffending and stop perpetrators of domestic abuse and stalking moving from one victim to the next.

■ **Domestic Abuse: Armed Forces**

Tom Hayes:

[\[8049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Defence to ensure (a) domestic abuse within the armed forces is tackled, (b) victims are protected and (c) perpetrators are held to account.

Jess Phillips:

The Government has set out an unprecedented mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade; working across government departments, sectors and wider society to tackle the scourge of violence and abuse wherever it is found.

We will work closely with the Ministry of Defence to ensure we respond robustly to support victims and pursue perpetrators within the armed forces, and their families. This will include identifying any additional challenges this cohort may face.

■ **Hate Crime: Staffordshire**

Adam Jogee:

[\[7997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of reported hate crimes in Staffordshire.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office collects and publishes statistics on hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales at the Police Force Area level.

Data for Staffordshire police can be found in Appendix Table 1 here: [Hate crime, England and Wales, year ending March 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ **Home Office: Paternity Leave**

Shaun Davies:

[\[7910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in her Department was in each of the last three years; and whether she holds similar data for police forces in England and Wales.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office policy is named 'maternity and adoption support leave' in recognition of the fact that the secondary parent or, in the case of adoption, the secondary adopter, is not necessarily a man. The average length of maternity and adoption support for last three financial years is outlined below.

YEAR	AVERAGE LENGTH OF MATERNITY AND ADOPTION SUPPORT (CALENDAR DAYS)
2021-22	14
2022-23	14
2023-24	14

The Home Office does not collect centrally information on the average length of paternity leave taken by those working within the police service.

■ **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022**

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[7975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to repeal Part III of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Sections 73, 74 and 79 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC Act 2022) are currently being reviewed by the Government in line with commitments made in Parliament when the Act was passed. In addition, the Act itself will be subject to post-legislative parliamentary scrutiny between 3 and 5 years after Royal Assent, i.e., between April 2025 and April 2027.

■ **Police: Finance**

Shivani Raja: [\[7926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) Police and Crime Commissioners on updating the funding formula for police forces.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government continues to have ongoing discussions representatives from the policing sector, including Police and Crime Commissioners on a range of topics.

This engagement will continue through the current and future Spending Review processes, including discussions on allocation of funding.

■ Police: Misconduct

Jim Shannon:

[7776]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the number of police misconduct investigations held in England in the last 12 months.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the number of police complaints, conduct matters and misconduct proceedings (including cases and allegations) on an annual basis in the 'Police misconduct, England and Wales' statistical bulletin which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-misconduct-statistics>.

The latest information covers cases finalised in year ending 31 March 2023.

This statistical release is also accompanied by open data tables which include information on misconduct proceedings:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-misconduct-open-data-tables>

Data for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 is due for publication in late 2024 to early 2025.

■ Police: Standards

Jim Shannon:

[7769]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure the adequacy of police response times.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Chief Constables are responsible for determining the allocation of resources for operational policing and managing their response times, in line with the priorities set out by their Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) regularly inspect forces' response to the public as a part of their Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspections. As a part of this, they examine whether forces provide an appropriate response to incidents.

As highlighted in their 'Getting a Grip' report on police performance, HMICFRS found wide-ranging issues with the recording of data on attendance times at incidents. The NPCC are exploring options for a standardised measurement of police response in light of recommendations in HMICFRS's 'Getting a Grip' report, and the Home Office are supporting them with this work.

The Home Secretary has been clear that she wants the Home Office to play a greater role in setting performance measures and monitoring and driving system performance in the police. Plans will be set out for this in due course.

Adam Jogee: [\[7992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help improve standards of policing in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and b) Staffordshire.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government committed to rebuilding confidence in policing as part of its safe streets mission and has been clear on its determination to raise standards in policing.

This will include introducing mandatory professional standards on vetting and improving police suspension provisions. Further detail will be set out in due course.

■ Police: Training

Tom Hayes: [\[8046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure police officers are effectively trained to handle cases of (a) domestic abuse and (b) sexual violence.

Tom Hayes: [\[8047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve the charge rates for perpetrators of violence against women and girls.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a top priority for this Government and we will treat it as a national emergency. Our mission is to halve levels of these crimes within a decade, using every lever available to us in government and right across society. This means reforming the police response to these crimes, strengthening the criminal justice system, and empowering victims by providing access to specialist support when they need it.

We are committed to ensuring policing have the right skills and training to respond appropriately to victims of VAWG and have committed to mandating stronger training on VAWG for policing.

We have also supported the College of Policing to design and launch new, academic-informed training programmes on investigating rape and sexual offending. This includes new training for those likely to make initial contact with victims.

To improve the criminal justice response, the Home Office continues to support collaboration between the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in order to increase the number of cases being charged and prosecuted, and reduce the time taken to reach this point. This involves supporting policing and CPS colleagues to improve case progression by reducing blockages, cutting bureaucracy, streamlining processes, and improving timeliness. This Government has also committed to making it easier for high-performing police forces to charge domestic abuse suspects to speed up the charging process and improve outcomes.

■ Prostitution: Washington and Gateshead South

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[7720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support her Department provides to help victims of sexual exploitation in Washington and Gateshead South constituency exit prostitution.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[7721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce demand for trafficking for sexual exploitation in Washington and Gateshead South constituency.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[7722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the scale of commercial sexual exploitation in Washington and Gateshead South constituency.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[7723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to prevent organised crime groups advertising victims of trafficking and other sexual exploitation offences on websites advertising prostitution in Washington and Gateshead South constituency.

Jess Phillips:

The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is a truly horrific crime. This Government has committed to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, and will use every lever available to deliver this.

We must ensure law enforcement relentlessly pursue perpetrators and that victims are supported to recover from this horrendous abuse. The Government is working closely with law enforcement to tackle the drivers of trafficking for sexual exploitation, including through operational intensifications to target prolific perpetrators.

We have several ways to estimate the scale of sexual exploitation. Victims of sexual exploitation make up a significant proportion of referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM, the framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery to appropriate support). The most recent statistics show that in 2023, sexual exploitation accounted for 10% (1,679) of all referrals, a 2% increase from the previous year, with 9% (1,470) of referrals relating to women. The Home Office does not hold data specific to Washington and Gateshead South. However, from January to June 2024, 6 potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM who reported (either part or wholly) sexual exploitation disclosed that their exploitation occurred in Tyne and Wear.

Online platforms are a significant enabler of sexual exploitation. The Online Safety Act 2023 sets out priority offences, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking offences, and companies will need to adopt measures and put in place

systems and processes to identify, assess and address these offences based on a risk assessment.

To help support victims, we are providing £1.36m over three years to Changing Lives for their Net-Reach project, which provides early intervention and targeted support for women and girls at high-risk of commercial exploitation. We are also providing £378,811 to Trevi Women who provide trauma-informed support to women wishing to exit on-street prostitution.

In addition, the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract provides support to adult potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery in England and Wales. This includes financial support and a support worker to help them access wider services, including medical treatment, legal aid, legal representatives, and legal advice.

Home Office Ministers regularly meet with stakeholders, including NGOs and law enforcement partners, to promote the better identification and prosecution of perpetrators, and to enhance support for victims who are trapped within commercial sexual exploitation.

■ Protest

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[7977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to strengthen the right to peaceful protest.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Peaceful protest is a vital part of our democratic society, which must be protected. The Government keeps all relevant legislation under regular review.

■ Slavery: Victims

Tom Hayes: [\[8042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support victims of modern slavery.

Tom Hayes: [\[8043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to enhance the ability of the National Referral Mechanism to ensure quicker and more effective assistance for modern slavery victims.

Tom Hayes: [\[8045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the (a) specific needs of British national victims of modern slavery, (b) adequacy of pathways to access support and (c) potential barriers to accessing support.

Jess Phillips:

The Government is committed to tackling modern slavery, prosecuting those responsible and supporting victims in their recovery.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK's framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. 17,004 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office in 2023; the highest annual number since the NRM began in 2009 and a 628% increase since 2014.

This unprecedented increase in the volume of referrals into the NRM has presented significant challenges in resourcing and workflow, and we recognise that wait times for Conclusive Grounds decisions are too long. Operational teams have invested heavily in seeking to address this and as a result numbers of people awaiting a Conclusive Grounds decision have dropped for the first time and timeliness is improving. We continue to strive for faster decisions for victims.

In England and Wales, after referral to the National Referral Mechanism, adult victims can access specialist support from the government funded Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC). This support includes safe accommodation where necessary, financial support and a support worker to help them access wider support services, including medical treatment, legal aid, legal representatives, and legal advice. This support is available to all adult victims, including British nationals, based on an ongoing needs-based assessment.

Local authorities are the primary service provider for safeguarding child victims regardless of their nationality or immigration status. Additionally, the Government has rolled out Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) in two-thirds of Local Authorities in England and Wales. ICTGs provide an additional source of advice and support for potentially trafficked children, irrespective of nationality or immigration status. An ICTG's advocacy and involvement throughout the decision-making process is intended to ensure the child is protected from further harm, prevent possible repeat victimisation, re-trafficking or going missing, and promote the child's recovery.

The Government has robust internal assurance processes in place to manage and assure projects and programmes. We are currently looking at how we ensure the long-term sustainability of these programmes to continue to meet the needs of both adult and child victims of modern slavery.

■ UK Border Force: Standards

Jim Shannon:

[\[7778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) adequacy and (b) efficiency of the Border Force fleet.

Seema Malhotra:

We always seek to ensure the adequacy and efficiency of the Border Force fleet. Working with key law enforcement partners, Border Force Maritime Command supports border security in the maritime arena. Domain awareness and the effective deployment of maritime assets to a variety of tasks is achieved in conjunction with the Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC). The efficacy of these operations is reviewed by senior Border Force staff on a monthly basis.

■ Visas: Applications

Adam Jogee:

[7993]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the time taken for visa applications to be processed for (a) adults and (b) children.

Seema Malhotra:

We are seeking to ensure visa applications are processed as quickly as possible. Customer service standards exist for all types of visa applications, however the time taken to process a visa application may take longer under certain circumstances such as if the information provided is not accurate or further evidence is required.

If there is a delay, the applicant will be notified of this within the current processing times.

Data relating to the performance against visa service standards for all types of applications are produced as part of the Migration Transparency publication.

These can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>(opens in a new tab)(opens in a new tab).

■ Visas: Ukraine

Tom Hayes:

[8360]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to make it her policy to give Ukrainian visa holders (a) humanitarian protection or (b) other long-term status.

Seema Malhotra:

This Government is committed to standing with Ukraine, and providing stability for those we have welcomed to the UK and those who still need our sanctuary.

To provide future certainty to those who have been provided with sanctuary in the UK under the existing Ukraine schemes, the government will be introducing a bespoke Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE), due to open in early 2025. This will allow those with sanctuary to apply for further permission to remain in the UK, giving them the same rights and entitlements as they have been given under the existing Ukraine Schemes.

To allow ease of transition, this scheme will open in advance of the first Ukraine scheme visas expiring, with further details on eligibility and application processes being available before the scheme opens.

The Ukrainian government have been clear about their strong desire for the future return of its citizens to help rebuild Ukraine when it is safe to do so. It is important that our approach respects these wishes.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Commonhold and Leasehold: Reform**

Ms Julie Minns: [\[7938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will include proposals to end the inclusion of financially burdensome terms in the deeds of (a) freeholds and (b) leaseholds in planned draft legislation on leasehold and commonhold reform.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[7979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will take steps to replace the leasehold system with commonhold.

Joe Powell: [\[8051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department plans to respond to the consultation entitled Modern leasehold: restricting ground rent for existing leases which closed on 17 January 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

Over the course of this Parliament, the Government will further reform the leasehold system. We will enact remaining Law Commission recommendations relating to enfranchisement and the Right to Manage, tackle unregulated and unaffordable ground rents, reinvigorate commonhold through a comprehensive new legal framework, and ban the sale of new leasehold flats so commonhold becomes the default tenure.

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

■ General Elections

Adam Jogee: [\[7996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of compulsory voting in (a) local and (b) general elections.

Alex Norris:

No assessment of compulsory voting has been made.

■ Leasehold

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[7819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the average cost to leaseholders of marriage value in the last 12

months; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of abolishing marriage value.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[7980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to tackle unreasonable service charges for leaseholders.

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[7981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of giving leaseholders more powers to establish their own management companies.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government 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 measures that will make it easier for leaseholders to exercise their right to take over the management of their properties; enable the introduction of a new valuation scheme that leaseholders must follow to calculate how much they should pay to enfranchise, which includes the removal of the requirement for leaseholders to pay marriage value; and deliver 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 needed to bring the Act into force. An impact assessment for the Act, including on the removal of marriage value, was published in December 2023 and received a green rating from the independent Regulatory Policy Committee.

Over the course of this Parliament, the Government will further reform the leasehold system. We will enact remaining Law Commission recommendations relating to enfranchisement and the Right to Manage, tackle unregulated and unaffordable ground rents, reinvigorate commonhold through a comprehensive new legal framework, and ban the sale of new leasehold flats so commonhold becomes the default tenure. The Government has made clear it intends to publish draft legislation on leasehold and commonhold reform in this session so that it may be subject to broad consultation and additional parliamentary scrutiny. We will announce further details in due course.

■ Local Government: Hampshire

David Simmonds: [\[7876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2024 to Question 4069 on Local Government: Hampshire, whether she plans to introduce multi-year Local Government Finance Settlements.

Jim McMahon:

This Government is committed to resetting the relationship between local and central government and working in partnership in the interests of working people. A key part of this is our commitment to moving towards multi-year Local Government Finance Settlements.

■ **Local Government: Productivity****Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[7823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance her Department has issued to local authorities on (a) producing and (b) updating productivity plans since 4 July 2024.

Jim McMahon:

I wrote to all councils on 13 September to thank them for producing a plan and detail the rich evidence base they have given us. I proposed that we work together to build on the work to get more out of existing resources. I was also clear that I am not interested in micromanaging councils, but helping the sector improve efficiency even further, including reducing the barriers to change.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Civil Servants****John Glen:**[\[6111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people have been appointed to civil service positions without open competition in her Department since the general election; what their (a) job titles and (b) salary bands are; and on what basis each was appointed.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:[\[6401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 23 September 2024, to Question 2981, on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Civil Servants, if she will list the (a) Recruitment Principles exception and (b) job title of the position for each of the appointments made without open and fair competition from 4 July 2024 to date.

Alex Norris:

MHCLG made 47 appointments by exception to fair, open and merit-based recruitment principles from 1 July to 31 September 2024.

All appointments were at grades below the Senior Civil Service. We are unable to break this down further (ie grade level) as the numbers are too small to disclose.

EXCEPTION	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF APPOINTMENTS BETWEEN 1 ST JULY – 31 ST SEPTEMBER 2024
Exception 1	Temporary appointments	40

EXCEPTION	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF APPOINTMENTS BETWEEN 1 ST JULY – 31 ST SEPTEMBER 2024
Exception 2	Government employment programmes	5
Exception 3	Secondments	2

The department publishes a senior and junior organogram biannually setting out job titles and salaries – [Organogram of Staff Roles & Salaries - data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk).

There are clear rules governing recruitment and appointment of civil service roles, which are regulated by the Civil Service Commission. It is the longstanding convention of government under successive administrations that we do not comment on matters relating to individual staff.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7018\]](#)

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

Alex Norris:

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

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is currently allocated two vehicles including allocated and shared vehicles.

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

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

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7019\]](#)

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

Alex Norris:

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.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Paternity Leave**Shaun Davies:**[\[7912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in her Department was in each of the last three years; and what information she holds on the the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in local authorities in the same period.

Alex Norris:

Our records show that between 2021 and October 2024, 100 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) employees have taken paternity leave for the birth or adoption of a child. The average working days taken (AWDT) is shown in the table below.

CALENDAR YEAR	AWDT
2021	10
2022	11
2023	12
2024 (Jan to Oct)	10

Staff employed in local authorities are subject to the pay terms and conditions for those organisations. This department does not keep a central record on employment data relating to these organisations.

■ National Security Council**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[7516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she is a member of the National Security Council.

Alex Norris:

Details of Cabinet Committees and their membership are published on gov.uk at the following [link](#).

■ Outdoor Advertising

David Simmonds:

[7875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's guidance entitled Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers, published on 18 June 2007, what guidance her Department issues on advertisements displayed inside a courtyard but visible from a public highway; and whether such advertisements would be categorised as an outdoor advertisement.

Alex Norris:

The department has not issued any further guidance on advertisements displayed inside a courtyard but visible from a public highway beyond that contained in the Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers. General guidance on the advertisement control regime can be found at [Advertisements - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/advertisements).

The control of advertisements is governed by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. Class 6 of Schedule 3 to the Regulations grants deemed consent subject to certain conditions and limitations for advertisements on the forecourt of business premises. It is for local planning authorities to decide whether a particular advertisement requires consent or not having regard to the Regulations.

■ Retail Trade: Macclesfield

Tim Roca:

[8066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to help support high streets in Macclesfield constituency.

Alex Norris:

This Government is fully committed to rejuvenating our high streets and supporting the businesses and communities that make our town centres successful.

MHCLG has provided £11.5 million from the core UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to Cheshire East Council. The Council have developed a number of schemes that local businesses and communities can apply to for support. The Council are also funding at least two UKSPF projects in Macclesfield that aim to enliven the town centre, as well as refurbishing the indoor market.

More broadly through the English Devolution Bill we will introduce a strong new 'right to buy' empowering local communities to reclaim and revitalise empty shops, pubs, and community spaces.

■ Right to Buy Scheme

David Simmonds:

[7873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data her Department holds on the average Right to Buy discount (a) in London and (b) outside London in each year since 1997.

David Simmonds:

[7874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data her Department holds on the maximum Right to Buy discount (a) in London and (b) outside London in each year since 1997.

Matthew Pennycook:

Financial information on Right to Buy sales in England was not collected prior to 1998-99. Average discounts from 1998-99 onwards at England level are available in Live Table 682 at the following [link](#).

Figures for numbers of sales and total discounts given are available from 2011-12 onwards by local authority at the following [link](#).

Prior to 2011-12, reliable financial data that is consistent with the numbers of sales is not held at regional or local authority level, so for these years it is not possible to provide a geographic breakdown of average discounts beyond the England level available at the above link.

The maximum Right to Buy discounts for the various regions since the inception of the scheme are published in the technical notes of the department's Right to Buy sales and replacements statistical release at the following [link](#), under section 4.4 "Discounts".

Satvir Kaur:

[8062]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of working with local authorities to (a) freeze and (b) reform the Right to Buy.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is currently reviewing the increased Right to Buy discounts that were introduced in 2012, with a view to better protecting existing social housing stock. The Government will also review the Right to Buy more widely, including looking at eligibility criteria and protections for newly-built social housing and will launch a public consultation in the autumn.

■ Social Rented Housing: Construction

Satvir Kaur:

[8061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of setting (a) national and (b) regional targets to build social homes within the 1.5 million homes that have already been planned.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. Our aspiration is to ensure that, in the first full financial year of this Parliament (2025-26), the number of Social Rent homes is rising rather than falling. We will update Parliament on our progress.

We have therefore asked Homes England and the Greater London Authority to maximise the number of Social Rent homes in allocating the remaining Affordable Homes Programme funding.

My department published an update on targets in the 2021-26 Programme on 30 July 2024. We have also proposed a number of changes to national planning policy that are designed to support the delivery of Social Rent homes. We will bring forward details of future Government investment in social and affordable housing at the Spending Review.

■ Social Rented Housing: Poverty

Kim Johnson: [\[7865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the number of households living in social housing without essential pieces of furniture.

Matthew Pennycook:

The department does not collect data on the number of households living in social housing without essential pieces of furniture. Social housing residents in need may be able to get help with essential items from their local council through the 'Household Support Fund'.

JUSTICE

■ Coroners

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[8015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps her Department has taken to help tackle delays at Coroners' Courts.

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[8016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps her Department has taken to reduce regional variations in the services provided by coroners.

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[8017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department has taken to help ensure that coroners are (a) making consistent use of their power to issue Prevention of Future Death reports and (b) improving the use of such reports to help prevent future deaths.

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[8025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to help improve the experiences of bereaved families who appeal coroners' conclusions.

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[8026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to help ensure that coroners' inquests are conducted adequately.

Alex Davies-Jones:

It is important that the inquest process is as swift and efficient as possible to avoid additional distress for bereaved families at such a difficult time in their lives. Whilst the Ministry of Justice is responsible for coroner law and policy, the Department does not have operational responsibility for coroner services as they are a local service, funded and administered by individual local authorities. Coroners themselves are independent judicial office holders, led by the Chief Coroner.

However, we are keen to understand the factors underlying the length of time for the completion of inquests, and to provide support, where possible and appropriate. To that end, we have introduced a raft of statutory measures to help streamline coroner processes and intend to take forward further measures when Parliamentary time allows. In addition, on 9 September 2024, the Government implemented the statutory Medical Examiner scheme which, by providing a more robust framework for the scrutiny of cause of death, is intended to decrease the number of deaths which are unnecessarily referred to the coroner, thereby helping to reduce pressure on coroner services and associated services such as pathology.

We will continue to work with the Chief Coroner to consider and address any issues of consistency which may exist across coroner areas. We will also continue to support the merger of coroner areas where opportunities arise, to better provide consistent service standards for bereaved families.

We welcome the findings of the Justice Committee's 2023 follow-up inquiry into the coroner service, including in relation to support for the bereaved in the inquest process. We are carefully considering the Committee's findings to establish a wider strategy for the development of coroner services including on issues such as coronial pathology and learning from death. We look forward to working closely with the Chief Coroner, local authorities and other key partners inside and outside of Government to devise and deliver this framework for the future, including working on an update to the *Guide to Coroner Services for Bereaved People*.

■ Courts: Correspondence

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[8027]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many court listings were vacated due to a failure to send a notice of hearing to the parties in the last 12 months.

Heidi Alexander:

This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Gender Based Violence

Steve Darling:

[\[8270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he plans to take through the criminal justice system to reduce levels of violence against women.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government was elected with the unprecedented ambition to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) in a decade, which is an integral part of the wider mission to take back our streets and raise confidence in the police and criminal justice system.

To begin, we have committed to fast-tracking rape cases through the courts to deliver swift and effective justice to some of the most vulnerable victims and survivors. In addition, we have announced that from next year, we will be rolling out free, independent legal advocates for victims and survivors of adult rape, ensuring that they have support to enforce their legal rights, for example, in relation to use of their personal records during an investigation or in court.

We will also be piloting Domestic Abuse Protection Orders from November, and in the family court we will further expand the Pathfinder courts model and ensure that children and families are better supported with access to domestic abuse specialists.

In our manifesto we also committed to banning the creation of sexually explicit deepfakes, as well as strengthening the law to help the police better respond to the crime of spiking.

These are just some of the early steps we are taking in the Ministry of Justice to deliver on our ambition to halve VAWG. I am also working closely with my cross-government colleagues to ensure every department is focussed on tackling this national emergency.

■ Ministry of Justice: Paternity Leave

Shaun Davies:

[\[7913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in (a) her Department, (b) HM Courts and Tribunals Service and (c) HM Prison and Probation Service was in each of the last three years.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The average length of paternity leave taken across the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) for each of the last three years is 14 calendar days. The breakdown as per the request is as follows:

Average number of days of paternity leave taken by staff in MoJ, HMCTS and HMPPS

	MOJ	HMCTS	HMPPS
01/07/2021 to 30/06/2022	14	14	14
01/07/2022 to 30/06/2023	14	14	14
01/07/2023 to 30/06/2024	14	14	14

Note: This includes those with an Absence Category of 'Paternity Birth' on the department's HR database.

Note: Records assigned to the relevant year by the Absence Start Date.

■ Prison Officers: Industrial Disputes

Grahame Morris:

[\[7428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of restoring the right of prison officers to take industrial action.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Prison officers work in difficult environments every day with some of the most challenging people in society, and we recognise their critical importance in keeping the public safe.

As prison officers' right to take industrial action is restricted under current legislation, their pay is governed by the independent Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB), which acts as a compensatory mechanism.

Ministers met with trade unions shortly after their appointment to Government and will continue to regularly engage with them going forward. There are no plans to review current legislation related to prison officers' right to take industrial action.

■ Prison Sentences

Rebecca Paul:

[\[8077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent progress she has made on progressing prisoners who remain in custody on Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences and who have served their minimum term towards release from incarceration.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

This Government is focused, as a matter of urgency, on ensuring that all serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) prisoners have the opportunity to reduce their risk, via effective and deliverable sentence plans, as well as supporting them to engage fully with those plans. We will shortly be publishing a refreshed IPP Action Plan, that is being worked on and will be delivered by very senior officials in HM Prison and Probation Service. More broadly, we continue to focus on delivering good

education, training and work opportunities in prison to build skills alongside support for IPP prisoners to access employment and accommodation on release.

It is right that IPP sentences were abolished, and we are committed to making further progress towards a safe and sustainable release for those serving the IPP sentence, but not in a way that impacts public protection. The Government will continue to consult with organisations and campaign groups to ensure it takes the appropriate course of action to support those still serving IPP sentences.

■ Prisoners on Remand

Grahame Morris: [7426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of remand prisoners serve longer in prison on remand than the length of an average custodial sentence for the crime that they are accused of.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Information relating to the time spent on custodial remand is not centrally held by the Ministry of Justice. To obtain the data to answer this question would involve a manual interrogation of court records which would result in a disproportionate cost to the department.

■ Prisoners' Release

Priti Patel: [6180]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders have been released as a result of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (Requisite and Minimum Custodial Periods) Order 2024 on each day since that Order came into effect; and how many and what proportion of those offenders have (a) re-offended and (b) 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, prison population and release figures are monitored and published as part of the Offender Management Statistics:

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2024/117/pdfs/ukia_20240117_en.pdf.

Data on SDS40 releases forms a subset of data intended for future publication.

■ Prisoners' Release: Electronic Tagging

Sir John Hayes: [5859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisoners released under the early release scheme have been electronically tagged.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data on SDS40 releases forms a subset of data intended for future publication. We do not yet hold centrally collated data on how many prisoners released under SDS40 have been electronically tagged.

Electronic Monitoring is only one part of a range of stringent license conditions used to manage offenders in the community and all offenders, including those released under SDS40, continue to be monitored closely by the Probation Service.

■ Prisoners: Rehabilitation

Grahame Morris: [\[7418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what comparative assessment she has made of the effectiveness of (a) public and (b) private prisons in reducing recidivism.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Robust assessments of the reoffending rate broken down by prison are not currently available, however the adult reoffending rate following a custodial sentence has fallen from 49.3% in 2011/12 to 37.0% in 2021/22. Both public and privately-run prisons play an important role in reducing reoffending across England and Wales.

All prisons in England and Wales work to reduce an individual's risk of reoffending and promote successful resettlement. In a mixture of 93 public and private prisons, for example, there are Prison Employment Leads who play a key role in getting prisoners work ready and matching them to jobs on release.

■ Prisons: Contracts

Grahame Morris: [\[6024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much her Department has spent on outsourced services in prisons in the last 12 months.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

For the period covered the 1 August 2023 – 30 August 2024, the Ministry of Justice spend with 3rd Party Suppliers for HMPPS as the operating unit is £3.2 billion.

■ Prisons: Nitazenes

Rachael Maskell: [\[7805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department is recording the number of cases of nitazene use in prison which has required (a) on site medical attention and (b) an ambulance to be called in each of the last three years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested, which relates to the responsibilities of more than one Government Department, is not collected in a format that would enable us to do so without incurring disproportionate cost.

Rachael Maskell: [\[7806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many confiscations of nitazines took place in prisons in each of the last three years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The information requested is not collected in a format that would enable it to be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Prisons: Private Sector**Grahame Morris:**[\[7417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment she has made of the cost-effectiveness of private prisons.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We are committed to maintaining a mixed market in custodial services. Private-sector companies continue to have an important role to play in the justice system, bringing innovation and expertise. Private prisons are among the best-performing in the estate and have consistently won praise from independent inspectors. When running operator competitions for new or existing private prisons, our aim is to secure high quality, sustainable, and value for money custodial and maintenance services that are safe, decent, secure, and rehabilitative. In each competition, bidders are required to set out detailed, high quality, value for money prison specific proposals that must meet minimum quality and financial thresholds – which ensures private prisons are assessed for their cost-effectiveness from the start.

Witnesses: Complaints**Rachael Maskell:**[\[7793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to give indirect witnesses of criminal offences that have taken place on social media standing in law to complain to the (a) Police and (b) Independent Office for Police Conduct about those offences.

Heidi Alexander:

Any individual is entitled, and should be encouraged, to report anything they believe to be criminal behaviour, however they became aware of it, to the police.

Section 12 of the Police Reform Act 2022 sets out that to use the police complaints system, a person (member of the public) must have been adversely impacted by the events about which they complain.

The Home Office are responsible for policy and legislation on the reporting of crime and complaints to the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

NORTHERN IRELAND**Northern Ireland Office: Paternity Leave****Shaun Davies:**[\[7914\]](#)

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

Hilary Benn:

The HR reporting system used by the Northern Ireland Office does not provide paternity leave information in the form requested.

The paternity leave policy followed is set out [here](#).

■ **Terrorism: Northern Ireland****Claire Hanna:****[8240]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what his planned timetable is for resuming inquests relating to the troubles in Northern Ireland that ended when the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 came into force; and whether those referred from the Attorney General will receive an inquest.

Hilary Benn:

The Government has made clear its intention to propose measures that allow legacy inquests previously halted by the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy & Reconciliation) Act 2023 to proceed, should that be the preference of the victims's families.

A number of inquests were referred to the coroners' service by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland shortly before the Act came into force. I am considering the approach to these as part of my ongoing consultation process with interested parties. I want to make progress as swiftly as possible.

As I set out in my Written Ministerial Statement of 7 October, the Government is now carefully considering its next steps following the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal's judgment in light of the additional declarations of incompatibility made by the Court of Appeal. At the same time, the Government will continue to explore measures to strengthen the ICRIR to ensure that it is both human rights compliant and able to command support from across communities in Northern Ireland.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY■ **Animal Experiments: Universities****Alex Mayer:****[7967]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with university vice-chancellors on reducing the use of animals in experiments.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to supporting the uptake and development of alternative methods to the use of animals in science. The Labour Manifesto includes a commitment to "partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing", which is a long-term goal.

We recognise that any work to phase out animal testing must be science-led and in lock step with partners, and are engaging in discussions on how to take this commitment forward, which may include with university vice chancellors. We have

already held roundtables with stakeholders from businesses, regulators and across Government.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Research

Dan Norris: [\[900702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to support research into artificial intelligence.

Feryal Clark:

The Government actively supports AI research by collaborating with academic institutions and industry, investing in talent development, and funding research projects.

UKRI has allocated over £1 billion to AI research including doctoral training, the Alan Turing Institute, Bridge AI, Responsible AI UK, and BRAID programmes.

We are focused on reducing barriers to research through initiatives such as AISI's Systemic Safety Grants Programme, which provides funding of up to £200,000 to innovative projects addressing AI risks.

■ Broadband: Rural Areas

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[900706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of rural broadband coverage.

Chris Bryant:

It is inadequate, but we are working on it. According to figures published by Ofcom earlier this year, 88% of premises in rural areas can get superfast broadband speeds, and 47% have access to a gigabit-capable connection.

Under Project Gigabit, almost £2 billion has already been allocated in contracts to connect homes and businesses that will not be reached by suppliers' commercial rollout. These premises are predominantly in rural areas.

■ Calling Line Identification

Alex Mayer: [\[7961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with providers on implementing revised Call Line Identification Guidance to extend blocking to international calls which display a UK number as a Presentation Number.

Chris Bryant:

The Government works closely with Ofcom who are responsible for the Call Line Identification (CLI) Guidance. Telecoms providers must comply with Ofcom's General Conditions, part of which outlines operator's obligations related to CLI.

In July 2024, Ofcom announced plans to update the CLI guidance, which sets out the actions operators must take to be comply with the General Condition, to extend requirements on blocking of international calls displaying a UK landline number as a Presentation Number. The updated guidance will come into effect from January 2025. Ofcom also published a Call for Input in July to explore the spoofing of UK mobile numbers from international numbers.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Paternity Leave

Shaun Davies:

[\[7904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in his Department was in each of the last three years.

Feryal Clark:

Our records show that between 2021 and October 2024, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) employee's have taken 160 days paternity leave for the birth or adoption of a child.

The average working days taken per colleague (AWDT) is shown in the table below.

YEAR	AWDT
2021	-
2022	-
2023 (Feb 2023* to Dec 2023)	10
2024 (Jan 2024 to Oct 2024)	12.9

*The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) was established in February 2023. Data before this time is unavailable.

■ Internet: Safety

Joe Powell:

[\[900703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help protect people online.

Johanna Baxter:

[\[900707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help protect people online.

Feryal Clark:

In line with our Safer Streets Mission, the Online Safety Act brings much needed protections to the online world by protecting children from harmful and age-inappropriate content, tackling violence against women and girls, and taking down criminal activity. The new laws apply to search services and all companies that allow

users to share and post content online or interact with each other, even if the companies providing them are outside the UK.

■ Life Sciences: Research

Rachael Maskell: [\[900705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to fund the scale up of research in the life sciences sector.

Feryal Clark:

We are actively supporting the life sciences sector to ensure that businesses investing in research can access the capital they need to scale up in the UK.

Through initiatives like the £400 million VPAG investment programme, we will expand the UK's capacity for commercial clinical trials and manufacturing, enabling research to have the impact that it deserves.

In addition, UKRI's £118m fund will create five new research hubs across the country, from Glasgow to Bristol, to develop new health technologies in partnership with the life sciences sector .

■ Medicine: Animal Experiments

Alex Mayer: [\[7968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will take steps with UK Research and Innovation to increase the proportion of biomedical research funding available for research projects that use non-animal new approach methodologies.

Feryal Clark:

In accordance with UK legislation UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) only fund animal research where there is no suitable non-animal alternative available. Around 70% of research funded by their Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and Medical Research Council does not involve animals. UKRI supports the development, validation and uptake of non-animal alternatives, largely through their investment in NC3Rs. UKRI are committed to conducting a strategic review of NC3Rs in 2024/25 to determine the appropriate level of future investment. The [UKRI policy on Research and Innovation Involving Animals](#) further commits UKRI to encouraging applications with potential to advance the 3Rs.

■ National Security Online Information Team: Staff

Sir John Hayes: [\[7715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many (a) full-time and (b) full-time equivalent staff are employed by the National Security and Online Information Team.

Feryal Clark:

Previous (but not quite the same question) [16125-6 Dan Jarvis - NSOIT staffing & Publication.docx](#)

Also see [response](#) to similar question answered by Minister Clark

■ **Pornography: Victims**

Carolyn Harris:

[\[7818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the harms of pornography experienced by victims.

Feryal Clark:

Under the Online Safety Act platforms must proactively tackle the most harmful illegal content including extreme pornography, much of which disproportionately affects women and girls. The Act requires services in scope to understand risks from illegal content online and take mitigating action.

Separate to provisions in the Online Safety Act, the Independent Pornography Review, led by Independent Lead Reviewer Baroness Gabby Bertin will explore the effectiveness of regulation, legislation and the law enforcement response to pornography. The government expects the Review to present its final report by the end of the year.

■ **Pornography: Washington and Gateshead South**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[7724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the harmful effects of pornography in Washington and Gateshead South constituency.

Feryal Clark:

Under the Online Safety Act, platforms must proactively tackle the most harmful illegal content including extreme pornography, much of which disproportionately affects women and girls. The Act requires services in scope to understand risks from illegal content online and take mitigating action.

Separate to provisions in the Online Safety Act, the Independent Pornography Review, led by Independent Lead Reviewer Baroness Gabby Bertin will explore the effectiveness of regulation, legislation and the law enforcement response to pornography. The government expects the Review to present its final report by the end of the year.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[7725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent children in Washington and Gateshead South constituency being exposed to pornography.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to keeping children safe online. Our priority is the effective implementation of the Online Safety Act so that children benefit from its wide-reaching protections.

The Act requires that all in scope services that allow pornography use highly effective age assurance to prevent children from accessing it, including services that host user-generated content, and services which publish pornography. Ofcom has robust enforcement powers available against companies who fail to fulfil their duties.

■ **Semiconductors: Manufacturing Industries**

Bob Blackman: [\[900704\]](#)

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

Feryal Clark:

This Government is committed to building on the UK's world-class strengths in the semiconductor sector to accelerate growth and unlock real-world benefits for citizens.

Last month, we announced new support for semiconductor scale-ups to advance high-potential innovations. We are backing UK semiconductor firms producing vital technology to scale up and drive economic growth.

We will also collaborate with the international community, including the EU and the G7, to ensure the UK remains a key global player.

■ **Shared Rural Network**

Greg Smith: [\[900708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking with mobile network providers to accelerate the delivery of the Shared Rural Network.

Chris Bryant:

The Shared Rural Network has already delivered substantial improvements to outdoor 4G mobile coverage across the UK.

I'm pleased to report to the House that 4G coverage across the UK now stands at 94.9% which is an increase from 91% in March 2020 when the Shared Rural Network was agreed.

This indicates the programme will deliver the overarching 95% coverage target ahead of its December 2025 target, enabling rural businesses and communities to thrive.

SCOTLAND

■ **Voluntary Organisations: Scotland**

Chris Kane: [\[8327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps he plans to take to support the voluntary sector in Scotland.

Ian Murray:

Volunteering is a devolved policy area. However, the UK Government funded and supported the launch of the 2024 Big Help Out, which was a UK-wide campaign and took place on 7-9 June. It aimed to raise awareness of volunteering and provided opportunities for people to support their communities. This event followed the success of the inaugural day of community volunteering to mark the Coronation of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty The Queen, held on 8 May 2023.

Millions of people took part in last year's Big Help Out with a huge range of charities and voluntary organisations providing people with the opportunity to try out and experience volunteering.

UK Government officials will continue to engage with the devolved administrations on matters relating to volunteering policy and shared insights.

TRANSPORT**■ Active Travel****Deirdre Costigan:****[8287]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to work with local authorities to encourage greater uptake of (a) walking, (b) cycling and (c) other active travel modes in (i) urban and (ii) rural areas.

Simon Lightwood:

Active Travel England (ATE) works with all combined authorities and local authorities in England, providing funding and support with the intention being to encourage greater uptake of active travel. ATE is assuring the design quality of around £2 billion of active travel schemes and is working with authorities to boost officer capability to design schemes that improve safety of cyclists and pedestrians. This is being done through the provision of training and the development of specific guidance – including a rural design guide and a best practice guide to community consultation and engagement.

In addition to this, local authorities receive support through national training and engagement programmes, including Bikeability cycle training, Walk to School Outreach and Big Bike Revival.

As a statutory consultee in the planning system, ATE provides advice to local authorities on all planning applications for new development exceeding 150 dwellings, 7,500sqm of non-residential floorspace or 5 hectares in size. For applications outside of ATE's remit, the agency has produced toolkits and guidance that can be used by local authorities to deliver improvements in active travel provision as part of new developments.

■ M25: Repairs and Maintenance**Rebecca Paul:** [R] [8079]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October 2024 to Question 5795 on M25: Noise, when Next Generation Concrete Surfacing will take place between Junctions 8 and 9 on the M25.

Lilian Greenwood:

A section of the M25 between Junction 8 and Junction 9 was treated with Next Generation Concrete Surfacing (NGCS) in September 2024 and wider implementation of NGCS on the M25 is expected to be undertaken from 2026. At present, National Highways is unable to confirm when specific sections of the M25 will be treated, but all concrete sections of the M25 are planned to receive noise mitigation treatment.

■ Railways: Finance**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [7871]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what Network Rail's year one projected spend profile is under the regulatory Control Period 7 funding settlement.

Simon Lightwood:

Network Rail's year one projected spend profile for Control Period 7 can be found in Network Rail's delivery plan for Control Period 7 which is published on its website. Please find below a link to the document:

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Network-Rail-CP7-GB-Delivery-Plan.pdf>

■ Railways: Hampshire**Dame Caroline Dinenge:** [7742]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with train operating companies on the feasibility of increasing the frequency of train services in South Hampshire.

Simon Lightwood:

Department officials work closely with all operators on seeking to increase service levels. The Department needs to balance demand with taxpayer money when approving additional service levels across the country.

■ Railways: Prosecutions**Tim Roca:** [8073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to make an assessment of the effectiveness of the use of prosecutions for low level offenses by rail operators.

Simon Lightwood:

I am aware of the recent coverage of a number of prosecutions undertaken by one rail operator. It would be inappropriate to comment on the details of individual cases, but we expect operators to ensure their policy on ticketing is clear and fair for passengers at all times and have instructed the operator to review the details of these cases urgently. 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: Rural Areas**Graham Leadbitter:**[\[8596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to improve rail transport links in rural areas to increase access to (a) the Duke of Edinburgh Award and (b) other youth services.

Simon Lightwood:

The government continues to be open to initiatives that improve rural railways, and a number of schemes delivered previously through the New Stations Fund have improved access to the rail network for more rural areas.

Shipping: Safety**Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:**[\[8021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to promote safety on international maritime trade routes.

Mike Kane:

The UK is an active and committed member of IMO, the international body with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping.

As a contracting Government to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREGs), and other safety related instruments, the UK has implemented regulations that require UK-flagged merchant ships to comply with internationally agreed safety standards when operating on any international route.

The UK shares information and guidance with Red Ensign flagged vessels to support them in implementing adequate and proportionate measures to support safe operations in challenging environments.

TREASURY**Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties****Rachel Gilmour:**[\[8056\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to (a) review the planned changes to alcohol duty rates before their implementation in February 2025, notwithstanding an extension of the current duty freeze and (b) publish an impact

assessment of the planned changes (i) on the (A) hospitality and (B) wine production sectors and (ii) more broadly.

James Murray:

As with all taxes, the Government keeps alcohol duty rates under review during its Budget process. Any substantive tax changes would be accompanied by a relevant Tax Information and Impact Note.

The current temporary duty easement for wine is due to end on 31 January 2025.

■ **Banks: Lincolnshire**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[8630\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of bank closures in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire on (i) pensioners and (ii) small business owners.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government understands the impact of bank branch closures on communities and the importance of face-to-face banking. It is committed to championing sufficient access for all as a priority.

This is why the Government is working closely with industry to roll out 350 banking hubs across the UK. The UK banking sector has committed to deliver these hubs by the end of this parliament. These hubs will provide small businesses and individuals who need face-to-face support with critical cash and in-person banking services. Over 80 banking hubs are already open and Cash Access UK, who oversee banking hub rollout, expect 100 hubs to be open by Christmas.

Furthermore, FCA guidance expects firms to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and put in place alternatives where reasonable. As well as banking hubs, alternative options to access everyday banking services can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking and via the Post Office.

■ **Council Tax: Wales**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7828\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2024 to Question 5223 on Council Tax: Wales, if she will publish the contract between the Valuation Office Agency and the Centre for Appraisal Research and Technology.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7829\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Pursuant to the answer of 17 September 2024, to Question 5223, on Council Tax: Wales, if she will place in the House of Commons Library a copy of any report or documentation provided by CART to the Valuation Office Agency.

James Murray:

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) publishes all contracts above £12,000 (including VAT) on GOV.UK in line with Government transparency rules. As the contract between the agency and the Centre for Appraisal Research and Technology (CART) falls below this threshold the VOA has no plans to go beyond these requirements.

The VOA intends to publish more information about the Automated Valuation Model (AVM) before April next year, therefore it currently has no plans to place documentation provided by CART in the House of Commons Library.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:[\[7830\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 September 2024, to Question 5155, on Council tax: Wales, if she will list each individual type of variable used in the Valuation Office Agency's Automated Valuation Model.

James Murray:

The variables used in the Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) Wales Automated Valuation Model and sources are listed in the table below:

DATA / VARIABLE	SOURCE:
Sale Price & Date	VOA sales data; HM Land Registry Price Paid Data
Sale Price Adjustment	Office for National Statistics / HM Land Registry House Price Index
Property Coordinates	Ordnance Survey AddressBase Premium; VOA records; National Statistics Postcode Lookup (NSPL)
Billing Authority of Property	VOA Records
Property Attributes: Dwelling Type Dwelling Group Dwelling Age Dwelling Area Parking Facilities Subsidised Housing Indicator Bedroom Count Bathroom Count	VOA Records
Plot size	Land Registry Title Polygons and Ordnance Survey National Geographic Database

■ Developing Countries: Debts

Abtisam Mohamed: [\[7969\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had recent discussions with the International Monetary Fund on the Debt Sustainability Framework for Low Income Countries.

Darren Jones:

The UK is engaging with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the Debt Sustainability Framework for Low Income Countries (LIC-DSF) as part of the ongoing joint World Bank-IMF review of the Framework.

We welcome the review, as it is an important exercise to ensure that the LIC-DSF remains fit for purpose in providing nuanced and balanced assessments of countries' debt situations, and supporting sustainable management of debt.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Taxation

Dame Caroline Dinenge: [\[7733\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what evidential basis HMRC concluded that abolition of the Furnished Holiday Lettings tax regime will not have significant macroeconomic impacts; and if she will publish that evidence.

James Murray:

The abolition of the Furnished Holiday Lettings tax rules will not have any macroeconomic impact due to the small proportion of the landlord population affected.

There may be a limited behavioural change over the long term.

Impacts are assessed as part of the Budget process.

■ Ian Corfield

John Glen: [\[7750\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she made a ministerial declaration of interest in relation to her donation from Ian Corfield.

James Murray:

Ian Corfield was appointed on a short-term basis to carry out urgent work in support of the government's International Investment Summit in October. A full recruitment process could not have been completed in the time available. He has since been appointed, unpaid, as a direct ministerial appointment. The donation was included in the Chancellor's Register of Member's Interests.

■ Monetary Policy

Tim Roca: [\[8071\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund in its report entitled New Perspectives on Quantitative

Easing and Central Bank Capital Policies, published on 17 May 2024, whether she plans to review the treatment of QE/QT profits and losses.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Asset Purchase Facility (APF) is indemnified by HM Treasury so that all profits and losses accrued in the APF are owed to, or borne by, HM Treasury. This is in line with its financial relationship with the Bank and supports the Bank's operational independence by allowing the MPC to make decisions on asset purchases without being constrained by the financial risk of the operations.

The advantages of HM Treasury's indemnity arrangements were outlined in the Autumn Statement 2023 in Box 1.E, and are in line with best practice as set out in a recent IMF working paper.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-relationship-between-the-treasury-and-the-bank-of-england>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2023>

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2023/06/02/Quasi-Fiscal-Implications-of-Central-Bank-Crisis-Interventions-534076>

Excess cash from asset purchases between 2009 and 2012 initially accrued in the APF. When it became clear that asset purchases under QE were being held for longer and at a larger scale than initially envisaged, the government decided to normalise the cash management arrangements such that any excess cash would be transferred to the Treasury on a quarterly basis. The cash transfers from the APF to the Treasury that took place until 2022 helped reduce the government's cash requirement and the amount of gilts that would need to be issued by the DMO, therefore reducing the government's future debt interest costs and supporting the overall position of the public finances. Cashflows were always expected to reverse as quantitative easing is unwound and gilts are sold back into the market.

■ **New Businesses: Investment**

Callum Anderson:

[8008]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department is taking to increase private investment in scale-up companies.

Tulip Siddiq:

This government has been clear: our number one mission is driving economic growth to improve the lives of the British people. To grow our economy, we need more high quality, long-term investment. This means creating a new partnership with businesses and making sure Britain is the best place in the world to invest.

The government is strengthening the British Business Bank's ability to support the UK's fastest growing, most innovative companies by establishing the British Growth Partnership.

The British Growth Partnership is a new, pathfinder approach to the partnership between the British Business Bank and institutional investors that will further the

government's goal, as set out in the Pensions Investment Review, of encouraging more UK pension fund investment into UK growth assets. The British Business Bank, the UK's largest domestic venture capital investor, will launch a new fund to attract pension and institutional investment into venture capital and innovative businesses, with the aim of making investments by the end of 2025.

The government expect both successful bidders of the Long-Term Investment for Technology and Science (LIFTS) competition, Schroders and ICG, to begin making investments via their new funds in late 2024, supported by pensions capital from Phoenix Group, with the aim of generating over a billion pounds of investment into UK science and technology companies.

To provide greater certainty for investors and businesses, we have extended the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) and the Venture Capital Trust (VCT) schemes by ten years to 5 April 2035. This will ensure the schemes continue to be available to support scale-up companies.

Finally, in April 2024, the British Business Bank and Innovate UK signed a Memorandum of Understanding to help create new pathways for private investment into scale-ups, to better scale firms and address regional disparities.

■ Pension Funds: British National (Overseas)

Gordon McKee:

[\[7656\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will hold discussions with Standard Chartered on steps to help Hong Kongers with British National (Overseas) passports access their Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) retirement savings.

Tulip Siddiq:

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) route are having difficulties accessing their Mandatory Provident Fund from Hong Kong.

Whilst documentary requirements for withdrawing funds are a matter for the Hong Kong authorities, officials have 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.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[7854\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has had discussions with (a) HSBC and (b) Standard Chartered on the provision of Mandatory Provident Fund retirement savings to Hong Kongers on the British National (Overseas) visa scheme.

Tulip Siddiq:

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) route are having difficulties accessing their Mandatory Provident Fund from Hong Kong.

Whilst documentary requirements for withdrawing funds are a matter for the Hong Kong authorities, officials have 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.

■ **Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland**

Robin Swann:

[\[7308\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Barnett consequentials applicable to Northern Ireland are from the pay rises for (a) consultants, (b) specialist, associate specialist and specialty doctors, (d) junior doctors and (e) train drivers.

Darren Jones:

The Barnett formula applies to all increases or decreases to Departmental Expenditure Limits, rather than when policies or funding are announced. When UK Government departmental budgets change, the Barnett formula will apply in the usual way.

Any Barnett consequentials for the Northern Ireland Executive resulting from the recent public sector pay awards in England in 2024-25 would be confirmed at Autumn Budget 2024 or Supplementary Estimates 2024-25.

■ **Public Houses: Business Rates**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7832\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024, to Question 4354, on Public Houses: Business Rates, whether (a) pavement licences under the Business and Planning Act 2020 and (b) outdoor licensing under the Licensing Act 2003 affect the assessment of a Fair Maintainable Trade for the purposes of the Rateable Value valuation or revaluation.

James Murray:

Fair Maintainable Trade (FMT), for the purposes of determining a property's rateable value, is an assessment of the property's potential turnover. The absence or presence of a pavement or outdoor license will be reflected in the overall FMT for each pub.

■ **Retail Trade: Investment**

Callum Anderson:

[\[8009\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps her Department plans to take to help incentive retail investment in domestic public companies.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government is committed to reinvigorating our capital markets to deliver growth across the UK and is pursuing ambitious reforms to make our markets even more competitive.

This is why we supported the implementation of the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) listing reforms, and are supportive of the reform to overhaul the Prospectus rules to improve access for retail investors in the capital raising process.

The Government is also taking forward work to improve the information and support available to retail investors to help with their decision-making. This includes reforms to the UK's retail disclosure regime and exploring options to expand the availability of investment support through the joint Government and FCA review of the boundary between financial advice and guidance.

Additionally, individuals can also save up to £20,000 into an Individual Savings Account (ISA) each year, including Stocks and Shares ISAs, and any savings income received within an ISA is tax free.

■ Shareholders

Callum Anderson: [\[8010\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to accept all recommendations of the Digitisation Taskforce Interim Report, published July 2023.

Tulip Siddiq:

The work of the Digitisation Taskforce is ongoing and it has not yet made any recommendations to government. The government looks forward to the taskforce providing its final report and will set out its response after that.

■ Stocks and Shares

Callum Anderson: [\[8007\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what further fiscal steps she is taking to help increase the international competitiveness of the UK's listing regime.

Tulip Siddiq:

The government is committed to reinvigorating our capital markets to deliver growth across the UK and is pursuing ambitious reforms to make our markets even more competitive. The Chancellor will announce any fiscal decisions at the Budget in the usual way.

■ Tax Avoidance

Stuart Andrew: [\[7746\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many suicides of people facing the Loan Charge HMRC has referred to the Independent Office of Police Conduct.

James Murray:

HMRC takes issues relating to loss of life or serious injury extremely seriously. HMRC has made ten referrals to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) where a taxpayer has sadly taken their life and used a disguised remuneration scheme.

■ Tax Avoidance: Prosecutions**Stuart Andrew:****[7747]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) promoters and (b) operators of schemes now subject to the Loan Charge have been prosecuted.

James Murray:

Promotion or operation of mass marketed tax avoidance schemes is not, in or of itself, a criminal offence, unless the promoter is acting in breach of an HMRC Stop Notice.

One individual involved in selling Disguised Remuneration schemes subject to the Loan Charge has been convicted for a related offence. A number of individuals are currently under criminal investigation by HMRC for offences linked to schemes subject to the Loan Charge.

■ Taxation: Gifts and Endowments**John Glen:****[7749]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the HMRC internal manual EIM01450 - Employment income: gifts and other voluntary payments, what guidance HMRC has provided her Department on whether gifts of (a) glasses and (b) clothing are subject to (i) income tax and (ii) National Insurance.

James Murray:

The normal rules for employment-related benefits apply to employment-related gifts, as described in HMRC guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-income-manual/eim20020>

■ Treasury: Arden Strategies**John Glen:****[7751]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what meetings officials in her Department have had with companies represented by Arden Strategies since 5 July 2024.

Tulip Siddiq:

The government has engaged with a number of different businesses and trade bodies in the run up to the International Investment Summit – including Arden Strategies - to help coordinate meetings with key investors as part of the usual course of business. It also has an ongoing business engagement programme run by officials. All external meetings between senior officials at Permanent Secretary and Director General will be published on gov.uk in the usual way as part of the department's quarterly transparency return.

John Glen: [\[7752\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the International Investment Summit Adviser has (a) had meetings with representatives of Arden Strategies and (b) arranged meetings between Arden Strategies clients and officials in her Department since 5 July 2024.

Tulip Siddiq:

The IIS Adviser has engaged with a number of different businesses and trade bodies in the run up to the International Investment Summit – including Arden Strategies - to help coordinate meetings with key investors as part of the usual course of business.

■ Treasury: Paternity Leave

Shaun Davies: [\[7909\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in (a) her Department and (b) HMRC was in each of the last three years.

James Murray:

HMT Response

HM Treasury offers two-weeks' paternity leave with pay for staff who meet the qualifying conditions. Staff can choose to take the two weeks together or in separate blocks of one week each.

The information below covers the average length of paternity leave in calendar days for the past three financial years in HM Treasury:

FINANCIAL YEARS:	AVERAGE LENGTH OF PATERNITY LEAVE:
1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022	12.78
1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023	13.16
1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024	12.35

HMRC Response

Financial year April-23 to March-24: The average number of calendar days taken for paternity leave per person is 27.79 days.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Equality Act 2010

John Glen: [\[7753\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will commission a regulatory impact assessment on the proposed commencement of the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act 2010.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Government is committed to commencing the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act 2010. The duty will require public bodies, when making strategic decisions, to actively consider how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. To ensure effective implementation, we will be undertaking the necessary assessments. We will be updating Parliament on this in due course.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ AEA Group: Workplace Pensions****Edward Morello:**[\[8618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to investigate complaints about the AEA Technology pension scheme.

Emma Reynolds:

The AEAT Pensions issue has a long and complex history. The Work and Pensions Committee inquiry report on Defined Benefit pension schemes, published in March 2024, helpfully outlines areas to be considered including on AEAT members. The work was originally halted due to the general election. DWP ministers continue to take advice from officials on these issues.

■ Carer's Allowance**Tom Gordon:**[\[8262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to review the adequacy of the level of Carer's Allowance in the context of increases in the cost of living.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting elderly or disabled relatives or friends. Sometimes unpaid carers will need to turn to the benefit system for financial support, so it is right that we keep Carer's Allowance under review, to see if it is meeting its objectives, and giving unpaid carers the help and support they need and deserve.

In addition to Carer's Allowance, carers on low incomes can claim income-related benefits, such as Universal Credit and Pension Credit. These benefits can be paid to carers at a higher rate than those without caring responsibilities through the carer element and the additional amount for carers respectively. Currently, the Universal Credit carer element is £198.31 per monthly assessment period. The additional amount for carers in Pension Credit is £45.60 a week.

The Secretary of State undertakes a statutory annual review of benefit and pensions, and the level of Carer's Allowance is protected by Up-rating it each year in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI).

■ Cost of Living: Lone Parents

Tom Hayes:

[\[7119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the 30-hour work requirements introduced in October 2023 on the standard of living of single parents.

Alison McGovern:

No assessment has been made of the potential impact of the 30-hour work requirements, introduced in October 2023, on the standard of living of single parents.

However, we promised concrete actions in our manifesto to support children and families which is why we announced our ministerial taskforce on the 17th July, jointly chaired by the Work and Pensions and Education Secretaries, to begin work on an ambitious Child Poverty Strategy. The Taskforce will 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.

■ Food Poverty

Rachael Maskell:

[\[8651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help tackle food insecurity; and if she will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of the potential impact of these steps on (a) physical and (b) mental health.

Alison McGovern:

This government is committed to tackling poverty and reducing mass dependence on emergency food parcels.

We know that good work can significantly reduce the chances of people falling into poverty so this will be the foundation of our approach. 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. Alongside this, we have committed to reviewing Universal Credit by listening to the full range of views on potential changes, so that our social security system is fit for purpose.

Tackling child poverty is at the heart of this Government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity. The Child Poverty Taskforce, which includes the Department for Health and Social Care, 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.

We will also take initial steps to tackle poverty by introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school, so children don't go hungry, protecting renters from arbitrary eviction and banning exploitative zero hours contracts.

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. The Fund can be used to provide support with food, energy, water and wider essentials.

■ Housing Benefit: Young People

Max Wilkinson:

[\[7923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will (a) lower the Housing Benefit taper rate and (b) increase the applicable amount to help young homeless people into work.

Sir Stephen Timms:

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

The Department acknowledges the challenge presented by the interaction between Universal Credit and Housing Benefit for those residing in Supported Housing and Temporary Accommodation and will consider the issue carefully in partnership with stakeholders.

■ Hygiene: Poverty

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[7785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to reduce hygiene poverty in (a) London and (b) England.

Alison McGovern:

Tackling poverty in all forms, from reducing mass dependence on emergency food parcels to ensuring people can afford essentials like hygiene products, is a priority for this government.

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.

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 (HSF) 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 HSF 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. The Fund can be used to provide support with food, energy, water and wider essentials including hygiene products.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[7786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Child Poverty Taskforce will take to estimate levels of hygiene poverty in England.

Alison McGovern:

The Child Poverty Taskforce has started urgent work to publish the Child Poverty Strategy in Spring and will explore all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty. The taskforce is exploring a range of metrics and will make decisions alongside the publication of the strategy in Spring 2025.

■ **Jobseeker's Allowance: Young People**

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[7269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of changes in the number of 18-24 year olds claiming jobseeker's allowance in Newbury constituency; and what steps she plans to take to help young people find job opportunities.

Alison McGovern:

- Our plan to get Britain Working includes a new Youth Guarantee for all young people aged 18-21 to ensure that they can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or employment support. This will sit alongside; a new public employment and careers service to help get more people into work, and the launch of Skills England to open new opportunities for young people.
- In August 2024, 686 young people aged 18-24 were claiming Universal Credit in the Newbury parliamentary constituency. The latest released statistics on Job Seeker's Allowance suggest that 5 young people aged 18-24 were claiming this benefit in February 2024. Please note however, that these statistics are subject to small, randomised adjustments in order to prevent the accidental disclosure of personal information. The small number of young claimants of Job Seeker's Allowance is particularly sensitive to the impact of these randomised adjustments.
- DWP currently provides young people aged 16-24 with labour market support through an extensive range of interventions at a national and local level.
- Newbury Jobcentre has a dedicated youth Work Coach team, who work closely with the National Careers Service as well, encouraging all customers to take part in any training or Work experience activities that the Jobcentre organises such as Job Fairs, Sector-based Work Academy programmes, and movement to work opportunities.

■ Pension Credit

Paula Barker:

[\[6617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to simplify the pension credit application process.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department continues to assess the Pension Credit service. This led to the introduction of the online claim process, providing customers with a convenient alternative claim route, alongside the existing telephony and paper application methods. As the Department continues to modernise the Pension Credit service, we continue to review the user experience, balancing simplification of application with capturing the right information to ensure accuracy of award.

Paula Barker:

[\[6618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the processing times for pension credit applications.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department has secured funding for additional staffing to assist with the processing of the additional Pension Credit claims being made.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[7794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people claimed Pension Credit in each of the last 12 months.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 14 October 2024]: Internal Pension Credit operational information is not currently produced monthly, but rather weekly. Please find data from 4 th September 2023 up to the end of week commencing 30 th September 2024. This data is a longer time series of the ad hoc statistics recently published by the Department, available via Weekly Pension Credit claims received from 1 April 2024 to 22 September 2024 - GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/weekly-pension-credit-claims-received-from-1-april-2024-to-1-september-2024/weekly-pension-credit-claims-received-from-1-april-2024-to-1-september-2024>

WEEK COMMENCING	PENSION CREDIT CLAIMS RECEIVED
04 September 2023	3,700
11 September 2023	4,100
18 September 2023	4,800
25 September 2023	4,200
02 October 2023	4,300

WEEK COMMENCING	PENSION CREDIT CLAIMS RECEIVED
09 October 2023	4,200
16 October 2023	4,700
23 October 2023	4,600
30 October 2023	5,200
06 November 2023	4,900
13 November 2023	4,400
20 November 2023	4,200
27 November 2023	4,800
04 December 2023	6,600
11 December 2023	4,500
18 December 2023	2,900
25 December 2023	1,300
01 January 2024	3,100
08 January 2024	4,600
15 January 2024	4,800
22 January 2024	4,500
29 January 2024	4,400
05 February 2024	5,800
12 February 2024	5,600
19 February 2024	5,800
26 February 2024	7,200
04 March 2024	6,200
11 March 2024	5,100
18 March 2024	5,100
25 March 2024	3,800
01 April 2024	3,900

WEEK COMMENCING	PENSION CREDIT CLAIMS RECEIVED
08 April 2024	4,400
15 April 2024	4,400
22 April 2024	4,200
29 April 2024	3,700
06 May 2024	3,400
13 May 2024	4,100
20 May 2024	4,000
27 May 2024	3,300
03 June 2024	4,200
10 June 2024	4,000
17 June 2024	3,400
24 June 2024	3,200
01 July 2024	3,800
08 July 2024	4,100
15 July 2024	3,300
22 July 2024	3,500
29 July 2024	7,900
05 August 2024	7,300
12 August 2024	5,900
19 August 2024	8,400
26 August 2024	9,000
02 September 2024	10,700
09 September 2024	13,400
16 September 2024	11,800
23 September 2024	9,800
30 September 2024	8,300

Sarah Olney: [8186]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral contribution of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29 July 2024 on Public Spending: Inheritance, Official Report, column 1033, how many people have applied for pension credit since that date.

Emma Reynolds:

We have recently published [Weekly Pension Credit claims received from 1 April 2024 to 22 September 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/weekly-pension-credit-claims-received-from-1-april-2024-to-22-september-2024) which provides the number of Pension Credit claims received by the department.

Sarah Olney: [8187]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the average waiting time between a pension credit application and a decision by the Department.

Emma Reynolds:

The most recent information on processing times for Pension Credit was published in the DWP Annual Report and Accounts on 22nd July 2024 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024-html>). This shows that in 2023/24 DWP cleared 192,000 Pension Credit claims within the planned 50 working day timescale, equating to 77.7%.

Sarah Olney: [8188]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average wait for a pension credit application to be approved was in each year since 2015.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department does not hold information on the annual average waiting time for Pension Credit and cannot provide the figures requested.

The Department does publish our annual performance against a 50 working day clearance rate for Pension Credit in the DWP Annual Report and Accounts [DWP annual report and accounts 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024).

Of 248,000 Pension Credit claims cleared in performance year 2023/24, 192,000 were cleared within the planned 50-day timescale, equating to 77.7%. 56,000, 22.3% were cleared outside of the of the 10-week planned timescale.

■ Pension Credit: North West Norfolk

James Wild: [6562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications for Pension Credit have been (a) received and (b) approved in (i) North West Norfolk constituency and (ii) the UK since 29 July 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

The information requested regarding the number of Pension Credit applications is not readily available below national level and to provide it at constituency level would incur disproportionate cost.

Year to date figures for weekly Pension Credit claim volumes, received in the Department, were recently published in an ad hoc statistical release. They are available via [Weekly Pension Credit claims received from 1 April 2024 to 22 September 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/weekly-pension-credit-claims-received-from-1-april-2024-to-22-september-2024)

■ Pension Credit: Park Homes**Dr Ben Spencer:****[8479]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of Park Home Residents who are unable to take up Pension Credit due to pitch fees not being treated equivalently to ground rent in the application process.

Emma Reynolds:

An award of Pension Credit can include certain housing costs where the dwelling occupied as the home is not owned by the claimant and if these costs cannot be covered by Housing Benefit. Examples of housing costs covered by Pension Credit include:

- rents or ground rents on long tenancies
- service charges
- rent charges
- co-ownership schemes
- tenancies or licences of Crown tenants
- tents and their sites

It is not possible to provide an accurate estimate of the number of Park Homes residents whose Pension Credit applications were unsuccessful due to pitch fees not being included in the assessment.

■ Pension Credit: Publicity**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[7839]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of sending targeted letters directly to people who are potentially eligible to claim Pension Credit.

Emma Reynolds:

In November we will 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: South Cotswolds**Dr Roz Savage:****[7378]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has provided support to (a) Wiltshire and (b) Gloucestershire County Council to enable them to encourage pensioners in South Cotswolds constituency to check their eligibility for Pension Credit.

Emma Reynolds:

All local authorities in England have received bulletins from both DWP and MHCLG. The bulletins contained information about Pension Credit along with links to DWP's online stakeholder toolkit which contains a range of materials to help promote Pension Credit to pensioners and their friends and family. The bulletins also invited local authorities to request printed promotional materials to support their local activity.

The Department also shares extensive data with all 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. Through this process, local authorities can re-use the data originating from DWP to help identify people eligible for Pension Credit.

Since 16 September, the Department has also been running national paid marketing activity, including radio (Greatest Hits Radio and Smooth Radio air in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire); national and regional press (including the Swindon Evening Advertiser); paid social media; and GP and Post Office Screens (including six medical centres and nine Post Offices in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire).

■ Pension Credit: Take-up**Sir Ashley Fox:****[6873]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of her Department's campaign to promote Pension Credit on the number of successful applications.

Emma Reynolds:

The latest available data published on the 27 September [[Weekly Pension Credit claims received from 1 April 2024 to 22 September 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/weekly-pension-credit-claims-received-from-1-april-2024-to-22-september-2024)] shows that the Department received around 74,400 Pension Credit claims in the 8 weeks since the Winter Fuel Payment announcement on 29 July. This is compared to around 29,500 Pension Credit claims in the 8 weeks preceding the announcement. This represents a 152% increase in Pension Credit claims.

Data on the number of successful applications is not currently available.

■ Pensioners: Income

Gareth Davies:

[6637]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her oral contribution to the debate on Social Security of 10 September 2024, Official Report, column 735, whether her estimate that pensioners will be £1,700 better off by the end of this Parliament includes tax payable on that income.

Emma Reynolds:

Through this Government's commitment to the Triple Lock, the full yearly rate of the new State Pension is forecast to increase by around £1,700 by the end of this Parliament. This estimate accounts for potential income tax payable on the full new State Pension income alone, based on current legislation. Where people have other income, income tax may be payable, as has always been the case.

The Personal Allowance threshold is £12,570 per annum and frozen until 2027/28 then assumed to be uprated by CPI till the end of parliament (29/30). The new State Pension is £11,542 per annum and assumed to be uprated by Triple lock till the end of parliament. Economic assumptions for CPI and Triple Lock are consistent with OBR's Spring Budget 2024 forecasts. OBR's Spring Budget 2024 economic assumption forecasts are found here:

[Detailed forecast tables Economy March 2024.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

■ Pensioners: Low Incomes

Abtisam Mohamed:

[7984]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support low-income pensioners.

Emma Reynolds:

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

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them.

The State Pension is the foundation of income in retirement and will remain so protecting 12 million pensioners through the triple lock. Based on current forecasts, the full rate of the new state pension is set to increase by around £1,700 over the course of this Parliament.

The Household Support Fund (HSF) is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

We are also providing support for pensioners through our Warm Homes Plan which will support investment in insulation and low carbon heating – upgrading millions of homes over this Parliament. Our long-term plan will protect billpayers permanently, reduce fuel poverty, and get the UK back on track to meet our climate goals.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

■ Poverty: Children

Kim Johnson: [\[7867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the child poverty taskforce plans to make an assessment of the potential impact of furniture poverty on families in social rented homes.

Alison McGovern:

The Child Poverty Taskforce has started urgent work to publish the Child Poverty Strategy in Spring and will explore all available levers to drive forward short and long-term actions across government to reduce child poverty. The taskforce is exploring a range of metrics and will make decisions alongside the publication of the strategy in Spring 2025.

■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud

Steve Darling: [\[7925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department plans to take to (a) protect and (b) support vulnerable people in relation to the new Fraud, Error and Debt Bill.

Andrew Western:

Safeguarding vulnerable claimants is always a priority. All the powers included in the Fraud, Error and Debt Bill will include strong safeguards to ensure they are only used appropriately and proportionately – including new oversight and reporting mechanisms. We have a clearly defined scope and clear limitations for the use of all the powers we are introducing, and our staff will be trained to the highest possible standards.

■ State Retirement Pensions

Manuela Perteghella: [\[6896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to ensure the continuation of the triple lock on state pensions.

Emma Reynolds:

The Government has committed to up-rating the basic and new State Pensions by the Triple Lock for the length of this Parliament.

Through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit. Over the course of this Parliament, the full yearly rate of the new State Pension is forecast to increase by around £1,700.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad**

Claire Hanna:

[\[8684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will review the Government's policy on uprating the State Pension for people living overseas.

Emma Reynolds:

There are no plans to review the policy on up-rating the UK State Pensions Overseas.

UK State Pensions are payable worldwide, without regard to nationality, and are only uprated abroad where there is a legal requirement to do so, for example in countries with which we have a reciprocal agreement that provides for up-rating.

The policy on the uprating of UK State Pensions paid overseas is a longstanding one.

■ **Supported Housing: Housing Benefit**

Kate Osamor:

[\[7821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the taper rate for housing benefit on young people in supported housing.

Sir Stephen Timms:

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

Notwithstanding these positive outcomes from work, the Department acknowledges there is a challenge presented by the interaction between Universal Credit and Housing Benefit for those residing in Supported Housing and Temporary Accommodation and receiving their housing support through Housing Benefit and will consider the issue carefully in partnership with stakeholders.

■ **Universal Credit: Lone Parents**

Tom Hayes:

[\[7123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 36 of the report entitled Universal Credit Conditionality Changes & the Impact on Single Parent Families, published by Single Parents Rights, in March 2024, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that work coach meetings meet the needs of single parents.

Alison McGovern:

Work Coaches work with all customers, including lead carers to provide tailored advice on a range of opportunities to improve their likelihood of entering or re-entering the labour market, including training for skilled jobs in specific sectors.

As previously announced, we are planning fundamental reforms to the employment system to support more people to get into and to get on in work.

Proposed reforms include:

- A new public employment and careers service to help get more people into work and to progress in work.
- Working with local areas to tackle economic inactivity including the development of 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 address barriers and deliver employment opportunities for local people.
- A youth guarantee for all people aged 18 to 21 to ensure that they can access quality training opportunities, an apprenticeship or employment support.

■ Winter Fuel Payment**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**[\[8091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of adding Attendance Allowance to the list of benefits that qualify for the Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

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

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the Government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control.

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

For those with long-term health conditions or disabilities, the “extra costs” disability benefits, including those provided for by the Scottish Government, 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 in addition to any other benefits received .

For example, Attendance Allowance can be worth around £5,600 a year. Further, receipt of AA can provide a passport to additional amounts in means-tested benefits for those on low incomes providing they meet the other eligibility criteria.

Immediate support for pensioners includes our commitment to the Triple Lock, with over 12 million pensioners set to benefit through the course of this parliament, with the full yearly rate of the new State Pensions forecast to increase by around £1700.

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 uptake of Pension Credit and to target additional support to the poorest pensioners.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

Blake Stephenson:

[8296]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of Age UK's Equality Impact Assessment on the Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

[Holding answer 14 October 2024]: 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 th September. 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.

Our commitment to the Triple Lock means that both the basic and new State Pensions will increase in line with the highest of earnings growth, price inflation or 2.5% in each year of this Parliament. This will benefit over 12 million pensioners.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them.

Since September the Department has been running a campaign to raise awareness of Pension Credit. This national marketing campaign is running on a range of channels, including national and local print media and radio. The campaign also highlights that a successful backdated claim for Pension Credit made by 21 December will also qualify a pensioner for a Winter Fuel Payment, as long as they satisfy the other eligibility criteria.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: Ashfield

Lee Anderson:

[\[6479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of pensioners who will not be eligible 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

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: Bridgwater

Sir Ashley Fox:

[\[6871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who will be affected by the change in eligibility criteria for the winter fuel payment in the Bridgwater constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

It is estimated that around 19,200 pensioners in Bridgwater 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 Bridgwater Constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in Bridgwater 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: Broxbourne**Lewis Cocking:**[\[7919\]](#)

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 decision to means-test winter fuel payments in Broxbourne constituency.

Emma Reynolds:

It is estimated that around 16,600 pensioners in Broxbourne Constituency (2024 boundaries) will be affected 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

This estimation is calculated by subtracting the number of people claiming Pension Credit in Broxbourne constituency from the number of Winter Fuel Payment recipients in Broxbourne 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.

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:

[6153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of people in (a) Witham constituency and (b) Essex who (i) are eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment and (ii) will be eligible for the payment under the proposed changed eligibility requirements; and what the estimated value of those payments is.

Emma Reynolds:

In winter 2023 to 2024, a) 21,661 pensioners in Witham constituency (2024 boundaries) and b) 353,463 pensioners in Essex received a Winter Fuel Payment. This is based on the Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2023 to 2024 - [Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2023-to-2024).

It is estimated that around a) 1,681 pensioners in Witham Constituency and b) 34,541 pensioners in Essex will receive Winter Fuel Payment following the changes in eligibility criteria for Winter Fuel Payment. This is based on February 2024 Pension Credit statistics which are available via [DWP Stat-Xplore](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-stat-xplore). 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.

Please note that we do not hold information on the estimated value of these payments.

The estimates for Essex have been calculated by combining the data for the following 14 Local Authorities in Essex: Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock, Braintree, Brentwood, Basildon, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon, Rochford, Tendring and Uttlesford.

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: War Widow(er)s

Rebecca Paul:

[7680]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting war (a) widows and (b) widowers from changes to the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment.

Emma Reynolds:

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

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the Government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control.

Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households that need it most, that is, those receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. These are, Universal Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged over 80. This approach retains support for pensioners on low incomes.

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.

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.

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.

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.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ **UK accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership – Entry into Force**

Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security (Mr Douglas Alexander):
[\[HCWS142\]](#)

I am pleased to announce that it has, today, been confirmed that the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will enter into force on 15 December 2024, between the UK and ratified Parties.

CPTPP is one of the largest free trade areas in the world: when the UK accedes, it will account for almost 15% of global GDP, or over £12 trillion. The latest analysis shows that accession to CPTPP could in the long-run increase UK trade by £4.9 billion every year, boost the economy by £2.0 billion every year and add £1.0 billion to real household wages every year – supporting this Government's vital Growth Mission. Every nation and region of the UK is expected to benefit from this agreement once the UK accedes. The deal will bring new opportunities for British businesses, support jobs across the UK, and help shape the future of international trading rules.

British businesses will be able to take advantage of this global trade deal by the end of the year, with Japan, Singapore, Chile, New Zealand, Viet Nam, Peru and Malaysia. Indeed, through CPTPP, we will benefit from a free trade deal with Malaysia for the first time - an economy worth £334bn with a population of 33 million people. I would like to thank our valued partners for their support in ensuring our nations benefit from the deal as soon as possible.

The UK continues to work closely with the remaining CPTPP Parties – Australia, Brunei, Canada and Mexico – who are completing their processes to ratify our accession as quickly as possible. From this point onwards, for any new Party that ratifies the UK's accession, the agreement will enter into force with them 60 days after their ratification.

Next steps

The Department is preparing communication plans ahead of Entry into Force to ensure businesses can ready themselves to take full advantage of the opportunities CPTPP presents. These include media outreach, social media campaigns, and business engagement, to raise awareness of this significant milestone and explain the choices and opportunities available to traders.

From 15 December 2024, practical guides for businesses will be available online at great.gov.uk. These guides cover the agreement and interactions with bilateral FTAs on topics from rules of origin to digital provisions and focusing on particular sectors. Following Entry into Force, the Department will focus on supporting businesses to understand the practicalities of how CPTPP works, to ensure UK businesses can get the most out of the agreement.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Voluntary Report on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law at Domestic Level**

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Mr David Lammy): [\[HCWS140\]](#)

I am delighted to inform the House that the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) have jointly published the United Kingdom Government's second "Voluntary Report on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law at Domestic Level".

The publication of this report reflects the UK Government's determined commitment to international law and the proper implementation of, and compliance with, International Humanitarian Law (IHL). This is a vital responsibility of all States. IHL is the manifestation of the long-standing determination of the international community to limit the effects of armed conflict. In an age where IHL continues to be violated by both States and non-State parties to conflict, it is critical to reinforce these fundamental humanitarian rules that form an integral part of the international legal order in times of conflict. We are proud of our strong record of IHL implementation and compliance.

The voluntary report aims to explain in a single document the key steps that the United Kingdom has taken at a domestic level to implement IHL. Publishing specific examples of our practice to implement IHL is intended to help improve understanding of IHL, and encourage and inform dialogue on IHL issues both at home and abroad. We hope it will encourage other States to publish details of their activities to implement IHL at the domestic level, to better identify best practice and ultimately to improve implementation and compliance with IHL.

I am grateful to the United Kingdom National Committee on International Humanitarian Law for leading the compilation of this voluntary report. The British Red Cross, in its capacity as an auxiliary to the UK Government, deserve special thanks for assisting the FCDO and MOD with the production of this voluntary report.

The voluntary report is available on the www.gov.uk website. I will also place a copy in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT**■ Motor Insurance**

Secretary of State for Transport (Louise Haigh): [\[HCWS143\]](#)

Today the Economic Secretary to the Treasury and I will co-chair the first meeting of a new cross-Government Taskforce on motor insurance.

Motor insurance is an essential, not a luxury. It is vital to accessing economic opportunities, and this Government is committed to ensuring drivers are treated fairly.

This Government is committed to tackling increases in motor insurance premiums – which have risen at far higher rates in the UK than in other comparable economies. While motor insurance is a complex market, the Government wants to ensure that it works well for the drivers it serves.

The Taskforce, which will be attended by ministers from several departments and by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), has a strategic remit to set the direction for Government policy in this area. It will identify the drivers behind rising premiums and will agree short-term and long-term actions for departments that can contribute to stabilising or reducing premiums, while maintaining appropriate levels of cover.

The Taskforce will evaluate the impact of increased insurance costs on consumers and the insurance industry, including how this impacts different demographics, geographies and communities.

Whilst all drivers have struggled with rising costs, it is important to recognise the particular pressures on specific groups that face barriers to accessing fair and affordable motor insurance. This includes ethnic minorities, those on lower incomes, and elderly and young drivers. This taskforce will therefore have an additional focus on those groups.

The Taskforce's first meeting will also be attended by representatives from the motor and insurance industries, consumer champions and other relevant groups.

Improving access to appropriate and affordable insurance is key to supporting people's financial resilience, wellbeing, and making sure they can benefit fully from this Government's wider economic agenda of inclusive growth and breaking down the barriers to opportunities. I look forward to updating the House on the Taskforce's progress on these matters in the coming months.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ DWP Carer's Allowance

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Liz Kendall):

[\[HCWS141\]](#)

I would like to advise the House of my intention to bring forward an independent review into the issue of overpayments of Carer's Allowance, in cases where earnings have exceeded the entitlement threshold.

Many unpaid carers have been pushed to breaking point looking after the people they love. It is essential that we provide eligible carers with the support they need at the time they need it. This includes support for carers on low incomes through Universal Credit, and for all unpaid carers through Carer's Allowance.

The review will investigate how overpayments of Carer's Allowance have occurred, what can best be done to support those who have accrued them, and how to reduce the risk of these problems occurring in future. I am delighted to announce that Liz Sayce OBE has agreed to lead the review.

The independent review will focus on quickly gripping the issue of Carer's Allowance overpayments.

Carer's Allowance is a devolved matter in Scotland, and a transferred one in Northern Ireland. The review will therefore cover England and Wales, but we will discuss with the Scottish Government the position with respect to people in Scotland who are or have been receiving Carer's Allowance while DWP has been delivering it there on behalf of the Scottish Ministers.

Further details on the timelines for the review and terms of reference will be published in due course and a copy placed in the House Libraries.