



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 17 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:25 P.M., 17 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General and Crown Prosecution Service: Paternity Leave

Shaun Davies:

[\[7897\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in (a) her Department and (b) the Crown Prosecution Service was in each of the last three years.

Sarah Sackman:

Our records show that between 2021 and October 2024, Attorney General's Office and Crown Prosecution Service 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.

YEAR	ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE – AWDT	CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE – AWDT
2021	10	10
2022	0	10
2023	10	10
2024 (Jan to Oct)	10	10

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Carers: Conditions of Employment

Munira Wilson:

[\[7850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment the Cabinet Committee on the Future of Work has made of the potential merits of improving employment rights for kinship carers.

Justin Madders:

The Government greatly values kinship carers who come forward to care for children who cannot live with their parents.

The Government has committed in the Plan to Make Work Pay to review the system of parental leave to ensure that it better supports working families.

It is a long established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place at Cabinet and its committees is not normally made public.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Arden Strategies

Nick Timothy: [\[8514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) officials in his Department have had discussions with representatives of Arden Strategies.

Justin Madders:

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

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

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

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

■ Pre-school Education: Living Wage

Clive Lewis: [\[8664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2024 to Question 4008 on Childcare: Recruitment, what steps his Department is taking to (a) monitor and (b) enforce the payment of the National Living Wage in the early education and childcare sector.

Justin Madders:

The Government is clear that anyone entitled to the minimum wage should receive it. Robust enforcement action is taken against employers who do not pay their staff correctly.

HMRC enforces the minimum wage on behalf of DBT, and they investigate where they believe an employer is not paying the minimum wage. This includes considering all complaints from workers, conducting proactive enforcement activities in sectors considered high risk, and delivering educational activity to support employer compliance.

■ Pubs Code Adjudicator

Blake Stephenson: [\[8524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his planned timetable is for the third statutory review of the Pubs Code and the Pubs Code Adjudicator.

Justin Madders:

The third statutory review of the Pubs Code will commence following the end of the current three-year review period on 31 March 2025. It will consider the extent to

which the Code is consistent with the principles of fair and lawful dealing of tied pub tenants by pub-owning businesses and that those tenants should not be worse off than they would be if they were not subject to any product or service tie.

The review will consider a range of evidence and notes that the Society of Independent Brewers and Associates and the Campaign for Real Ale raised the issue of guest beers in their responses to the last statutory review. The Government also notes that the Pubs Code in Scotland will not come into force until March 2025.

Blake Stephenson: [\[8525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make a comparative assessment of the Pubs Code in (a) Scotland and (b) England and Wales.

Justin Madders:

The third statutory review of the Pubs Code will commence following the end of the current three-year review period on 31 March 2025. It will consider the extent to which the Code is consistent with the principles of fair and lawful dealing of tied pub tenants by pub-owning businesses and that those tenants should not be worse off than they would be if they were not subject to any product or service tie.

The review will consider a range of evidence and notes that the Society of Independent Brewers and Associates and the Campaign for Real Ale raised the issue of guest beers in their responses to the last statutory review. The Government also notes that the Pubs Code in Scotland will not come into force until March 2025.

Blake Stephenson: [\[8526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the Pubs Code to allow tenants of pub-owning businesses to sell one beer of their choice.

Justin Madders:

The third statutory review of the Pubs Code will commence following the end of the current three-year review period on 31 March 2025. It will consider the extent to which the Code is consistent with the principles of fair and lawful dealing of tied pub tenants by pub-owning businesses and that those tenants should not be worse off than they would be if they were not subject to any product or service tie.

The review will consider a range of evidence and notes that the Society of Independent Brewers and Associates and the Campaign for Real Ale raised the issue of guest beers in their responses to the last statutory review. The Government also notes that the Pubs Code in Scotland will not come into force until March 2025.

■ Toys and Games: Safety

Alex Mayer: [\[8553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to limit the number of dangerous toys sold by third-party sellers on online marketplaces.

Justin Madders:

The Office for Product Safety and Standards leads a national programme of regulatory action to tackle risks from unsafe and non-compliant goods from online marketplaces. This includes test purchasing products, including toys, to assess compliance and remove non-compliant products; requiring action from marketplaces to ensure they are taking the steps to meet their responsibilities under the law; and taking enforcement action where necessary.

The Product Regulation and Metrology Bill, currently before the House of Lords, will enable requirements for online marketplaces to be modernised to improve the safety of products sold on their platforms to UK consumers.

Trade Agreements: Parliamentary Scrutiny**Clive Jones:**[\[8571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he plans to take to ensure that Parliament has meaningful powers to (a) scrutinise trade negotiations as they progress and (b) (i) debate and (ii) vote on trade treaties ahead of ratification.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

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

Free trade agreements are subject to parliamentary scrutiny under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, prior to ratification.

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

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Arts: Visas****Pete Wishart:**[\[900680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what progress she has made with Cabinet colleagues on easing restrictions for UK artists seeking to tour in EU countries.

Chris Bryant:

This Government is working collaboratively across departments to look at how best to help touring artists, and improve arrangements for musicians, performing artists and their support staff being able to tour across the EU.

We will engage with the new European Commission and EU Member States, seeking improved arrangements across the European continent without a return to free movement. Our priority remains ensuring that UK artists can continue to thrive on the global stage.

■ BBC: Finance**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[900682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to prepare the BBC for its charter review.

Stephanie Peacock:

The next Charter Review has to ensure the BBC doesn't just survive but thrives for decades to come.

My Department is in the early stages of preparation for the upcoming Charter Review, which we expect to launch in 2025. My Department is already in discussions with the BBC about Charter Review.

■ Charities: Older People**Rachael Maskell:**[\[7810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she (a) has had and (b) plans to have discussions with representatives of clubs for the elderly that are closing in autumn 2024 on their (i) financial situation and (ii) role in providing warm spaces for the elderly.

Stephanie Peacock:

This government recognises the vital role that charities play up and down the country, providing crucial support to different groups across society, including the elderly.

DCMS is supporting charities with their financial sustainability in a number of ways including delivering grants, growing the social investment market and supporting their ability to bid for contracts.

Since I was appointed to my role I have not yet had discussions with representatives for clubs for the elderly. However this new government is keen to reset the relationship with civil society, and I would welcome the opportunity to engage and discuss with them.

Rachael Maskell:[\[7811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will have discussions with representatives of charities on the funding of organisations that provide clubs for the elderly.

Stephanie Peacock:

This government recognises the vital role that charities play up and down the country, providing crucial support to different groups across society, including the elderly.

DCMS is supporting charities with their financial sustainability in a number of ways including delivering grants, growing the social investment market and supporting their ability to bid for contracts.

Since I was appointed to my role I have not yet had discussions with representatives for clubs for the elderly. However this new government is keen to reset the

relationship with civil society, and I would welcome the opportunity to engage and discuss with them.

■ **Gambling: Advertising**

John Slinger: [\[6913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of gambling companies advertising through sports clubs on problem gambling.

John Slinger: [\[6916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the impact of television advertising for gambling websites and apps on (a) mental health and (b) suicide rates among men.

Stephanie Peacock:

All major sports have published their gambling sponsorship Codes of Conduct, setting minimum standards for gambling sponsorships, and the Premier League's decision to ban front-of-shirt sponsorship by gambling firms will commence by the end of the 2025/26 season.

Regarding television advertising, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is the independent body responsible for regulating advertising in the UK and co-regulates broadcast advertising under contract with Ofcom. The Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) and Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP), sister organisations of the ASA, are responsible for codifying the standards for advertising to the marketing industry as part of their CAP and BCAP Codes. A wide range of provisions in the codes are designed to protect vulnerable adults from harm, including those prohibiting imagery or claims that might encourage problematic gambling behaviour.

We are considering the best available evidence from a wide range of sources to inform decisions on how best to fulfil our manifesto commitment to reducing gambling-related harm. We will provide further updates to the House soon.

John Slinger: [\[6914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of gambling companies advertising through sports clubs on men's (a) mental health and (b) suicide rates.

Stephanie Peacock:

All major sports have now published their gambling sponsorship Codes of Conduct, setting minimum standards for socially responsible gambling sponsorships, and the Premier League's decision to ban front-of-shirt sponsorship by gambling firms will commence by the end of the 2025/26 season.

We are considering the best available evidence from a wide range of sources to inform decisions on how best to fulfil our manifesto commitment to reducing gambling-related harm. We will provide further updates to the House in due course.

Caroline Voaden:

[\[7132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will hold discussions with Ofcom on further regulating (a) gambling advertising and (b) gambling advertising associated with sports to help prevent (i) children and (ii) vulnerable people from gambling.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is the independent body responsible for regulating advertising in the UK and co-regulates broadcast advertising under contract with Ofcom. The Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) and Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP), sister organisations of the ASA, are responsible for codifying the standards for advertising to the marketing industry as part of their CAP and BCAP Codes.

We are considering the best available evidence from a wide range of sources and working closely with the relevant organisations to inform decisions on how best to fulfil our manifesto commitment to reducing gambling-related harm. We will provide further updates to the House soon.

■ **Gambling: Internet**

Victoria Collins:

[\[7068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she plans to take to reform online gambling to tackle gambling addictions; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of limiting the practice of offering free bets to attract new players.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is considering the best available evidence from a wide range of sources to inform decisions on how best to fulfil its manifesto commitment to reducing gambling-related harm.

The Gambling Commission has recently implemented a number of regulatory reforms aimed at reducing harm, such as introducing new regulations to make online games safer and financial vulnerability checks aimed at reducing cases of unaffordable losses. The Commission has also consulted on measures to ensure that incentives such as free bets are constructed in a socially responsible manner and will respond to this consultation in due course.

We will provide further updates to the House soon.

■ **Museums and Galleries: Finance**

Josh Babarinde:

[R] [\[900684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she plans to take to support art galleries with financial pressures.

Chris Bryant:

Museums and galleries enrich communities, creating thriving places for people to live and visit.

We're working with Arts Council England and others to understand the sector's priorities and needs, looking at the sector as a whole: from our commitment to restoring stability to Local Government, to our forthcoming review of Arts Council England.

Regional art galleries are a major beneficiary of DCMS's £86 million Museum Estate and Development Fund, with Round 4 currently underway.

■ Sports**Maureen Burke:**[\[900683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support Team GB and ParalympicsGB to build on their successes in 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

We are fully committed to multi-year funding for our elite sport system and enabling our athletes to excel on the world stage.

This means supporting them financially to match and build on their success in Paris, helping them to deliver at LA 2028. We will set out further details at the Spending Review.

■ Youth Services: Hartlepool**Mr Jonathan Brash:**[\[900681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the contribution of youth services to the wellbeing of young people in Hartlepool constituency.

Stephanie Peacock:

This Government cares about young people and champions the vital role that youth services play in improving the wellbeing of young people. We are working closely with the Home Office on the Young Futures Programme which prioritises prevention, including mental health. In Hartlepool, we have provided funding to youth clubs through the Youth Investment Fund, to give young people a safe space to go to. We also know that sport has public health benefits too which is why we have committed to investing £123 million in grassroots sport this year to ensure sport is open to everyone.

DEFENCE**■ Army: Training**

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[8944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of British Army Training Unit Kenya in financial year 2023-24.

Luke Pollard:

c.£27 million was directly attributed to The British Army Training Unit Kenya for the financial year 2023-24.

EDUCATION**■ Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund**

Rachael Maskell: [\[8165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of potential merits of the recommendation in the report entitled the Adoption Barometer, published by Adoption UK in May 2024, that the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund be made permanent.

Rachael Maskell: [\[8166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to reduce delays in families accessing therapeutic support through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund.

Rachael Maskell: [\[8167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of adequacy of the time it takes families to receive therapeutic support through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund.

Rachael Maskell: [\[8168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of ringfenced crisis funding within the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund to enable families facing an urgent crisis to access therapeutic interventions more quickly.

Rachael Maskell: [\[8169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the therapeutic modalities available within the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund.

Janet Daby:

Funding for Children's Social Care, which includes the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF), is being considered as part of the current spending review.

The department has been making a range of changes to improve the timeliness of the ASGSF application process. For example, we will be streamlining the online application process to reduce administration for local authorities and regional adoption agencies (RAAs), and have already changed systems to ensure that application outcomes are delivered more swiftly. We have also introduced a direct communication link with therapy providers to give early updates on any changes and advice on submitting applications.

These changes should help to reduce delays within local authorities and RAAs before applications are received. The additional support to providers, with better sharing of information about the ASGSF, should also help families to receive support more quickly.

One of the main aims of the ASGSF is to support families whose adoption or special guardianship order is at risk of breakdown, with children being at risk of being returned to care, without the specialist therapy linked to trauma and attachment we fund. For this reason, all funding for the ASGSF can be considered crisis funding, and efforts are made to get that support to those in need as soon as possible. The adequacy of the therapies available within the ASGSF is currently being assessed from multiple angles. The National Institute for Health Research is currently conducting a randomised control trial into Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP). This research is currently in the third and final phase and will give robust evidence into the effectiveness of DDP. Moreover, the collection of data from Outcomes Measurement Tools for ASGSF-funded therapies began in December 2023. This data will give an overall picture of the impact and adequacy of ASGSF-funded therapies.

■ **Bramhall High School**

Tom Morrison:

[\[8964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his timetable is for providing Bramhall High School with details of (a) funding and (b) a start date for as under the School Rebuilding Programme.

Stephen Morgan:

Bramhall High School is currently in the 'feasibility' stage of the School Rebuilding Programme. The feasibility will determine the scope of the project, programme and the budget. Once the feasibility is concluded, the department will procure a contractor to undertake the detailed design of the scheme and secure planning permission.

The department currently anticipates appointing a contractor in spring 2025 with construction beginning from summer 2026.

■ **Breakfast Clubs**

Damian Hinds:

[\[5978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of primary and secondary schools which (a) were offering a free breakfast club at the end

of the 2023-2024 academic year and (b) are projected to be offering a free breakfast club at the end of the 2024-2025 academic year.

Stephen Morgan:

To date, the department has not regularly collected data on the total number of schools that operate breakfast clubs, and, as a result, the department is unable to project the anticipated numbers for this academic year.

The National School Breakfast Club Programme currently supports up to 2,700 participating schools in disadvantaged areas, but this is not enough. The department understands the significant impact breakfast clubs can have in ensuring that children arrive at school ready to learn. Therefore, the department will be inviting 750 schools to participate in an early adopter scheme in April 2025, designed to test and identify effective strategies before a national rollout.

The department is collaborating closely with the sector to ensure that appropriate support, including funding, guidance and resources, is established.

■ **Breakfast Clubs: Primary Education**

Adam Jogee:

[\[6977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to extend free -breakfast clubs in primary schools in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme and (b) Staffordshire for pupils in (i) special schools and (ii) alternative provision.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is clear on the impact that breakfast clubs can have to support children to arrive at school ready to learn, which is why we are committed to introducing free breakfast clubs in every school with primary aged pupils.

From April 2025, free breakfast clubs will be available in up to 750 early adopter schools, as part of a 'test and learn' phase, in advance of a national roll out.

The new breakfast club offer, once rolled out nationally, will be available to every state funded school with primary aged children. It will both provide parents with more affordable childcare choices, supporting families with the cost of living, and support school attendance and attainment, ensuring children are set-up for the day and ready to learn.

■ **Childcare: Fees and Charges**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[6365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the affordability of childcare for families ineligible for free childcare for working parents.

Stephen Morgan:

Ensuring that parents are able to access affordable and high quality childcare is a priority for this government. Our focus in reforming the system will be to ensure that there are greater and more equal opportunities to access early education for every

family, and that there are greater opportunities for children to thrive and develop. As an initial step, we are progressing work to deliver new places in 3,000 nurseries through upgrading space in primary schools.

Families that are not eligible for the childcare entitlements for working parents may be entitled to other forms of support, including the 15 hours entitlement for disadvantaged two year olds and the 15 hours universal entitlement for three and four year olds. The universal entitlement is available to all parents of three and four year olds, regardless of income or immigration status. In terms of the disadvantaged two year olds entitlement, parents do not need to work to claim this entitlement. However, they will need to be claiming certain benefits and have a household net income of less than £15,400 per year. All two year olds with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, those in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and looked after children are eligible regardless of household income. Some two year olds with 'no recourse to public funds' immigration status may also be eligible subject to different income thresholds.

Working families claiming universal credit can also claim up to 84% of the childcare costs back through Universal Credit Childcare. This offer can be used alongside the entitlements set out above.

We will be undertaking a comprehensive evaluation programme of the expansion of childcare entitlements for working parents which will explore how families not eligible for the new entitlements experience finding and accessing childcare, including the associated costs. Further, the impact evaluation will assess how the expansion has impacted upon the quality of childcare provision and children's development, for all children, and wider family outcomes. As per Government Social Research guidelines, evaluation findings will be available within 12 weeks of the projects being finalised. We expect the first to be available from spring 2026.

■ Children: Food

Damian Hinds:

[5981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of her Department's spending on (a) activities and (b) provision of food during school holidays in (i) 2009-10 and (ii) 2023-24.

Stephen Morgan:

All 153 local authorities are participating in the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme supported by over £200 million a year. The HAF programme provides free childcare places, enriching activities and healthy meals to children from low-income families, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning.

The department knows that the longer school holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of increased costs, in particular childcare, and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap. Children from disadvantaged families are less likely to access organised out-of-school activities and are more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of

nutrition and physical health, as well as increased likelihood of experiencing social isolation.

The HAF programme can offer these children stability, structure and support alongside fun, food and physical activities during the longer school holidays, and can help children to return to school feeling engaged and ready to learn.

■ Further Education: Qualifications

Sarah Green: [\[9048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 19 September 2024 to question 4269 on Qualifications, what progress her Department has made on its review of 16-19 qualification reforms at Level three and below.

Janet Daby:

The department is making good progress with the review of qualifications reform. The review is focused on Level 3 qualifications that are due to have funding removed on 31 July 2025. The review will aim to ensure that there are a range of high quality qualifications at Level 3 alongside T Levels and A levels to meet the needs of learners and employers.

The department has an extensive programme of engagement underway, to ensure that the views of colleges, schools, teachers and wider stakeholders are fed into the review. The department has already held a round table, which was chaired by my noble Friend, the Minister for Skills, with key leaders in the college sector. The department is also undertaking a series of focus groups and interviews with colleges, schools and other organisations to ensure that the views of stakeholders are fully considered. Alongside this, departmental officials are using the latest student data and information available to inform the review. The department remains committed to undertaking this review quickly and concluding it by the end of the year.

■ Hinduism: Aylesbury

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[8926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that Hinduism is taught in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in Aylesbury constituency.

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[8927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that (a) teachers are given training in and (b) schools have high-quality resources to support teaching on Hinduism in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in Aylesbury constituency.

Laura Kyrke-Smith: [\[8936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure faith groups are regularly consulted on locally agreed syllabuses for religious education.

Catherine McKinnell:

Religious education (RE) is an important subject that should provide pupils with an opportunity to learn about a wide range of religious and non-religious beliefs. RE should help pupils to better understand the values and traditions of different religious communities, which is why it remains a compulsory subject in all state-funded schools in England for each pupil up to the age of 18. To support high-quality teaching, the department offers a £10,000 bursary for those undertaking RE postgraduate initial teacher training in the 2024/25 academic year.

The government does not specify of what a local RE curriculum should consist. These considerations, in relation to mainstream state funded schools, are a matter for individual schools or for Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs), which review and recommend a locally agreed syllabus to their local authority for approval.

Academies and most maintained schools with a religious designation are permitted to develop their own RE syllabus. In the case of schools with a religious designation these may be in accordance with their trust deeds or tenets of their faith. For other schools, and in locally agreed syllabuses, schools must reflect: “the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain”.

Legislation requires each locally agreed syllabus for religious education to be reviewed at least once every five years by an ASC established by the local authority. Membership of the ASC must be drawn from Christian denominations and such other religions and religious denominations as, in the opinion of the local authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area. Membership must also be drawn from the Church of England, teacher associations and the local authority. This ensures that all relevant faith groups can be consulted.

■ Parents**Patrick Spencer:****[8385]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to (a) encourage and (b) support parents to (i) read, (ii) speak and (iii) play with young children in the home.

Stephen Morgan:

The department recognises the vital role of parents and the home learning environment in children's early development and their contribution to the government's mission to improve opportunity and give all children the best start in life. The department continues to support family hubs delivering services to help parents create rich home learning environments. The department's Little Moments Together campaign aims to encourage and provide resources for parents to chat, play and read with their children. The department is reviewing future support for parents within the current spending review process.

■ Private Education: VAT**Ben Obese-Jecty:****[6834]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential impact of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees on funding for state schools.

Stephen Morgan:

This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy and will confirm the introduction of these changes at the Budget on 30 October. The Office for Budget Responsibility will also certify the government's costings for these measures at that time. The right time to discuss any funding for state-funded schools is at the Spending Review. To note, analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies assumes a net gain to the public finances of £1.3 to 1.5 billion per year in the medium to long run as a result of removing tax exemptions from private schools. This would allow for about a 2% increase in state school spending in England. This analysis can be found here: <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/tax-private-school-fees-and-state-school-spending>.

Bradley Thomas:**[7653]**

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

Stephen Morgan:

This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy. Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies indicates that the number of pupils who may switch schools as a result of this change is likely to represent a very small proportion of overall pupil numbers in the state sector and any displacement would be expected to take place over several years. This research can be found here: <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/tax-private-school-fees-and-state-school-spending>.

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

■ Pupils: Absenteeism**Nesil Caliskan:****[8346]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many school absences were recorded in Barking in the (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23 academic years.

Stephen Morgan:

Information on pupil absence, including breakdowns by characteristic, is published at local authority level in the Pupil absence in schools in England statistics publication. This can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england/2022-23>. The number of overall absence sessions, and absence rates, in Barking and Dagenham for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/e975658f-5526-4b87-c3cc-08dce8260458>.

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

Special Educational Needs: Autism and Learning Disability**Dame Caroline Dinenege:****[6047]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of introducing the Oliver McGowan mandatory training on learning disability and autism in education settings.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government aims to support all pupils with special education need and disabilities (SEND), including with autism, to achieve and thrive at school. High quality teaching and support is the single most important in-school factor in improving outcomes for pupils, including those with autism or other SEND.

While the department recognises the value of Oliver McGowan training, this training was developed for health and social care staff.

Within education settings, school staff can access a range of training as appropriate to their career stage. Training to support pupils with autism includes information on when to draw on the expertise of health and social care professionals.

Headteachers should also use their professional judgement to identify any further training for teaching staff they employ. This may include the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training and specific specialisms for individual staff when that is relevant to them, the school and its pupils. This can also include the Universal Services (US) Programme.

The US programme brings together SEND-specific continuous professional development and support for the school and further education workforce. The programme aims to improve outcomes for children and young people, including those with autism, and aims to reach 70% of schools and colleges in England per year. The contract offers autism awareness training and resources. Over 185,000 professionals have received autism training from an Autism Education Trust training partner since the US programme launched in May 2022.

■ Special Educational Needs: Huntingdon**Ben Obese-Jecty:** [\[6830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional SEN provision will be provided in state schools in Huntingdon constituency following the introduction of VAT on independent school fees.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will support the independent sector to maintain places for (a) vulnerable and (b) disadvantaged children who have difficulties settling in large state schools.

Stephen Morgan:

State education is accessible to all children, regardless of their financial status. All children of compulsory school age are entitled to a state-funded school place. The department works to support local authorities to ensure that every local area has sufficient places for every child that needs one. This includes those pupils who have special educational needs.

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

■ Special Educational Needs: Norfolk**Clive Lewis:** [\[8666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 2948 on Special Educational Needs, what estimate she has made of when the review of Norfolk County Council's Safety Valve agreement will be completed.

Catherine McKinnell:

Norfolk County Council's Safety Valve agreement is currently under review. The local authority is working closely with the department and expert advisers on a plan to achieve a sustainable high-needs budget while delivering better outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. There is no set timetable for this review to be completed.

The department regularly reviews the implementation of all Safety Valve agreements through its monitoring process and provides support and intervention if they go off track.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Emissions

Danny Beales:

[\[8085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help the public understand the (a) potential (i) costs and (ii) benefits of reducing and (b) steps they can take to reduce carbon emissions.

Kerry McCarthy:

Net zero will bring significant opportunities to people across the UK such as greater energy security, economic opportunities and good jobs. The Government is committed to bringing people with it on the transition to net zero, empowering them to take action and demonstrating the benefits of the transition. We have also committed to the Warm Homes Plan which will transform homes, making them cheaper and cleaner to run, full details of this will be set out next Spring.

■ Electricity: Prices

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[8946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a zonal pricing mechanism via the review of electricity market arrangements.

Michael Shanks:

Through the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements, we are exploring several ways to reduce energy bills by making more efficient use of the energy infrastructure we are building.

The Government is continuing to assess the benefits and costs of zonal pricing alongside other options for reform within our current national pricing arrangements. We are considering these options carefully and will provide more information in due course.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[8275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help (a) support British farmers to negotiate contracts with retailers and (b) preserve traditional farming methods.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government will deliver a resilient and healthy food system, with a new deal that ensures fairness in the supply chain across all sectors. Where farmers sell directly to retailers, their agreements will be covered within the scope of the sectoral regulations that we are introducing through powers in the Agriculture Act 2020. Farmers should

always receive a fair price for their products and the Government is committed to tackling contractual unfairness wherever it exists

Farmers are not only an important part of our local economies and communities, they play a crucial role in tackling biodiversity loss; improving water and air quality and improving our resilience to climate change.

To us, food security is national security, and so it is important that we have a resilient and healthy food system that works with nature and supports British farmers.

We understand the importance of, and need for, continuity when it comes to traditional farming practices for certain landscapes. This government will work with the sector to optimise schemes, including the methods and actions they fund, making sure that they work for all farmers whilst delivering food security and nature recovery in a just and equitable way.

■ Air Pollution

Liam Conlon: [\[8537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce air pollution (a) nationally and (b) in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Emma Hardy:

(a) The Government will introduce a comprehensive Clean Air Strategy to deliver legally binding targets to improve air quality. The Clean Air Strategy will include a series of interventions to reduce emissions so that everyone's exposure to air pollution is reduced.

(b) Air quality policy in London is devolved to the Mayor. The Mayor and the London Assembly prioritise action to improve air quality and support local authorities including Bromley to improve air quality in their area.

■ Animal Products: Imports

Will Stone: [\[8509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timetable is for the introduction of legislation to ban imports of hunting trophies.

Mary Creagh:

The Government committed to banning the import of hunting trophies in its Manifesto. We intend to deliver on this and are currently considering the most effective way to do so.

■ Aquariums: Domestic Visits

Dr Danny Chambers: [\[8743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the last Ministerial visit to an aquarium in the UK took place.

Daniel Zeichner:

All Ministerial visits should be declared on the ministerial transparency return which is published by Cabinet Office every quarter.

■ **Beavers: Conservation****Andrew Cooper:**[\[9026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will review the rules on beaver (a) reintroduction and (b) management.

Mary Creagh:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

Yes, Defra will continue to work with Natural England to develop our approach to beaver reintroductions and management in England. Beaver management should follow the 5-step management approach published on Gov.uk. Licenced projects are responsible for managing animals they have released and are also expected to follow the Code for Reintroductions and other Conservation Translocations in England. Landowners and managers who may be affected by beaver activity can find further guidance on beaver management, including when a licence might be needed, on Gov.uk.

■ **Deposit Return Schemes****Josh Babarinde:**[\[8295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to accelerate the introduction of the Deposit Return Scheme.

Mary Creagh:

This Government remains committed to delivering the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers in October 2027, as agreed with the devolved Governments of the UK, and in accordance with the Joint Policy Statement published in April 2024. There are no plans to accelerate this work – industry have been clear that this is the time they need to launch the scheme.

Defra intends to lay the DRS regulations for England and Northern Ireland before Parliament later this year, assuming Parliamentary time allows. If so, the regulations would come into force in early 2025, before the Deposit Management Organisation (DMO), (who will run the scheme), would be appointed in April 2025.

■ **Dogs: Electronic Training Aids****Sarah Champion:**[\[6248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he last had discussions with the (a) Kennel Club, (b) RSPCA, (c) Dogs Trust and (d) Battersea Cats and Dogs Home on the use of electric shock collars to train pet dogs.

Daniel Zeichner:

No formal discussions have taken place with the organisations listed.

■ Environment Protection: Frome and East Somerset**Anna Sabine:**[\[7227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage investment in natural capital projects in Frome and East Somerset constituency.

Mary Creagh:

The Environment Agency (EA) is developing an initiative called Heart of Wessex that incorporates large parts of the Frome and East Somerset constituency. It is led by the EA and works across Natural England, The Forestry Commission, local eNGOs and community groups. It is designed to leverage natural capital and ecosystem services to draw in largescale sustainable finance across the boundaries of Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire.

We have also been working with Wessex Water and the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership to develop a partnership project in the Cam & Wellow Catchment under the Water Industry National Environment Programme. This project will help drive large amounts of investment into natural capital, delivering nature-based solutions, habitat creation and water quality improvements across the constituency.

Other partnership projects in this constituency that we have supported, and which have invested in natural capital include:

- Natural Flood Management and farm advisory projects to tackle diffuse pollution in the Somerset Frome catchment.
- A project in Frome Town called Transforming Waterways in Somerset Towns.
- A river restoration scheme on the River Mells.
- A project in the Somer Valley which included creating green spaces and access to nature to promote improved health and wellbeing in the local communities.

■ Farmers: Income**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[8864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that farmers have a stable income.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government strongly believes in the importance of farming. For this Government, food security is national security, requiring a sustainable, resilient and healthy food system that works with nature and supports British Farmers.

The Government understands the importance of stability for the sector and so have delivered on our commitment to restore stability by continuing the rollout of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme.

Record numbers of farmers are now in an Environmental Land Management scheme, and the Government wants to maintain the momentum built over recent months. This Government will continue to support farmers by optimising its schemes and grants in an orderly way, ensuring they produce the right outcomes for all farmers while delivering food security and nature recovery in a just and equitable way.

We recognise the pressures that so many farmers are under, including cost pressures. We need to make sure the agricultural transition is fair and will back British farmers in everything we do.

The Government is offering a new deal for farmers giving farmers their future back, including:

- Back British produce and standards and our farmers who produce it. Kickstart rural growth by fostering trading opportunities for British famers.
- We will tackle rising energy costs, by introducing a public sector sustainable energy company - GB Energy.

■ Fishing Catches

Edward Morello:

[\[8617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that fishing catch limits are in line with scientific advice on that matter.

Daniel Zeichner:

As an independent coastal State the UK sets catch limits, primarily through negotiation with other coastal States. In line with our domestic and international obligations, including those of the Fisheries Act 2020 and Joint Fisheries Statement, our approach to setting catch limits is based on the best available scientific advice, including advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) on maximum sustainable yield where that is available. Following the conclusion of this year's annual fisheries negotiations, the Government will publish an independent assessment of the number of TACs set consistent with ICES advice for 2025 as it has done in previous years.

■ Flood Control: Bromsgrove

Bradley Thomas:

[\[7652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how the Floods Resilience Task Force will work with stakeholders in Bromsgrove constituency.

Emma Hardy:

The Government's new Floods Resilience Taskforce marks a new approach to preparing for flooding. It brings together a range of partners in national, regional and local Government, including the Environment Agency (EA), Devolved Administrations, selected Regional Mayors and Lead Local Flood Authorities.

Membership of the Taskforce is flexed to meet the specific agenda and priorities but the Taskforce will also work with a wider range of flood risk partners as needed.

The EA has been supporting Bromsgrove District Council to deliver flood risk management projects which will increase protection for over 150 properties by 2027.

The EA has acted on local feedback to further improve the flood warning service on these watercourses, to help warn and inform constituents to take action to protect livelihoods and property.

■ Flood Control: Clacton

Nigel Farage:

[9090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to improve flood defences in (a) Jaywick, (b) St Osyth, (c) Point Clear and (d) other high-risk areas in Clacton constituency.

Emma Hardy:

Protecting communities around the country from flooding is one of the new Secretary of State's five core priorities. That's why this Government launched a Flood Resilience Taskforce to provide oversight of national and local flood resilience and preparedness ahead of and after winter flood season.

The Government is investing over £1.25 billion in 2024/25 to build and maintain flood defences to scale up national resilience. We continue to target investment where it's most needed to ensure that communities are protected from the devastating impacts of flooding and coastal erosion.

In Jaywick, the Environment Agency (EA) recently completed the £12 million Cockett Wick seawall improvement scheme, ensuring 3,000 homes and businesses are better protected from tidal flooding.

At Point Clear, the EA is developing a scheme to strengthen flood defences, investing £3.5 million by 2029.

In Walton-on-the-Naze, the EA is delivering a £1.1 million scheme to improve the resilience of flood defences, and contributing £170,000 to support works to other defences in this area.

In Clacton constituency, including St Osyth, the EA spends £300,000 annually for routine operation and maintenance of flood defences. It will also be contributing £200,000 to support works delivered by Essex County Council between 2025-2028 to reduce the risk of flooding from surface water.

■ Fly-tipping

Dr Neil Hudson:

[9074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle fly-tipping in (a) rural, (b) semi-rural and (c) urban communities.

Mary Creagh:

Fly-tipping is a serious crime which blights communities and the environment and dealing with it imposes significant costs on both taxpayers and businesses. In our manifesto we committed to forcing fly-tippers and vandals to clean up the mess that they have created as part of a crackdown on anti-social behaviour. We will provide further details on this commitment, and other actions to tackle fly-tipping, in due course.

In the meantime, Defra will continue to chair the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group through which we work with a wide range of stakeholders such as local authorities, the Environment Agency and National Farmers Union, to promote good practice with regards to tackling fly-tipping, including on private land.

■ Fly-tipping: Epping Forest**Dr Neil Hudson:****[9075]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the level of fly-tipping in Epping Forest constituency.

Mary Creagh:

The department has not yet made any formal assessment of the implications of its fly-tipping policies. Local authorities are required to report fly-tipping incidents and enforcement actions to Defra, which the department publishes annually, at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/env24-fly-tipping-incident-and-actions-taken-in-england>.

This data isn't available at a constituency level and excludes the majority of private-land incidents.

■ Forest Products: Northern Ireland**Jim Allister:****[7706]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2024 to Question 4798 on Forest Products: Northern Ireland, what estimate his Department has made of the annual costs of running the competent body with respect to its role in EU Regulation 2023/1115.

Mary Creagh:

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

■ Horses: Dartmoor**Steve Race:****[8268]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the long-term conservation of Dartmoor's hill ponies.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra supports the long-term conservation of livestock and equines, including the Dartmoor Hill pony, by monitoring populations of pedigree livestock including native breeds which are published in an annual UK National Breed inventory and by protecting eligible native breeds at risk from culling during notifiable disease outbreaks.

Through the expanded offer for Sustainable Farming Incentive 2024, keepers of Dartmoor Hill Ponies on Dartmoor can also claim payment for grazing under the native breeds at risk supplement and pony/cattle grazing supplement.

Steve Race:[\[8269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to rule out any reductions in the minimum population of Dartmoor's iconic semi-wild Hill Ponies as part of future land management or environmental strategies for the Dartmoor area.

Daniel Zeichner:

Through the new offer we will be providing payment for grazing with both cattle and ponies and making both cattle and ponies eligible under the native breeds at risk supplement. We are thereby removing the competition between the two as recommended in the Dartmoor review. We have also made it clear within the new offer that ponies are exempt from stock removal requirements, in recognition that removal of ponies from moorland is neither feasible nor desirable in most circumstances.

We cannot, exclude either cattle or ponies from stocking density calculations. All livestock contribute to the overall grazing pressure exerted on moorland. On some moorland habitats (such as peatland), it is necessary to graze with low stocking densities to support habitat restoration and maintenance. If any livestock are excluded from the stocking density calculation, then over grazing would result. This would prevent us achieving desired improvements in habitat condition.

The new moorland offer will be subject to monitoring and evaluation, particularly in the first year. Any change in the pony population during this time will be investigated and further mitigations will be explored if necessary.

■ Incinerators**Steve Barclay:**[\[8438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the statutory target to halve residual waste on demand for waste incineration capacity.

Steve Barclay:[\[8439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of waste incineration capacity over the next (a) five, (b) 10 and (c) 20 years assuming all statutory environmental targets are met.

Steve Barclay:

[\[8440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to reduce the amount of waste sent for incineration; and what estimate he has made of the volume of waste that will be incinerated in each of the next five years.

Mary Creagh:

Our current use of resources has been set on a trajectory that is economically, environmentally and socially unsustainable. This Government will be creating a roadmap to correct course towards a circular economy, supporting sustainable economic growth by driving up resource efficiency and reducing our emissions and waste. As part of this we will consider the role of waste incineration, including Energy from Waste, and any implications for circularity, economic growth, and net zero.

■ **Inland Waterways: Beckenham and Penge**

Liam Conlon:

[\[8536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to clear up water ways in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State has met with water company bosses, including Thames Water, to make clear companies will be held accountable for their performance for customers and the environment. During the meeting water bosses signed up to the Government's initial package of reforms to reduce sewage pollution and attract investment to upgrade infrastructure.

In addition, the Government's Water (Special Measures) Bill will strengthen regulation, giving the water regulator new powers to ban the payment of bonuses if environmental standards are not met and increasing accountability for water executives. These are the first critical steps in enabling a long-term and transformative reset of the entire water sector. The Government will be carrying out a review to fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good.

Also, in Beckenham and Penge, and across the country, the Environment Agency undertakes weekly debris screen clearances and vegetation clearances at priority locations to keep the main rivers clear.

■ **Livestock: Manure**

Robin Swann:

[\[8986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken with external stakeholders to remove excess phosphorus from cattle and pig slurry.

Daniel Zeichner:

A recent £15 million round of the Farming Innovation Programme focussed on nutrient management, funding research projects to develop ideas and technology

enabling farmers to manage their inputs and reduce environmental risk more effectively. Managing and recovering phosphorous in slurry is in scope of this competition and the successful projects will be announced in due course.

■ **Mobile Phones: Waste Disposal**

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[7683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the potential environmental impact of mobile phones going to landfill.

Mary Creagh:

No assessment has been made of the environmental impacts of mobile phones going to landfill.

■ **Nature Conservation**

Alex Easton: [\[8367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the UK meets its 2030 nature recovery targets; and what steps he is taking to measure progress against those targets.

Alex Easton: [\[8368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the State of Nature Partnership report entitled State of Nature Report 2023, published in September 2023, what steps he plans to take to (a) prevent further biodiversity loss and (b) support long-term biodiversity recovery.

Mary Creagh:

We know Britain's nature is in crisis. The State of Nature Report 2023 states that of species found in England, 13% are at risk of extinction from Great Britain.

This Government is committed to delivering the species abundance, species extinction and habitat creation and restoration targets set under the Environment Act in England.

We have wasted no time in launching a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) to ensure it fully supports our mission to recover nature. We will publish a summary of findings in early 2025, to be followed by publication of a revised EIP in Spring 2025.

The species abundance target indicator measures progress against our species abundance targets and in recent years the declines have shown potential signs of levelling off. We recognise that more needs to be done to put nature firmly on the road to recovery. This is why we have announced a review to transform our water system and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas; and introduced a new deal for farmers to boost food security, restore nature and support economic growth.

■ NHS: Food

Paula Barker:

[\[6624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to ensure the continuity of (a) patient care and (b) NHS resilience in respect to specialist food products used by the NHS in the context of the implementation of the Windsor Framework.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra officials are working with colleagues across the Government to ensure continuity of supply into Northern Ireland of specialist food products used by the NHS and to facilitate patient care, recognising the importance of these products to enable patients to meet their dietary requirements and live full lives.

■ Penguins: Aquariums

Dr Danny Chambers:

[\[8742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the welfare of the Gentoo penguins at London aquarium.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world. Under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, all zoos in Great Britain must be licensed to appropriate welfare standards, as set out in the Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice. An updated version of the standards will be published shortly. Zoo standards are enforced in Great Britain by Local Authorities. While the Department is aware of the penguins at the London Aquarium Defra cannot comment on individual cases.

■ Recycling

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[7827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 September 2024 to Question 5409 on Recycling, what his planned timetable is for bringing forward the secondary legislation to meet the timescales set out in Annex A.

Mary Creagh:

The relevant legislation introducing Simpler Recycling in the Environment Act 2021, launched under a Government she was part of, has now come into force.

This means that the requirements regarding separate collection of the core recyclable waste streams will automatically come into effect as per the previously announced timetable.

Steve Barclay: [8441]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the proportion of waste that will be recycled in each of the next five years.

Mary Creagh:

In 2022, the [Waste from Households recycling rate](#) in England was 43.4%. Figures for 2023/24 are provisionally scheduled for publication by January 2025. We have a long-term target to halve residual waste by 2042 and we are committed to achieving a municipal recycling rate of at least 65% by 2035.

■ Reservoirs: East of England

Ben Obese-Jecty: [8947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 October 2024 to Question 6855 on Water Supply: East of England, what the planned timetable is for (a) approving and (b) constructing the proposed two new reservoirs in East Anglia.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State has allowed Anglian Water to finalise its Water Resources Management Plan, which includes proposals for two reservoirs, the Fens Reservoir and Lincolnshire Reservoir. Both meet the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project criteria and would need development consent, under the Planning Act 2008.

Anglian Water expects the Fens Reservoir to be in supply by 2036/37 and the Lincolnshire Reservoir to be in supply by 2039/40. Future consultations on the proposals are required before the applications for development consent are submitted. The applications are expected in 2026/27 for the Fens Reservoir, and in 2028/29 for the Lincolnshire Reservoir.

■ Salmon: Conservation

Robin Swann: [8985]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to protect the wild salmon population.

Daniel Zeichner:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

Between 2019 and 2023, the Environment Agency mitigated 58 barriers to fish passage on England's salmon rivers. The Environment Agency also manages salmon fisheries in England, ensuring that 95% of salmon catches in 2023 were released, alive, through a combination of voluntary and mandatory measures.

Cleaning up the water environment is a key priority for Defra. The Government will be carrying out a review of the water sector regulatory system, with further details to be set out later this year.

Defra is also working internationally to protect salmon populations through participation in the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO). A full list of actions related to salmon conservation can be found in the England and Wales NASCO “ [Implementation Plan](#) ”, along with [annual progress updates](#). The Environment Agency is currently re-assessing the key pressures on salmon, in England, ahead of producing a new Implementation Plan in 2025/26, to cover the 2025 – 2030 reporting cycle.

■ **Sewage: Stratford-on-Avon**

Manuela Perteghella:

[8301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle sewage dumping in the (a) rivers and (b) brooks of Stratford-on-Avon constituency.

Emma Hardy:

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

In September, 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](#).

■ **Sewage: Waste Disposal**

Tim Farron:

[8418]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information his Department holds on how frequently the Environment Agency reviews environmental permits issued to sewerage undertakers under the Environment Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency (EA) periodically reviews environmental permits issued to sewerage undertakers under the Environment Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 to ensure they remain effective and fit for purpose. There is no set frequency for reviewing all permits. The EA undertakes reviews in response to specific triggers, such as new environmental legislation, updated water quality standards, or significant operational changes at sewage treatment facilities.

In addition, the EA conducts routine compliance checks and inspections of sewerage undertakers to assess their adherence to permit conditions. These checks may lead

to further review or variation of a permit if necessary to improve environmental protections.

The EA will take action against non-compliance. We will not let companies get away with illegal activity and where breaches are found, we will not hesitate to hold companies to account.

Tim Farron: [8419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether all existing environmental permits issued to sewerage undertakers under the Environment Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 require those companies to fulfil their legal obligations in relation to sewage (a) treatment and (b) disposal.

Emma Hardy:

Yes, all environmental permits issued to sewerage undertakers under the Environment Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 require companies to fulfil their legal obligations regarding both the treatment and disposal of sewage. These permits set out strict conditions designed to protect human health and the environment, including requirements to ensure the proper treatment of sewage before it is discharged into watercourses or the ground.

The Environment Agency will take action against non-compliance. We will not let companies get away with illegal activity and where breaches are found, we will not hesitate to hold companies to account.

■ Slaughterhouses

Satvir Kaur: [8587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) non-compliances and (b) legal breaches in (i) publicly funded and (ii) all other slaughterhouses in the UK.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) monitors and enforces animal welfare legislation in slaughterhouses in England and Wales. Food Standards Scotland operate in Scotland and the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs are responsible in Northern Ireland.

FSA animal welfare enforcement non-compliance data can be accessed on their website [here](#). The FSA records non-compliances in all slaughterhouses in the same way irrespective of if the slaughterhouse receives Government funding.

■ Waste Management

Steve Barclay: [8442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many abandoned waste sites there are; and if he will publish a list of such sites.

Mary Creagh:

As of July 2024, the Environment Agency confirmed 35 abandoned waste sites in England. An abandoned site occurs if the waste management permit holder dies, or the company is wound up.

Information on these sites was not published when he was Secretary of State due to data protection and ongoing investigations. This remains the case.

Water Companies: Fines**Jesse Norman:**[\[6035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total proceeds of fines on water companies have been since the Treasury announcement on 30 November 2022 that they would be reserved for river restoration; and how much has been spent for this purpose.

Emma Hardy:

The Water Restoration Fund, which launched in April this year, is reinvesting water company environmental fines and penalties into projects to improve the water environment. A total of £11 million has been made available for local projects in regions where fines and penalties have been issued between April 2022 and October 2023. The application window for the Water Restoration Fund closed on Friday 7th June and we are currently reviewing applications. The Government is committed to restoring and enhancing the water environment in England.

Water Companies: Licensing**Tim Farron:**[\[8417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when a water company licence was last revoked; and how many water company licences have been revoked.

Emma Hardy:

Ofwat as the independent regulator monitors the performance of water companies and adherence to the conditions of company licences. Ofwat cannot unilaterally revoke an undertaker's licence but is able to replace an existing undertaker in certain scenarios. For example, if the statutory grounds in section 24 of the Water Industry Act 1991 are met, special administration can also be used to transfer the company to new owners. Under the Conservatives, there has been no revocation of a water company licence.

The new Government is in the process of resetting relations with water companies.

■ Water: Consumption

Clive Lewis: [\[8657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has undertaken an assessment of the potential impact of data processing by data centres on water usage.

Clive Lewis: [\[8658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with Ofwat on increased demand on water supply by data centres.

Clive Lewis: [\[8659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the potential merits of requiring companies building data centres to invest in (a) building and (b) maintaining water supply infrastructure.

Clive Lewis: [\[8660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to monitor the water usage of data centres.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is implementing a Water Demand Target to reduce the use of public water supply by 20% by 2037/38. As part of this, Defra is working with the Department for Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and the Environment Agency (EA) to determine how we can improve water efficiency and demand in data centres. Defra also works closely with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, the Department for Business and Trade and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on plans to support the economic opportunities data centres bring, whilst making sure these developments are sustainable for local water supplies. The department will also continue to work with Ofwat to identify ways in which we can reduce overall water demand and achieve a secure supply of water for customers and the environment.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government**

Alicia Kearns: [\[9107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government considers that the All-Serb Assembly Declaration of June 2024, made by the Republic of Serbia and Republika Srpska, is compatible with the Dayton Agreement.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK Government considers that a number of elements in the Declaration of 8 June do not align with the Dayton Peace Agreement. The UK is firmly committed to supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and multi-ethnic character and completely oppose statements supporting secessionism or stoking division. We will continue to work closely with our allies in the EU and US to ensure the upholding of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Civil Servants**

John Glen:[\[6147\]](#)

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

Catherine West:

At the delegated grades, the table below shows we have appointed the following since 4 July 2024 to civil service posts in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office without open competition in line with the Civil Service Recruitment Principles [https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/02a_RECRUITMENT-PRINCIPLES-April-2018-FINAL-.pdf]. The exceptions we have used are:

Exception 1: Temporary Appointments

Exception 3: Secondments

Exception 5: Former Civil Servants

Exception 7: Transfers of staff from other public bodies

EXCEPTION	BAND	SALARY BAND	JOB TITLE
1	AO	£26,500	UKRI - Summer Intern 2024
1	AO	£26,500	Finance Payments Officer
1	AO	£26,500	Credit Card Administrator
1	AO	£26,500	Finance Payments Officer
1	AO	£26,500	Consular Officer
1	AO	£26,500	Consular Officer
1	AO	£26,500	Consular Officer

EXCEPTION	BAND	SALARY BAND	JOB TITLE
1	AO	£26,500	Consular Officer
1	AO	£26,500	Consular Officer
1	AO	£26,500	Consular Officer
1	AO	£26,500	Pensions Administrator
1	EO	£28000 - £30,500	Leonard Cheshire - Summer Intern 2024
1	EO	£28000 - £30,500	Leonard Cheshire - Summer Intern 2024
1	EO	£28000 - £30,500	Desk Officer Team 4, Diplomatic Missions Team
1	AO	£26,500	Pensions Administrator
7	HEO	£34,500 - £40,000	Auditor
3	Grade 7	£53,000 - £62,000	Senior research Fellow
3	Grade 7	£53,000 - £62,000	Research Fellow
3	G7	£53,000 - £62,000	Senior Research Fellow
3	G7	£53,000 - £62,000	Senior Research Fellow
3	G7	£53,000 - £62,000	Senior Humanitarian Policy Advisor
3	G7	£53,000 - £62,000	Senior Research Fellow
3	G7	£53,000 - £62,000	Senior Research Fellow
3	G7	£53,000 - £62,000	Senior Research Fellow
3	G7	£53,000 - £62,000	Senior Research Fellow

EXCEPTION	BAND	SALARY BAND	JOB TITLE
3	G7	£53,000 - £62,000	Senior Research Fellow
3	G7	£53,000 - £62,000	Senior Research Fellow
3	HEO	£34,500 - £40,000	Security/Intelligence Analyst
5	G7	£53,000 - £62,000	Team Leader Indo Pacific Maritime Security, Engagement and Communications

There have been no external appointments to SCS level civil service posts without open competition since 4 July 2024.

There has been no ministerial involvement in appointments to civil service posts in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office since 4 July 2024.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Private Education

Dame Harriett Baldwin:

[\[7449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 on Question 1266, what recent estimate he has made of the potential impact of the introduction of VAT on private school fees on his Department's budget for (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26.

Catherine West:

From 1 January 2025, VAT will be charged on private school fees at 20 percent. We have contacted the schools to ask how they intend to implement the introduction of VAT, but we do not yet have a full picture. Based on an assumption of how schools might apply the increase to parents and the impact on fees, we expect that the increased cost to the FCDO could be around an additional £1 million for 24/25 and £2.5 million in 25/26. The FCDO will continue to assess the longer-term financial impact.

■ Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office

Clive Jones:

[\[8570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will review the privileges granted to the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office under the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Act 1996.

Catherine West:

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Act 1996 provides the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office with certain privileges and immunities in line with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations for the purposes of furthering economic and trade interests. There are no current plans to replace this legislation.

■ Ilois: Government Assistance**Tom Hayes:**[\[8576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement on British Indian Ocean Territory: Negotiations of 7 October 2024, Official Report, column 45, when his Department plans to publish further details of the (a) trust fund and (b) additional government support for Chagossians in the UK.

Stephen Doughty:

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 be free to implement a programme of resettlement to the islands of Chagos other than Diego Garcia, and the UK will finance a new trust fund for Mauritius in support of Chagossians. I will endeavour to provide Parliament with further appropriate details, including additional government support for Chagossians in the UK, at the point that the Treaty is signed.

■ Myanmar: Politics and Government**Ruth Jones:**[\[8856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the situation of (a) the Buddhist community and (b) other religious minorities in Myanmar; and what discussions he has had with his Laotian counterpart on ASEAN's efforts to tackle the (i) violence and (ii) humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

Catherine West:

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief for all. We are aware of the continued vulnerability of religious minorities in Myanmar, and we condemn identity-based violence on any ground. The UK continues to raise our concerns about ethnic and religious discrimination in multilateral fora, notably the UN. We continue to co-fund the UN's Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar and the Myanmar Witness programme, which collect evidence of human rights violations, including identity-based violence. As a Dialogue-Partner the UK continues to support ASEAN's regional leadership on the crisis in Myanmar, including the efforts of Laotian Chair and Special Envoy H.E Alounkeo Kittikhoun. In July, the Foreign Secretary attended the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Vientiane and met Laos' Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saleumxay Kommasith, where they discussed the crisis in Myanmar.

■ USA: Diplomatic Service

John Glen:

[\[6063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024, to Question 1242, on USA: Diplomatic Service, what the process for the appointment of His Majesty's Ambassador to the United States of America will be; and whether this process will involve open competition.

Stephen Doughty:

Heads of Mission roles are usually advertised across Government and open to serving Civil Servants. The process for the appointment of His Majesty's Ambassador to the United States of America will be determined in due course.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Oxfordshire

Layla Moran:

[\[7526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve pathways of care for young people with ADHD in Oxfordshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is currently considering next steps to improve access to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessments and care pathways.

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including ADHD care pathways, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

We are supporting a taskforce that NHS England is establishing to look at ADHD service provision and its impact on patient experience. The taskforce will bring together expertise from across a broad range of sectors, including the National Health Service, education and justice, to better understand the challenges affecting people with ADHD and help provide a joined-up approach in response to concerns around rising demand.

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire ICB advises that it has implemented a new assessment model within its neurodevelopmental conditions service to enable the team to carry out additional assessments. It has also commissioned a Living Well with Neurodivergence offer for children and young people with diagnosed or suspected ADHD, launched a parent peer support network for families waiting for assessment, and partnered with Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum to provide a range of workshops for parents.

■ Autism and Learning Disability: Training

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[6560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce the Oliver McGowan training Code of Practice.

Stephen Kinnock:

Under the Health and Care Act 2022, a Code of Practice must be issued to guide providers registered with the Care Quality Commission on how to meet their statutory requirement on learning disability and autism training under the same Act. The Oliver McGowan draft Code of Practice was consulted on last year. We will set out further information on our plans for the Code of Practice in due course.

■ Breast Cancer: Rural Areas

Edward Morello:

[\[8612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve support for people living with secondary breast cancer in rural areas.

Karin Smyth:

Reducing unwarranted variation in cancer treatment is a strategic priority for NHS England's Cancer Programme. The programme was commissioned by the Royal College of Surgeons and aims to deliver 10 cancer clinical audits, including two audits on primary and metastatic breast cancer.

To help improve outcomes and treatments for patients in all areas, NHS England funded an audit into primary and metastatic breast cancer. Using routine data collected on patients diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in a National Health Service setting as part of their care and treatment, the audit brings together information to look at what is being done well, where it's being done well, and what needs to be done better. On 12 September 2024 the National Cancer Audit Collaborating Centre published their State of the Nation Report on primary and metastatic breast cancer.

The Department supports statutory integrated care systems (ICSs) in delivering NHS services across England. ICSs are partnerships of organisations which come together to plan and deliver joined up health and care services, to improve the lives of the people who live and work in their area. This includes considering adequate healthcare provision for populations in towns and rural areas, and working collaboratively to plan for population change.

The organisations within an ICS include the NHS, local government, social care providers, charities, and other organisations working together to provide more joined up care for people, and to improve the outcomes for their populations.

■ Breast Cancer: Screening

Tom Gordon:

[\[6682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to help (a) return breast cancer screening rates to pre-covid-19 levels and (b) meet breast cancer screening targets.

Andrew Gwynne:

Following COVID-19, a national restoration plan was implemented by NHS England in 2020/21 with targeted support to all breast screening services to clear the backlog by the Summer of 2023. In 2021/22 and 2022/23, activity was higher than in the previous 10 years, with more women invited for breast screening compared to pre-pandemic years.

The NHS England national uptake improvement plan aims to address the fact that despite this action, some women are still not coming forward for breast screening. The plan includes active follow ups for women who have missed appointments or who have not engaged with screening, a review to establish reasons for non-attendance to identify and address any barriers, and a look at how different invitation methods may impact on uptake, considering factors such as age, screening history, and deprivation.

■ Carers

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[8092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of publishing a National Carers Strategy.

Stephen Kinnock:

This Government is committed to ensuring that families have the support that they need. The Government has heard the calls for a National Carers Strategy. This must be addressed in the wider context of the urgent need for a renewed vision for adult social care.

As part of that renewed vision, we will consider how best to support unpaid carers. As we move forward, we will collaborate with our counterparts across Government, unpaid carers, and sector partners, to make sure that unpaid carers are visible, valued, and supported.

■ Department of Health and Social Care and NHS: Paternity Leave

Shaun Davies:

[\[7907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in (a) his Department and (b) NHS England was in each of the last three years; and what information his Department holds on the average level of paternity leave taken at each NHS trust in the same period.

Karin Smyth:

The average length of paternity leave at the Department over the last three years is 10 days. The following table shows average length of paternity leave at the Department broken down by year:

PERIOD	AVERAGE WORKING DAYS BY YEAR
October 2021 September 2022	10
October 2022 September 2023	10
October 2023 September 2024	10

Regarding the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in NHS England and NHS trusts, the Department does not hold this information.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:[\[7005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Karin Smyth:

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 GCS are set out in the Civil Service Management Code. There has been no change in this policy since the 2024 General Election.

■ Doctors: Migrant Workers

Mark Pritchard:[\[8415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to introduce additional measures to (a) verify and (b) validate the medical qualifications of non-UK trained doctors working in the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has no current plans to introduce additional measures to verify and validate the medical qualifications of non-United Kingdom trained doctors working in the National Health Service.

The General Medical Council (GMC) is the independent regulator of all medical doctors practising in the UK. The GMC is independent of the Government and directly accountable to Parliament. The GMC sets and enforces the standards all doctors

must adhere to and is responsible for ensuring that doctors have the necessary skills and knowledge to join the UK medical register. All doctors must register with the GMC and hold a license to practice in the UK.

■ Food: Prescriptions

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[8470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper, published in February 2022, whether he is taking steps to implement the Community Eatwell pilot.

Andrew Gwynne:

The prevention of ill health is a clear mission for the Government, and the cornerstone of this is supporting people to live healthier lives. The Government is committed to creating the healthiest generation of children ever, as set out in our Child Health Action Plan. The Healthy Start scheme was introduced in 2006 to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies, and young children under four years old from very low-income households. It can be used to buy, or can be put towards the cost of, fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk, and infant formula. Healthy Start beneficiaries have access to free Healthy Start Vitamins for pregnant women and children aged under four years old.

The Government also encourages everyone to have a healthy balanced diet in line with the United Kingdom's Eatwell Guide. Further action on diet and obesity under the Government's Health Mission will be set out in due course.

■ General Practitioners

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[9073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve access to GP appointments in (a) Epping Forest constituency and (b) England.

Stephen Kinnock:

We know that patients across the country are finding it harder than ever to see a general practitioner (GP), and we are committed to fixing the crisis in GPs. Our plan to restore GPs will require both investment and reform. We will increase the proportion of funding for GPs and are already investing £82 million to recruit 1,000 newly qualified GPs. This will increase the number of GP appointments delivered, secure the future pipeline of GPs, and take pressure off those currently working in the system.

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

■ General Practitioners: Training

Shockat Adam:

[\[8529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) help prevent burnout and (b) increase the capacity of postgraduate GP trainers.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 15 October 2024]: We hugely value the critical role that general practitioners (GPs) play, and we are determined to address the issues they face. We recognise that burnout among postgraduate GP trainers is a risk that needs to be tackled, as highlighted in the General Medical Council's National Trainer Survey. We will continue to work with the National Health Service and profession to understand how we can help GPs and improve their working environment.

The Government is committed to reducing bureaucracy and paperwork for GPs, an intention we stated at the Royal College of General Practitioners Annual Conference earlier this month. This will be an important step in reducing burnout risk, which is often reported to be due to workload challenges.

NHS England is working to expand GP trainer numbers in addition to the number of trainees, and has made changes to the delivery of GP specialty training to better support trainees and to support trainers and educators, such as piloting blended learning and standardising entry and approval requirements.

■ GP Surgeries

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[8404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the condition of the general practice estate; and what additional investment his Department intends to make in the general practice estate.

Stephen Kinnock:

NHS England has undertaken an exercise to gather information on the primary care estate which provides a thorough understanding of the age, condition, quality, utilisation, and ownership of the estate, allowing us to estimate and calculate the requirement for investment.

NHS England remains committed to continuing to invest in capital estates both nationally and locally through integrated care boards, to improve capacity and environments for general practitioners and their patients.

■ Health Services and Social Services: Homelessness

Paula Barker:

[\[8905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the guidance by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence entitled Integrated health and social care for people experiencing homelessness, published on 16 March 2022, what

steps his Department is taking to implement these guidelines in health and social care settings.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department recognises the importance of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines, and is working across the Government and the health system, and with local government, commissioners, and the voluntary sector, to continue to review and support implementation of the guidance Integrated health and social care for people experience homelessness (NG214), both nationally and locally. With the aim to include setting priority areas of focus and identifying and sharing best practice for implementation.

■ **Health Services: Reciprocal Agreements**

Mark Pritchard:

[\[8634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to establish new reciprocal healthcare agreements with non-EU countries.

Andrew Gwynne:

Reciprocal healthcare arrangements (RHAs) cover emergency and medically necessary healthcare for United Kingdom nationals or residents on short-term visits. They benefit people with long term, pre-existing conditions, and along with insurance, offer all travellers greater peace of mind when travelling. We recognise the benefits associated with RHAs. We continually review options to update existing arrangements outside of the European Union, as well as the potential to develop new ones.

■ **Home Care Services: Pay**

Paula Barker:

[\[8487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that home care workers are paid correctly for their travel time.

Stephen Kinnock:

All workers, including social care workers, must be paid at least the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage for the work that they do. Time spent travelling between appointments counts as working time for minimum wage purposes. If anyone thinks they are not receiving at least the minimum wage, they can contact the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service or submit a query directly to HM Revenue and Customs.

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 and terms and conditions in a regulated and responsible manner and will help to address the recruitment and retention crisis in the sector, in turn supporting the continued delivery of high-quality care.

■ Hormone Replacement Therapy

Charlotte Nichols: [8236]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to review the requirement for three miscarriages to have taken place before the drug progesterone can be administered.

Karin Smyth:

The new National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance states that women bleeding in early pregnancy after one miscarriage should be offered progesterone. The guidance was updated in 2021, based on the progesterone in early pregnancy bleeding trial, and is available at the following link, in section 1.5.2:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng126/chapter/Recommendations#management-of-miscarriage>

■ Hospices: Finance

Steve Darling: [8519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to reform the funding model for charitable hospices as part of the 10 year plan for health and care.

Manuela Perteghella: [8530]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to reform the funding model for charitable hospices as part of the 10 year plan for health and social care.

Clive Jones: [8574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reforming the funding model for charitable hospices as part of his 10-year plan for health and care.

Stephen Kinnock:

We have committed to develop a 10-Year Health Plan to deliver an NHS fit for the future, by driving three shifts in the way health care is delivered, specifically: moving healthcare from hospital to the community; from analogue to digital; and from sickness to prevention. We will carefully consider policies, including those that impact people with palliative and end of life care needs, with input from the public, patients, health staff, and our stakeholders, including those in the hospice sector, as we develop the plan.

Most hospices are charitable, independent organisations which receive some statutory funding for providing National Health Services. The amount of funding charitable hospices receive varies by integrated care board (ICB) area, and will, in part, be dependent on the breadth of palliative and end of life care provision within each ICB catchment area.

I recently met with NHS England and discussions have begun on how to reduce inequalities and variation in access to, and the quality of, palliative and end of life

care in England. We will consider next steps on palliative and end of life care, including hospice funding, in the coming months.

■ Infant Foods

Rebecca Smith:

[8737]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish voluntary industry guidelines on commercial infant and baby food and drink.

Andrew Gwynne:

The independent Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN), for their report on Feeding Young Children aged 1 to 5 years, published in July 2023, recommended that foods, including snacks that are high in salt, free sugars, saturated fat, or are energy dense, should be limited in the diets of children aged one to five years old and that commercially manufactured foods and drinks marketed specifically for infants and young children are not needed to meet nutrition requirements. We face a childhood obesity crisis and the Government is committed to raising the healthiest next generation. Under our health mission and shift to prevention we are considering what action is needed to respond to the SACN commercial baby food recommendations to establish healthy habits as early as possible.

■ Infant Foods: Nutrition

Rebecca Smith:

[8738]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the nutritional content of commercial infant and baby foods.

Andrew Gwynne:

An evidence review on commercial baby food and drink, published in June 2019, showed that young children are eating too much sugar and salt, and energy intakes are exceeding requirements. Some baby foods, particularly finger foods, had added sugar or salt or contained ingredients that are high in sugar or salt. More information on this review is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commercial-infant-and-baby-food-and-drink-evidence-review>

More recent evidence considered by the independent Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN), for their report on Feeding Young Children aged 1 to 5 years, published in July 2023, reported that among children aged 12 to 18 months old who consumed commercial baby food and drinks, these products provided around 20% of free sugars intakes. Free sugar intakes are above recommendations for children at all ages where recommendations have been set.

SACN recommended in this report that foods, including snacks that are high in salt, free sugars, saturated fat, or are energy dense, should be limited in the diets of children aged one to five years and that commercially manufactured foods and drinks

marketed specifically for infants and young children are not needed to meet nutrition requirements.

We face a childhood obesity crisis and the Government is committed to raising the healthiest next generation. Under our health mission and shift to prevention we are considering what action is needed to respond to the SACN commercial baby food recommendations to establish healthy habits as early as possible.

■ Infant Mortality

Deirdre Costigan: [\[8277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve care for families after (a) pregnancy loss and (b) the death of a baby.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to delivering compassionate care for women, and supporting parents who have experienced any type of baby loss. Many trusts have specialist bereavement midwives, who are trained to care for and support parents and families who have suffered the loss of their baby. All trusts are signed up to The National Bereavement Care Pathway, which acts as a set of standards and guidance that trusts should follow when a patient has suffered a baby loss. Baby Loss Certificates are now available for all historic and future pregnancy losses, should parents wish to record and receive a certificate to recognise their loss.

Paid Parental Bereavement Leave was introduced in 2020. This entitlement is available to parents who lose a child under 18 years old, including where a baby is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Following the death of a baby, there are a number of different investigation and review routes available depending on the age of the baby and the circumstances surrounding the death. These include the Maternity and Newborn Safety Investigations Programme, the Perinatal Mortality Review tool, and the Child Death Review process. These reviews aim to provide answers for bereaved parents about why their baby died and learning for the healthcare system.

■ Liver Diseases

Dr Beccy Cooper: [\[7265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will commission a review into the adequacy of adult liver services across the NHS.

Stephen Kinnock:

There are currently no plans for a review into the adequacy of adult liver services across the National Health Service. The commissioning of services for liver disease is generally the responsibility of integrated care systems (ICS). ICS are responsible for decisions on commissioning health services and reviewing those services to ensure they best meet the needs of their local population.

NHS England has a Hepatobiliary and Pancreas Clinical Reference Group (CRG) which provides clinical advice to NHS England in support of the commissioning of specialised services. By working in partnership with key stakeholders, the CRG helps drive improvements in the quality, equity, experience, efficiency, and outcomes of specialised services. The CRG is currently reviewing its service specification in relation to liver and pancreatic care, which is scheduled for completion before the end of the current financial year.

■ **Mental Health Services: Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust**

Tom Gordon:

[\[7893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many complaints relating to the mental healthcare service at Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS trust there have been in each of the last three years.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 14 October 2024]: The following table shows information on concerns received by Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust between 2021/22 and 2023/24:

REPORTING YEAR	LOCAL ISSUE RESOLUTION	CONCERNS RAISED WITH PATIENT ADVICE AND LIAISON SERVICE		
		COMPLAINTS	TOTAL	
2023/24	206	1,773	498	2,447
2022/23	n/a	2,446	338	2,784
2021/22	n/a	2,281	293	2,574

Source: Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust Quality Accounts

Note: Concerns can range from an issue with a person's care to environmental factors, such as parking on the Trust's sites.

The Trust has advised that all complaints are managed in line with national guidance and it is committed to providing opportunities for its patients, their carers or their families to seek advice or information, raise concerns or make a complaint about the services that the Trust provides.

■ **Mental Health Services: Veterans**

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[\[8023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many veterans are receiving specialist mental health support.

Stephen Kinnock:

Veterans can access specialist mental health support either through Op COURAGE, a bespoke integrated mental health pathway for veterans, or NHS Talking Therapies. As of 30 June 2024, Op COURAGE reported that they were actively supporting 2,702 veterans. Since its inception in April 2017, there have been over 38,500 referrals to Op COURAGE. In addition to the Op COURAGE services, between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2024, 63,810 veterans have entered NHS Talking Therapy treatment services.

■ Mental Health: Men**Paul Davies:**[\[7298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) raise awareness of and (b) tackle stigma associated with (i) loneliness and (ii) mental health challenges among men.

Stephen Kinnock:

Raising awareness of loneliness across society and reducing the associated stigma for all groups at risk of loneliness, including men, is a core part of the Government's current approach to tackling loneliness. This includes providing loneliness advice as part of the Better Health: Every Mind Matters campaign.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is also supporting organisations which can play a role in reducing loneliness stigma amongst men through the tackling loneliness hub, an online platform that connects professionals from across sectors working to reduce loneliness.

Men with mental health issues are not getting the support or care they need, which is why we will ensure we give mental health the same attention and focus as physical health so that men can be confident of accessing high quality mental health support when they need it. We will modernise the Mental Health Act and we will recruit an additional 8,500 mental health workers to reduce delays, provide faster treatment and help ease pressure on busy mental health services.

We have committed to tackling suicide as one of the biggest killers of men and, as part of this, the new mental health workers will be specially trained to support people at risk of suicide.

We will also continue to work with the wide range of voluntary community and social enterprise organisations such as Men's Sheds, ANDYSMANCLUB and the Campaign Against Living Miserably which play such an important role in supporting men at risk of mental ill health and suicide.

■ Mental Health: Northern Ireland**Jim Shannon:**[\[8140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the Department of Health in Northern Ireland on the potential impact of the Mental Health Bill on Northern Ireland.

Stephen Kinnock:

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has made clear his commitment to ongoing engagement and collaboration with the devolved governments. Officials are currently working to find a date for the next Health and Social Care Interministerial Group.

The Department has engaged with Northern Ireland Department of Health officials on the Mental Health Bill. Officials have established a regular Four Nations Meeting on mental health reform, in which the Mental Health Bill's measures and potential implications for the devolved governments are discussed. We will continue to engage our counterparts in Northern Ireland closely throughout the bill's passage.

■ Migrants: Health Services and Temporary Accommodation**Tom Hayes:****[8361]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle misinformation relating to (a) migrant access to NHS services and (b) accommodation of asylum seekers.

Andrew Gwynne:

[Holding answer 16 October 2024]: As my Rt. Hon. friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology said on 9 September 2024, the Online Safety Act will be the Government's key tool in combatting online mis- and disinformation.

The Department recognises the importance of reducing barriers to services for migrants, and encourages these groups to access the National Health Services' they are entitled to. The Government has published the Migrant Health Guide, which sets out guidance on the services which migrants are entitled to receive. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migrant-health-guide>

The Department of Health and Social Care works with the Home Office to ensure asylum seekers have access to health care. The Home Office will ensure that the asylum system operates fairly, and processes claims quickly.

The Department of Health and Social Care, along with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, the UK Health Security Agency, NHS England, the Home Office, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, are in the final stages of agreeing the principles, objectives, and priorities of a National Partnership Agreement which will set out the common aspirations to support the health and wellbeing needs of people seeking asylum. They will also support local systems, like integrated care boards, local authorities, voluntary, community, and social enterprises, and others, in delivering these locally. NHS England has been working with the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence to support access to healthcare services for people on protection and resettlement routes, as well as people seeking asylum. NHS England has also worked with the Home Office to

improve support during the Move On period, when people are granted leave to remain, and any change of accommodation.

■ NHS Trusts: Health Services

Steve Darling:

[8517]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the flexibility NHS trusts have relating to capital departmental resource limit leases to allow trusts to support (a) local authorities and (b) regeneration of the high street to help support access to local health facilities.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is supportive of the National Health Service considering wider benefits from health capital investment opportunities, including high street regeneration. NHS England provides 'business as usual' capital allocations to integrated care systems (ICSs), who then determine how they are allocated between their operations and the NHS trusts in their system. This is based on their healthcare priorities and local system needs.

Within their allocation, ICSs, along with NHS England, can already make payments to local authorities towards healthcare expenditure on community services. For example, a local authority operating a unit for people with learning difficulties may receive a grant from the NHS body to cover the provision of healthcare to the clients in the unit. They also have the ability to grant capital to local authorities as a contribution to a facility occupied by a general practice, community trust, or a voluntary body that would provide healthcare services from the premises. However, all capital activity needs to be within the capital limit set by Parliament.

■ NHS: Pay

Laurence Turner:

[R] [8729]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to publication entitled Government and Agenda for Change trade unions offer in principle, published by NHS Employers on 16 March 2023, whether it remains his Department's policy to implement the measures listed under the sub-section of that document entitled Pay setting process.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 16 October 2024]: The Department is progressing work on all non-pay commitments covered in the 2023/24 Agenda for Change pay deal, including reviewing aspects of the pay setting process. Recommendations from this work will be considered at the earliest opportunity.

■ Nutrition: Low Incomes**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:****[8469]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the (a) access to and (b) affordability of (i) fruit and (ii) vegetables for families living on low incomes in Lambeth.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to creating the healthiest generation of children ever, as set out in our Child Health Action Plan. The Healthy Start scheme was introduced in 2006 to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies, and young children under four years old from very low-income households. It can be used to buy, or can be put towards the cost of, fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk, and infant formula. Healthy Start beneficiaries have access to free Healthy Start Vitamins for pregnant women and children aged under four years old.

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA) delivers the scheme on behalf of the Department. The NHS BSA is committed to increasing uptake of the Healthy Start scheme to ensure as many children as possible have a healthy start in life.

The NHS BSA promotes the Healthy Start scheme through its digital channels and has created free tools to help stakeholders promote the scheme locally. The NHS BSA has also reached out to stakeholders to see how it can support them in promoting the scheme.

The Government is committed to a prosperous horticulture sector and values the vital work of the industry in maintaining a secure supply of fruit and vegetables.

■ Pharmacy: Community Health Services**Freddie van Mierlo:****[8378]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to review levels of pharmacy reimbursement funding, in the context of recent trends in levels of closures of local pharmacies.

Stephen Kinnock:

Community Pharmacy funding is kept under regular review. The Department and NHS England consult with the sector on a quarterly basis on reimbursement rates, as well as monthly on concessionary prices. Consultations are held each year about service fee levels and what the sector will deliver for the available funding.

Department officials are working at pace to conclude the consultation on the Community Pharmacy contractual framework arrangements for 2024/25. The Department also continues to monitor patient access to pharmaceutical services closely.

■ Propranolol: Prescriptions**Jim Shannon:**[\[8448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of people being prescribed propranolol to treat anxiety.

Karin Smyth:

The information requested is not held. National Health Service prescriptions do not list the indication for which the medicine is prescribed. It is therefore not possible to determine from prescribing data held by the NHS Business Services Authority the number of people being prescribed propranolol to treat anxiety.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[8772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) encourage screening for and (b) increase the rate of early diagnosis of 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 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.

The Department has invested £16 million in the TRANSFORM trial which seeks to find ways to diagnose prostate cancer as early as possible. This trial will compare the most promising tests to look for prostate cancer in men that do not have symptoms and aim to address disparities in early detection rates across different groups.

We are also working with NHS England to support the National Health Service to meet the Faster Diagnosis Standard for cancer to be diagnosed or ruled out within 28 days from an urgent suspected cancer referral. This includes introducing best practice timed pathways for prostate cancer to streamline diagnostic pathways and speed up diagnoses.

Gareth Bacon:[\[8895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the National Screening Council plans to review its advice on Prostate Specific Antigen testing.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK National Screening Committee's (UK NSC) evidence review for prostate cancer screening is already underway, 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, and will encompass 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 Diseases

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[7261]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of ensuring people with lung conditions are given an annual (a) review and (b) medication check.

Stephen Kinnock:

Annual reviews, including reviews of medication, play a key role in the ongoing management of people with respiratory diseases, such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD). They are recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), playing a core part in its guidance for the diagnosis and management of asthma and COPD. Further information on the NICE's guidance for the diagnosis and management asthma and COPD is available respectively at the following two links:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng80>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng115>

The majority of patients with COPD and asthma are managed by general practitioners and members of the primary care team, with onward referrals to secondary care where required, and so the provision of annual reviews is incentivised in primary care through the Quality and Outcomes Framework. There are specific indicators for annual reviews for both COPD and asthma within this framework, specifically sections COPD010 and AST007. The Quality and outcomes framework guidance for 2024/25 is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/quality-and-outcomes-framework-guidance-for-2024-25/>

The NICE is currently reviewing its guideline for the diagnosis, monitoring, and management of chronic asthma, and an updated version is due to be published in November 2024. Based on the draft that has been published for consultation, we anticipate annual reviews will remain a recommended core component of the ongoing management of people with asthma.

■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination

Dr Ben Spencer:

[8235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the public information campaign for RSV vaccination uptake; and what further communication he plans for (a) people over 80 and (b) other ineligible groups.

Stephen Kinnock:

To raise awareness of the potential vaccination benefits and increase awareness of the programmes amongst health professionals, parents, carers, and the wider public, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) provides a comprehensive suite of public facing resources and assets. This includes information leaflets in multiple languages and accessible formats, for instance easy read, British Sign Language, and braille. The UKHSA also provides comprehensive clinical guidance, including e-learning programmes and training for healthcare professionals.

Following the public information campaign, as of 30 September 2024, 663,674 respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccinations have been administered across England since the programme commenced on 1 September 2024. This includes 611,527 vaccines given to the older adult cohort and 39,223 to the maternity cohort. Statistics on the RSV vaccination programme for England will continue to be published weekly, and are available at the following link:

www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/vaccinations-rsv/

Consideration is being given to development and publication of an asset to inform people who are currently not eligible.

Schools: Nurses**Adam Jogee:****[8563]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the School and Public Health Nurses Association on the adequacy of school nursing provision.

Andrew Gwynne:

Government officials meet regularly with the School and Public Health Nurses Association and have attended two recent roundtable events, as well as the launch event for their report entitled The Forgotten Frontline.

We are committed to creating the healthiest generation of children ever and recognise the critical role that school nurses play in supporting children, young people, and families. Our Chief Public Health Nurse Office has recently established a programme of work which aims to improve the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme, which includes school nursing. This will include a review of the school nursing workforce data in England, which then can be considered as part of our longer-term workforce planning.

Smoking**Shivani Raja:****[8942]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the potential impact of prohibiting outdoor smoking and vaping on the hospitality sector.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government will soon introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill which stands to be the most significant public health intervention in a generation. The bill will put us on track to a smoke-free United Kingdom, helping to reduce 80,000 preventable deaths, reduce the burden on the National Health Service, and reduce the burden on the taxpayer.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has had a range of discussions with ministers from other Government departments on the contents of the bill, including with my Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Business and Trade. Officials have also been in regular contact with counterparts across the Government during the development of the bill. More details will be set out soon.

Smoking: Health Services**Tom Gordon:**[\[6683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the national screening programme for lung cancer, if he will increase funding for smoking cessation provision in order that it can be offered as an opt-out integrated service within all lung screening appointments.

Andrew Gwynne:

The NHS Lung Cancer Screening Programme Standard Protocol includes a mandatory referral to smoking cessation services for all current smokers invited to the programme. The Government is providing £70 million additional funding this year to support local authorities increase provision of local stop smoking services which will support improved referral pathways and integrated working.

Smoking: Public Places**Nigel Farage:**[\[8699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has had discussions with local authorities on the potential impact of the proposed outdoor smoking ban on local businesses.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government will soon introduce the Tobacco and Vapes Bill which stands to be the most significant public health intervention in a generation. The bill will put us on track to a smoke-free United Kingdom, helping to reduce 80,000 preventable deaths, reduce the burden on the National Health Service, and reduce the burden on the taxpayer. To this end, Department officials regularly engage with local authorities and the Local Government Association.

■ Social Services: Fees and Charges

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[7577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of removing the cap on adult social care costs on the cost of adult social care.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 10 October 2024]: We inherited a commitment to implement charging reform in October 2025, which included the cap on care costs. The full policy would have cost government an additional £4bn by 2030 on adult social care spend per year.

Public finances are in their worst position since the Second World War. Funding was not guaranteed by the previous government and preparations for full rollout were not on track, therefore the cap on care costs would have been impossible to deliver by next October.

We are committed to building consensus on the long-term reform needed to create a National Care Service based on consistent national standards. We will set out next steps for a process that engages with adult social care stakeholders, including cross-party and people with lived experience of care.

■ Vaccination: Supply Chains

Alex Mayer:

[\[8551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of sovereign cold chain partners on the safe (a) storage and (b) delivery of vaccines in healthcare emergencies.

Andrew Gwynne:

The UK Health Security Agency has appointed, through a Commercial and Quality Technical Agreement, a third party to provide storage and distribution of vaccines in the event of healthcare emergencies. The United Kingdom-based provider must adhere to the relevant regulatory compliance to ensure this service is safe and ready to be utilised.

HOME OFFICE

■ Anti-social Behaviour: Beckenham and Penge

Liam Conlon:

[\[8538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

We will put thousands of new neighbourhood police and community support officers into local communities and we will crack down on those causing havoc on our high streets by introducing tougher powers, including new Respect Orders to tackle repeat offending.

■ **Crime: Wildlife**

Satvir Kaur:

[\[8372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she will make an assessment of the potential merits of making wildlife crimes notifiable offences.

Dame Diana Johnson:

There are no plans currently to make wildlife crimes notifiable. Any non-notifiable wildlife crime reported to the police can still be investigated where appropriate, as Chief Constables have operational independence to tackle the crimes that matter most to their communities.

This Government recognises the importance of tackling wildlife crime, which is why, along with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Home Office directly funds the National Wildlife Crime Unit to help tackle these crimes.

■ **Demonstrations: Police**

Alex Easton:

[\[8918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Metropolitan Police on the policing of public demonstrations relating to the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Secretary is in regular contact with the Metropolitan Police Service on a range of issues, including public order.

The management of demonstrations is an operational matter for the police, who are independent from government.

■ **Fire and Rescue Services: Finance**

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[8604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes in the level of funding on Fire and Rescue services; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funding to Fire and Rescue services through the Local Government Settlement.

Dame Diana Johnson:

MHCLG published the final Local Government Settlement on 5 February 2024 setting out the referendum principles for Local Authorities in 2024/25. All standalone FRAs will be able to increase their council tax by the core referendum limit of 3%. Standalone FRAs utilised this flexibility, which raised £42.6m in 2024/25.

Overall, fire and rescue authorities will receive around £2.87 billion in 2024/25. It is the responsibility of each fire and rescue authority to determine how to allocate that funding based on its analysis of risk and local circumstances. The Government will continue to work closely with stakeholders across the sector to ensure fire and rescue services have the resources they need to keep the public safe.

Funding for Local Authorities in 2025/26 will be announced at the provisional Local Government Settlement later this year.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Shropshire

Shaun Davies:

[\[8510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure the financial sustainability of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Standalone Fire and Rescue Authorities will see an increase in core spending power of £95.4 million in 2024/25. This is an increase of 5.6% in cash terms compared to 2023/24.

In 2024/25 Shropshire FRA has a core spending power of £28.8m, an increase of £1.6m (6.0%) compared to 2023/24.

As at 31 March 2023 Shropshire FRA held £6.0m in resource reserves. This is equivalent to 22.1% of their 2023/24 core spending power and an increase of £1.1m (22.4%) compared to the previous year.

In addition to the funding received through the Local Government Finance Settlement, fire and rescue authorities including Shropshire FRA will receive a share of grants provided by the Home Office, including Pensions and Protection grants.

The Government will continue to work closely with stakeholders across the sector to ensure fire and rescue services have the resources they need to keep the public safe.

■ Hinduism: Religious Buildings

Laura Kyrke-Smith:

[\[8934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect Hindu places of worship.

Dan Jarvis:

We are committed to protecting the right of individuals to freely practise their religion and we will not tolerate anti-Hindu hatred in any form. Government and police routinely assess potential threats to ensure that protective measures are in place to protect Hindu communities and their places of worship against terrorism and hate crime.

Additionally, Hindu communities can apply to the Places of Worship Protective Security Scheme. The scheme provides physical protective security measures (such

as CCTV, intruder alarms and secure perimeter fencing) to places of worship and associated faith community centres of all other faiths in England and Wales that are particularly vulnerable to religiously or racially motivated hate crime.

■ Police: Finance

Edward Morello:

[8624]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to consider the needs of rural areas when determining police funding allocations.

Dame Diana Johnson:

This Government is committed to reducing crime and disorder in rural areas, given the devastating impact rural crime can have on communities. Under our reforms, rural communities will be safeguarded, with tougher measures to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, strengthened neighbourhood policing and stronger measures to prevent farm theft and fly-tipping. The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee will deliver thousands of additional neighbourhood police, police community support officers and Special Constables, across England and Wales, including in rural areas, to speed up response times and build public confidence.

The majority of public funding for police forces in England and Wales is provided by the Home Office and is agreed by the House of Commons on an annual basis at the police funding settlement. Each year the Home Office produces a Police Grant Report which is published and voted on by Parliament and contains grant funding allocations for the following year to be paid out under the Police Act 1996.

A copy of the most recent Grant Report for 2024-25 has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and can be found online:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b913a1ee7d49000d9849d4/E03063051 - Police Grant Report England and Wales 24-25 Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b913a1ee7d49000d9849d4/E03063051_-_Police_Grant_Report_England_and_Wales_24-25_Accessible.pdf)

■ Police: Training

Neil Coyle:

[8159]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has taken steps to ensure (a) police and (b) security services receive adequate training to (i) identify and (ii) tackle instances of transnational repression of (A) people from Hong Kong with BNO status and (B) other people in the UK.

Dan Jarvis:

The UK does not tolerate any attempt to intimidate and silence individuals in the UK and overseas, including people from Hong Kong with BNO status. We continually assess potential threats in the UK, and take protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety in the UK very seriously. This involves taking a proactive approach to countering the most acute forms of state-directed threats to individuals.

The National Security Act 2023 strengthens our legal powers to counter foreign interference, including those actions which amount to transnational repression, and

provides the security services and law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to deter, detect, and disrupt modern-day state threats. As we implement the Act we are ensuring all relevant authorities have a good understanding of the threats many foreign powers present.

Where individuals have concerns for their safety, they are advised to contact their local police in the first instance. In the event that a person believes they are subject to an imminent threat, they should call 999.

■ Prostitution: Victims

Carolyn Harris: [\[7813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support the Government is providing to help victims of sexual exploitation exit prostitution.

Carolyn Harris: [\[7814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce demand for trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Carolyn Harris: [\[7815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the scale of commercial sexual exploitation across the country.

Carolyn Harris: [\[7816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to prevent organised crime groups from advertising victims of (a) trafficking and (b) other sexual exploitation offences on websites advertising prostitution.

Jess Phillips:

The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is a truly horrific crime. This Government has set out a mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, and we will use all of our levers available to deliver.

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 (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.

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 support 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 under the guise of prostitution.

The Government will set out policies in this area in due course.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[8845]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) adults and (b) children have (i) applied for and (ii) been found eligible to relocate and settle permanently in the UK under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme Pathway 1 Stage 2: Separated Families.

Seema Malhotra:

The UK has made an ambitious and generous commitment to help at-risk people in Afghanistan and, so far, we have brought around 32,600 people to safety, including thousands of people eligible for our Afghan schemes. We continue to honour our commitments to bring eligible Afghans to the UK.

The window to submit an expression of interest under ACRS Pathway 1 Stage 2: Separated Families was opened on 30 July 2024. This will remain open until 30 October 2024.

Those who have been resettled in the UK under Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme Pathway 1 and were evacuated during Operation Pitting without their immediate family members can submit an expression of interest under this pathway.

Further information is viewable at: [Afghan citizens resettlement scheme: Separated Families Pathway - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme-separated-families-pathway).

Data on the number of individuals relocated under this Pathway will be included in future additions of Afghan Operational data. Data on eligibility considerations will not be published. Work is ongoing to consider the expressions of interest submitted thus far as quickly as possible.

■ Retail Trade: Crime

Rachael Maskell: [\[8171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timetable is for bringing forward legislative proposals to tackle retail crime.

Rachael Maskell: [\[8172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases of retail crime have been reported in (a) York and (b) England in each of the last five years.

Rachael Maskell: [\[8173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has she made of the potential links of retail crime to County Lines.

Rachael Maskell: [\[8174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to ensure that there are simplified reporting systems for retail crime from business owners.

Rachael Maskell: [\[8176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what non-custodial steps she is taking to help divert people away from retail crime.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Shoplifting has increased at an unacceptable level in recent years, with more and more offenders using violence and abuse against shopworkers to do this. We will not stand for this. Everybody has a right to feel safe on the job.

To that end, this Government will end the effective immunity, introduced by the previous Government, granted to low level shoplifting of goods under £200.

We will also introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores.

We encourage closer local partnerships between police and retailers ensuring action can be taken, including reporting crime and considering what appropriate action, including non-custodial interventions, can be taken. We urge retailers to join their local Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) or Business Improvement District (BID) to support local community efforts to reduce retail crime.

The Home Office supports Pegasus, a unique private-public partnership, that is improving the way retailers share intelligence with policing, to better understand the tactics used by organised retail crime gangs and identify more offenders.

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of shoplifting offences recorded by the police in England and Wales on a quarterly basis. There have been approximately 1.5 million shoplifting offences recorded in England in the last 5 years, of which 7737 were for the York area.

We are committed to preventing young people being lured into crime, drugs and criminal gangs and the Government has made clear its commitment to introduce a new offence to tackle child criminal exploitation.

County Lines is the most violent model of drug supply and a harmful form of Child Criminal Exploitation. The County Lines Programme is funded by the Home Office to tackle this, resulting in over 5,600 county line closures, 16,500 arrests and 8,800 safeguarding referrals

■ Sexual Offences: Lowestoft

Jess Asato: [\[8334\]](#)

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

Jess Asato: [\[8335\]](#)

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 Lowestoft constituency.

Jess Asato: [\[8336\]](#)

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 Lowestoft constituency.

Jess Asato: [\[8337\]](#)

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 Lowestoft constituency.

Jess Phillips:

The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is a truly horrific crime. This Government has set out an ambition to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, and we will use all the levers available to us to deliver this.

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 (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 Lowestoft. 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 Suffolk. As we both know this will not be the extent of sexual exploitation in this area.

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 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.

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 under the guise of prostitution.

The Government will set out next steps in this area in due course.

■ Slavery

Tom Hayes: [\[9078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review Part 5 Modern Slavery of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.

Jess Phillips:

The Government is committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the current modern slavery system alongside consideration of long-term reform with a focus on improving support and increasing prosecutions. Consideration of all longer-term reform options could also include legislation. The Government's legislative plans will be published in due course.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Early Day Motions

Laurence Turner: [\[8730\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the average cost was to the public purse of administering an Early Day Motion in the latest 12 months for which data is available.

Nick Smith:

It is difficult to provide an accurate figure for the cost of administering an Early Day Motion as staff in the Table Office and the Procedural Publishing Unit who process EDMs have a wide range of other responsibilities and time spent exclusively on EDMs is not recorded.

We are able to provide a broad estimate based on staff time alone, but it should be noted that this takes no account of other fixed costs such as office accommodation and, notably, the cost of developing and maintaining the digital systems used to process EDMs.

The Table Office estimates that processing an EDM takes about five minutes of staff time if it is submitted electronically, 10 minutes if submitted by email and 15 minutes if submitted in hard copy.

The approximate staff costs (based on 2023 paycales) for processing EDMs by the Table Office are:

SUBMISSION METHOD	TABLE OFFICE STAFF COST
Electronically (via MemberHub)	£2.70
By email	£4.10
Hard copy	£5.50

Although the Table Office does not record how many signatures it adds to EDMs through hard copy signatures and by email each day, we estimate that it takes approximately one minute to add each signature (at a staff cost of approximately £0.27). In 2023, there was an average of 11 signatures for each EDM.

After EDMs have been processed by the Table Office, they are published by the Procedural Publishing Unit. This involves downloading script, moving the information into a template, checking the content and publishing to the website. The process costs approximately £6.90 in staff time. The additional time for publishing each EDM is low – i.e. the cost is likely to be very similar whenever more than one EDM is published in a day. In 2023, on average eight EDMs were published on every sitting day. The average cost for publishing each EDM to the website was therefore £0.86.

In 2023, the average daily cost for printing paper copies of all EDMs tabled on each sitting day was £43.

Therefore, the average cost of administering an EDM submitted electronically in 2023 is estimated to be £11.90, which as noted above does not include certain fixed costs or expenditure on digital systems.

Members: ICT**Chi Onwurah:**[\[8444\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, what progress the Commission has made on enabling (a) generative AI and (b) other new technologies to support members.

Nick Smith:

The House Authorities, in conjunction with the House of Lords administration and Parliamentary Digital Service, have been actively exploring the potential for AI, and other new technologies, to support the work of Members. A recent example includes the creation of the online portal for the registration of MPs' financial interests released in spring 2024.

PDS is undertaking a cost-benefit analysis of Microsoft's Co-Pilot AI tool, which includes AI for mailboxes. This could aid Members and staff in their management of day-to-day administrative activities and involves learning from Government departments which are testing its use. Before a pilot of Co-Pilot could happen within Parliament, there are important information rights protections to put in place to make sure that sensitive information is handled appropriately. Steps to put those protections in place are taking place in coming months.

Parliament's Information and Digital Strategy sets out both an ambition to ensure that the Houses are exploring the opportunities and risks of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and to be more focused on meeting the needs of Members in the delivery of digital services.

To support these ambitions, an AI Working Group has been convened with representatives of departments across both Houses coordinating and considering how best to enable the use of generative AI. A Digital Innovation Lab has been established to provide a safe testing ground for the use of AI and other emerging technologies, and initial proofs of concepts are being developed for the use of AI to support the work of Hansard and the Table Office. House staff and PDS are working closely with Government departments to understand their use of AI (in particular the development of the Redbox tool which can summarise documents and briefings, and whether there is potential application in Parliament).

To support Members specifically, guidance is being prepared on the safe use of AI in relation to Parliamentary duties. AI learning materials are also being curated, as well as opportunities to learn more through seminar-style events. Both the guidance and learning should become available over the autumn.

Parliamentary Estate: Security**Sarah Olney:**[\[8180\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member representing the House of Commons Commission, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many holders of each pass type have access to the parliamentary estate.

Nick Smith:

The number of passes on issue changes constantly, so the following represents a snapshot of data recorded on 10 October 2024:

- MPs: 648
- Peers: 832
- MPs' staff: 1,589
- Peers' staff: 333
- Staff of the Administrations - House of Commons, House of Lords, and Parliamentary Digital Service: 4,242
- Metropolitan Police staff including police officers: 565
- Contractors: 3,028 (blue) + 1,170 (yellow) = 4,198
- Former MPs: 419
- Retired Peers: 55
- Political parties and whips: 181
- Partners of MPs/Peers and residents: 680
- Civil servants: 1,515
- Media: 472
- Restoration & Renewal Management: 189

Sarah Olney:[\[8181\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many parliamentary passes were not returned following the conclusion of the holder's employment in each of the last five financial years.

Nick Smith:

The database is a live pass issuing system and does not retain full historical information as data is only retained for three years or less depending on the pass category, so is continually being deleted in line with our records retention policy.

The vast majority of passes are returned promptly after they expire or are invalidated. The following figures show the number of expired passes not returned by financial year; however please note all these passes were deactivated and would not allow access to the Parliamentary estate.

Financial year 2021–2022: 513

Financial year 2022–2023: 432

Financial year 2023–2024: 392

Sarah Olney: [\[8182\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many parliamentary passes were (a) lost and (b) stolen in each of the last five financial years.

Nick Smith:

The database is a live pass issuing system and does not retain full historical information as data is only retained for three years or less depending on the pass category, so is continually being deleted in line with our records retention policy. The following figures show the number of passes reported as lost or stolen by financial year; however please note all these passes were promptly deactivated and would not allow access to the Parliamentary estate.

Financial year 2021–2022: 43

Financial year 2022–2023: 76

Financial year 2023–2024: 62

Sarah Olney: [\[8183\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will publish a list of special advisers who have had a parliamentary pass in each of the last five financial years.

Sarah Olney: [\[8184\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will publish a list of (a) civil servants and (b) special advisers who have a parliamentary pass.

Nick Smith:

We are unable to provide this information, as the pass issuing system does not categorise passholders in this way. Special advisers are not a specific category of passholder, and therefore this information could not easily be obtained from the pass data system. In any event, it would be inconsistent with data protection principles to publish such a list.

It would not be appropriate to publish the personal data collected for the purposes of security pass allocation as this would not be consistent with data protection principles, therefore we are unable to provide a list of civil servants holding passes. As noted above, it would be inconsistent with data protection principles to publish personal data collected for security purposes in this way, and therefore the Commission is unable to provide such a list.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Hinduism: Hate Crime****Laura Kyrke-Smith:**[\[8929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to tackle anti-Hindu hatred in Aylesbury constituency.

Alex Norris:

No one should ever be a victim of hatred because of their race or religion and the Government continues to work with police and community partners to monitor and combat this. This Government is committed to protecting the right of individuals to freely practise their religion and we will not tolerate anti-Hindu hatred in any form.

From 2016/17 to 2022/23, under the Protective Security for Places of Worship Scheme, the Home Office has approved security measures at 523 places of worship across England and Wales, including Hindu temples. In 2024/25, £3.5 million will be available for the places of worship and associated faith community through the scheme.

More broadly, we continue to look at tackling all forms of religious hatred and the government is actively exploring a more integrated and cohesive approach to this.

■ Homelessness: Departmental Coordination**Paula Barker:**[\[8485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will have discussions with the Minister for Women and Equalities on a role for a Women and Equalities Minister in the cross-government strategy to tackle homelessness.

Rushanara Ali:

We will consult and engage a wide range of stakeholders to develop our new cross-government strategy to make sure we put in place services that meet people's needs. This includes discussions with the Secretary of State for Education who has responsibility for women and equalities to consider how we can ensure our strategy takes account of the needs of women.

The Government is taking action by setting up a dedicated Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG), bringing together ministers from across government, to develop a long-term strategy to put us back on track to ending homelessness.

■ Housing: Regeneration**Grahame Morris:**[\[8794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to review the funding criteria of Homes England to help facilitate investment in regeneration projects covering areas with high-density colliery housing that have significant numbers of (a) void, (b) derelict and (c) poor-quality homes, even if such regeneration schemes may result in a net reduction in the overall housing supply.

Matthew Pennycook:

The department works closely with Homes England to ensure investment in housing and regeneration schemes supports the delivery of the Government's wider housing ambitions, including providing high-quality new homes in the areas where they are most needed. We will carefully consider investment criteria for future funding against these ambitions to ensure they are being met.

The 2021-2026 Affordable Homes Programme can fund regeneration schemes where they are being delivered alongside net additional affordable housing. We plan to address the significant unmet need for affordable housing through the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. Any assessment of the role of grant funding in the future delivery of affordable housing will be made at the next Spending Review.

Housing: Seasonal Workers**Ellie Chowns:**[\[7169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the ITN investigation into seasonal worker accommodation, broadcast 5 September 2024; and if she will take regulatory steps to ensure that accommodation on farms for seasonal agricultural workers on the Seasonal Worker visa meets minimum standards for (a) occupancy rates and (b) quality.

Matthew Pennycook:

We recognise the importance of all seasonal workers living in safe accommodation.

[Guidance](#) is issued to sponsors for seasonal agricultural workers on the Seasonal Worker visa. It sets a requirement that scheme operators must ensure that safe and hygienic accommodation is in place, that complies with all relevant UK laws.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Councillors**David Simmonds:**[\[5418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether Ministers in her Department have met with Conservative councillors since 4 July 2024.

Jim McMahon:

Government is committed to resetting the relationship between local and central government and working in partnership in the interests of working people. I have regular engagement with local councillors and details of these meetings will be published on gov.uk.

■ Parking: Motorway Service Areas

John Slinger:

[\[8311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her plans for regulation of the private parking industry will apply to motorway service station car parks.

Alex Norris:

The Government's Private Parking Code of Practice will outline specific requirements for the operation and management of all private parking facilities, including motorway service area car parks.

■ Private Rented Housing: Rents

Paula Barker:

[\[8488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the role of letting agencies on trends in the level of rents in the private rented sector.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government keeps trends in the Private Rented Sector under review, including the role of letting agents.

The English Private Landlord Survey 2021 asked landlords if they had increased their rent and, if so, what were their motivations for doing so. It found that 64% of landlords surveyed had not increased their rent in the last two years. Where landlords had increased the rent, the most common factor was to account for changes in market rents. 71% of landlords who had raised rents cited changes in market rents as an influencing factor. 34% of landlords who had raised the rent cited advice from an agent as influencing their decision.

■ Private Rented Housing: Tenants' Rights

Paula Barker:

[\[8915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing private rented sector tenants' protections and rights of redress against (a) landlords and (b) letting agencies under private rented sector deposit protection schemes.

Matthew Pennycook:

Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP) schemes play a vital role in protecting tenant deposits and providing free alternative dispute resolution, should a deposit dispute arise at the end of a tenancy. TDP providers are appointed as authorised schemes through government concession contracts.

My department is responsible for managing these contracts and monitoring schemes' performance. The contracts are due to expire in 2026, and as part of the re-procurement we will be reviewing the current system and exploring what

improvements can be made to ensure the best possible service for tenants and landlords.

■ Racial Discrimination

Kim Johnson:

[7864]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government, whether she plans to respond to the report by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination entitled Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, published on 23 August 2024.

Alex Norris:

The UK condemns all forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia and related forms of intolerance and we remain steadfast in our commitment to combatting it, at home and abroad. This includes bringing forward new legislation to tackle persistent racial inequalities.

We recognise the important work of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and are committed to working with them to ensure that no one should have to endure racism. In accordance with the Convention and as per the process outlined in the Committee's report, we will be considering the Committee's recommendations and will provide an update to the Committee on specific recommendations by August 2025, followed by a full periodic report on our progress by April 2028.

■ Radicalism: Civil Society

Charlie Dewhirst:

[6994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 2635 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Expenditure, what her policy is on (a) engagement with the organisations cited in the Written Ministerial Statement of 14 March 2024 on New Extremism Definition and Community Engagement Principles, HCWS342, and (b) and support for the (i) counter-extremism centre of excellence and (ii) Commission for Countering Extremism.

Alex Norris:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [5739](#) on 11 October 2024. This government takes the threat of extremism very seriously and we will continue to work with partners to tackle extremism in all of its forms. Following the conclusion of the rapid review ordered by the Home Secretary, we will be setting out our strategic approach to countering extremism, which will ensure that we have the strongest possible response.

JUSTICE**■ Crown Court: Opening Hours****Sarah Coombes:****[9098]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has made an estimate of the cost of increasing the number of crown court sitting days beyond the original allocation.

Heidi Alexander:

Every year, the Government and the Judiciary agree a number of sitting days and an overall budget in what is known as the Concordat process.

In June, the Judiciary reached an agreement with the former Lord Chancellor to sit 106,000 days in the Crown Court within a total budget of £275 million.

The Lord Chancellor has since agreed to fund an additional 500 days, but it has become clear that there has been significant over-listing against this budget – with more trials scheduled than the funding allows.

As a result of that, approximately 1,600 sitting days have had to be withdrawn. The level of impact will vary across regions and is being managed closely to ensure there is minimal disruption to all involved.

■ Immigration: Appeals**Neil O'Brien:****[8672]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure decisions of the First-tier Tribunal Immigration and Asylum Chamber are published on the same basis as decisions of the Upper Tribunal.

Heidi Alexander:

I refer the honourable Member to the answer I gave on 10 October 2024 to Question 7538: [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#).

Decisions on publishing judgments, including those judgments of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal, are a judicial function.

We have no plans to legislate to change the current arrangements.

■ Prisoners' Release: Finance**Clive Lewis:****[8832]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 11 October 2024 to Question 6326 on Probation Service, what new funding has been allocated to (a) the Probation Service, (b) the Electronic Monitoring Service and (c) support other services provided to offenders in the community, in the context of the early prisoner release scheme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Recognising the Probation Service's crucial role in protecting the public and rehabilitation, the Department has committed to funding at least 1,000 additional trainee probation officers by the end of March 2025.

Given the multitude of factors involved, each with its own budget, it is not feasible to isolate a single expense figure for SDS40 borne by the Probation Service.

Commercial discussions are ongoing to confirm the level of additional expenditure the electronic monitoring service provider may charge.

Throughout the SDS40 implementation process, HMPPS and partnered agencies have ensured robust support is in place for offenders leaving custody, including continuity of health and substance misuse provision and access to employment, benefits, and accommodation. For example, the Lord Chancellor has authorised probation directors to use alternative arrangements for accommodation which can include budget hotels and B&Bs. This has been funded through reprioritisation of existing budgets. This is a temporary measure and we will ensure all appropriate safeguards are in place.

■ Prisoners: Children**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[9033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to ensure that the children of those imprisoned are (a) identified and (b) offered support.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government recently published the first official statistics to estimate the number of children affected by parental imprisonment using administrative government data. It's estimated that between 1 October 2021 and 1 October 2022 there were around 193,000 children with a parent in prison. We fully recognise the importance of being able to identify children with a parent in prison to make sure they receive the support they need to flourish and thrive, which is why a commitment on this was included in our manifesto.

The Ministry of Justice is working closely with the Department for Education to determine how to effectively identify these children and provide support for both them and for the parent in prison. The support will be informed by lessons from previous interventions and pilots, and engagement both with those with lived experience and organisations from the Voluntary, Charity and Social Enterprise sector.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Alex Burghart:

[\[8847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October to Question 7835 on Terrorism: Northern Ireland, if he will publish details of all requests for public inquiries that he has considered.

Hilary Benn:

I do not intend to publish details of the requests I receive for public inquiries. I have written to those whose requests I have recently considered.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Artificial Intelligence: Safety

Liam Conlon:

[\[8544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to help increase public confidence in the safety of AI.

Feryal Clark:

The Government wants to ensure the safe development of AI models. As set out in the Manifesto, the Government intends to introduce targeted requirements on the handful of companies developing the most powerful AI systems. We will be consulting on these proposals shortly.

These proposals will place the AI Safety Institute on a statutory footing. The AISI conducts research and model evaluations to assess the capabilities of frontier AI systems and works with developers and international partners to enhance the safety of models. Such policies are key to increasing public confidence in AI safety, which will drive adoption across the country.

■ Broadband and Mobile Phones: Rural Areas

Paul Davies:

[\[8610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of levels of (a) broadband and (b) mobile coverage in rural areas on mental health.

Chris Bryant:

Everyone needs the right access, skills, support and confidence to participate in a modern digital society. Government recognises that digital inclusion can have a positive impact on social wellbeing, increasing social connectivity and enabling access to mental health resources, and is committed to improving broadband and mobile access in rural areas.

Project Gigabit is delivering gigabit capable connectivity for millions of rural homes and the Shared Rural Network is improving 4G coverage in rural areas. For 5G, our

ambition is for all populated areas, including rural areas, to have high-quality standalone 5G by 2030.

■ **Digital Technology: Disadvantaged**

Andrew Griffith: [\[8502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to continue the inter-ministerial group on tackling digital exclusion.

Chris Bryant:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave to question 8498.

■ **Project Gigabit: Cumbria**

Tim Farron: [\[8416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his Department's planned timetable is for making a decision on whether the parishes of (a) Warcop, (b) Hilton, (c) Murton and (d) Ormside will be included in Project Gigabit.

Chris Bryant:

A Project Gigabit contract for Cumbria has been awarded to the broadband supplier Fibrus. Discussion on the inclusion of the parishes of Warcop, Hilton, Murton and Ormside within the contract is currently underway with Fibrus, with the aim of reaching an agreement by the end of December 2024.

■ **Spaceflight: Shetland**

Andrew Griffith: [\[8256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to visit the SaxaVord Spaceport in 2024.

Chris Bryant:

A date has still to be arranged, but I intend to visit as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT

■ **Active Travel: Environment Protection**

Deirdre Costigan: [\[8288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential environmental benefits of increasing active travel.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government recognises the environmental benefits from increasing active travel including improved air quality and reduced transport carbon emissions. The Department has published a range of reports which outline the environmental benefits from investment in active travel schemes and programmes.

■ Bus Services: Buckinghamshire**Sarah Green:**[\[8984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to maintain the current level of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding for Buckinghamshire after March 2025.

Simon Lightwood:

Improving bus services is a key part of this Government's growth mission. We are determined to deliver better services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions. The Government will empower local transport authorities and reform funding by giving local leaders more control and flexibility over bus funding and allowing them to plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities. Local authorities are best placed to understand what is needed to improve and grow their bus networks by learning from their experiences and building on their successes, and we will announce our future bus funding plans in due course.

■ Bus Services: Concessions**Mark Pritchard:**[\[8117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of offering free any time bus travel to disabled bus pass holders.

Simon Lightwood:

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

Local authorities in England have the power to go beyond their statutory obligations under the ENCTS and offer additional discretionary concessions, such as extending the times at which concessionary passes can be used.

■ Bus Services: Recruitment**Alex Mayer:**[\[8313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to encourage more women to take up careers in the bus industry.

Simon Lightwood:

The government is committed to delivering better bus services for passengers and it is essential that we ensure the sector better represents the people that it serves. Whilst it is the responsibility of individual bus operators to ensure they can recruit and retain staff, the government would encourage operators to support more women to take up careers in the bus industry. The government supports initiatives such as Women in Bus and Coach to ensure the bus sector is uplifting female role models in engineering, driving and management, and challenging industry policies that do not meet women's needs.

■ Bus Services: Rural Areas

Mark Swards: [\[8560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to improve the reliability of bus services in rural communities.

Simon Lightwood:

Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities. As announced in the King's Speech, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this parliamentary session, which will put decision-making into the hands of local leaders across England, including in rural areas. This will allow local areas to determine how best to design their bus services so that they have control over routes and schedules.

The government has also committed to increasing accountability by providing safeguards over local networks across the country and empowering local transport authorities through reforms to bus funding.

■ Electric Scooters: Safety

Mike Reader: [\[8392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to require that e-scooter (a) trials and (b) permanent schemes are run in away that (i) protects pedestrians from people riding on pavements and (ii) ensures safety guidelines are adhered to.

Simon Lightwood:

As you will appreciate, the new Government is still in its early stages, and I am carefully considering next steps for the e-scooter trials and wider micromobility rental and what legislative changes may be required in future.

However, road safety is a top priority for this Government and any regulations will consider how to protect vulnerable road users and pedestrians, including the enforcement of any safety guidelines.

■ M25: Repairs and Maintenance

Dr Ben Spencer: [\[8888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make a comparative estimate of the potential reduction in local noise pollution on the M25 in Runnymede and Weybridge constituency by (a) repairing the sections of concrete motorway and (b) replacing the concrete with another road surface.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways has already undertaken trials to monitor the noise generated by concrete road surfaces following surface treatments (including Next Generation Concrete Surfacing) and the noise generated by other types of road surface. The outcome of the trials indicated that using low noise surface material versus Next

Generation Concrete Surfacing does not result in a materially different amount of noise.

Due to the cost and disruption, replacing the existing sections of concrete road surface in the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency with a low-noise material is not being pursued until it is required (predicted to be after 2040). However, Next Generation Concrete Surfacing will be undertaken across the M25 from 2026 to 2039.

■ Public Transport: Active Travel

Deirdre Costigan: [\[8290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to integrate active travel with public transport networks.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government agrees on the importance of a properly integrated transport system, and will be saying more on this in due course in a new Integrated Transport Strategy. The Government agrees on the importance of integrating active travel networks with public transport networks, to make it easier for people to walk and cycle to bus, tram and train stations. Active Travel England works with local authorities to help design and deliver high-quality networks that are properly integrated with other local transport services. The Department has also published guidance for local authorities on both the design of cycle infrastructure (LTN 1/20) and on bus user priority (LTN1/24), with the latter including advice on matters such as mobility hubs and other interchanges.

■ Railways

Helen Morgan: [\[9052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many track access applications concerning changes to the national passenger rail timetable were received for (a) December 2024, (b) May 2025 and (c) December 2025.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department for Transport does not hold this information. Train operators must submit track access applications to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

The ORR is responsible for making decisions in relation to these applications and its decisions are published on the ORR website.

TREASURY

■ Beer and Cider: Excise Duties

Luke Taylor: [\[8299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will reduce the level of duty on (a) beer and (b) cider served in pubs.

James Murray:

The current alcohol duty system supports pubs through Draught Relief, which ensures eligible products served on draught pay less duty. Draught Relief helps to level the playing field between pubs and supermarkets, allowing pubs and brewers to price their on-trade products more competitively.

The Government is closely monitoring the impact of the recent reforms and rates that took effect on 1 August 2023. As with all taxes, the Government keeps the alcohol duty system under review during its Budget process.

Chris Hinchliff:[\[8365\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of draught duty relief for (a) beer and (b) cider.

James Murray:

The current alcohol duty system supports the industry through Draught Relief, which ensures eligible products served on draught pay less duty. Draught Relief helps to level the playing field between pubs and supermarkets, allowing pubs and brewers to price their on-trade products more competitively.

The Government is closely monitoring the impact of the recent reforms and rates that took effect on 1 August 2023. As with all taxes, the Government keeps the alcohol duty system under review during its yearly Budget process.

■ Databases: Blyth**Clive Lewis:**[\[8656\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 4 October 2024 to Question 6322 on Databases: Blyth, whether HMRC has undertaken an assessment of the projected loss of tax receipts from Blackstone's data centre in Blyth Investment Zone as the result of tax relief.

James Murray:

Estimates of the cost of tax relief for investment in Investment Zones were published in the Spring Budget 2024 – policy document and were estimated at an aggregate level. Estimates for individual projects within special tax sites are not available.

HMRC is unable to comment on identifiable individuals or businesses. Guidance on eligibility for tax reliefs in Investment Zone sites is available on gov.uk.

■ Faith Schools: VAT**Sir John Hayes:**[\[8104\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the introduction of VAT on private school fees on faith schools.

James Murray:

On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge

will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

A technical note setting out the details of the policy has been published online here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools(opens%20in%20a%20new%20tab)).

Draft VAT legislation was also published alongside this technical note, forming a technical consultation, which closed on 15 September. As part of this technical consultation, the Government engaged with a broad range of stakeholders.

Whilst developing these policies, the Government has carefully considered the impact that they will have on pupils and their families across both the state and private sector, as well as the impact they will have on state and private schools. Following scrutiny of the Government's costings by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), details of the Government's assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes will be published at the Budget on 30 October in a Tax Information and Impact Note.

■ **Film: Tax Allowances**

Tom Hayes:

[8580]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 7 October 2024 to Question 5458 on Film: Tax Allowances, whether she has a planned timetable for bringing forward legislative proposals on the Audio-Visual Expenditure Credit.

James Murray:

The additional tax relief for visual effects costs has not been legislated. Tax policy announcements are normally made at fiscal events and the Chancellor will set out her Budget on 30 October.

■ **Financial Services: Off-payroll Working**

Mr Richard Holden:

[9038]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to help reduce the impact of off-payroll working rules on the financial services sector and those working in it; and whether she plans to review those rules.

James Murray:

The Government keeps all tax policy and legislation under review.

The Government and HMRC published both [external research](#) and [internal analysis](#) on the impacts of the 2021 reform in the private and voluntary sectors here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/short-term-effects-of-the-2021-off-payroll-working-rules-reform-for-private-and-voluntary-sector-organisations>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impacts-of-the-2021-off-payroll-working-rules-reform-in-the-private-and-voluntary-sectors/impacts-of-the-off-payroll-working-rules-reform-in-the-private-and-voluntary-sectors>

HMRC will continue to provide support and guidance to individuals and businesses operating the rules, including those in the financial services sector, and will continue to look for opportunities to improve the way these rules work in practice.

■ Hotels and Tourism: Taxation

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8193\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to allow local authorities to levy (a) hotel and (b) tourist taxes.

James Murray:

The Government keeps all taxes under review and welcomes representations to help inform future decisions on tax policy. Any decisions on future tax policy will be announced by the Chancellor at a fiscal event.

■ House Insurance

Mr Richard Holden: [\[9039\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions she has had with the insurance industry on ensuring that premiums for homeowners do not increase substantially.

Tulip Siddiq:

Treasury Ministers and officials have regular meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors on an ongoing basis.

Insurers make commercial decisions about pricing and the terms of cover they offer based on their assessment of the relevant risks. This is usually informed by the insurer's claims experience and other industry-wide statistics. The respective capabilities of insurers to assess risk is a key element on which they compete and the Government does not intend to intervene in these commercial decisions as this could damage competition in the market.

However, the Government is determined that insurers should treat all customers fairly and insurance companies are required to do so under the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) rules. The FCA is an independent body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry. The FCA monitors firms to make sure they provide products that are fair value, and, where necessary, it will take action.

■ National Insurance Contributions: British Nationals Abroad

Josh Simons: [\[8512\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the Exchequer loss from UK citizens working abroad paying Class 2 NICs to build up entitlement to a state pension; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring such citizens to pay Class 3 NICs.

James Murray:

The Government has made no estimate of this. The Government keeps all tax policy under review.

■ National Wealth Fund**Clive Lewis:****[8839]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether organisations in receipt of funding via the National Wealth Fund will be required to (a) have a UK headquarters and (b) be UK taxpayers.

Tulip Siddiq:

The National Wealth Fund (NWF) will mobilise billions of pounds of investment in the UK's world leading clean energy and growth industries. In order to be eligible for consideration for NWF finance, the project must meet the NWF's investment principles, with proceeds going to UK-based projects. These are:

1. The investment helps to support the objectives to drive regional and local economic growth or tackle climate change;
2. The investment is in infrastructure assets or networks, or in new infrastructure technology;
3. The investment is intended to deliver a positive financial return; and
4. The investment is expected to crowd in significant private capital over time.

Individual investments will be considered on a case-by-case basis in line with the NWF's mandate and strategic priorities, which can be found on www.uknwf.org.uk.

Clive Lewis:**[8841]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Government's planned timetable is for introducing legislation to establish the National Wealth Fund.

Tulip Siddiq:

The National Wealth Fund (NWF) has been established and can operate under the UK Infrastructure Bank Act 2023. The government will bring forward new legislation when parliamentary time allows to broaden its mandate beyond infrastructure and cement its position as a permanent institution at the heart of the country's long-term growth and prosperity.

■ National Wealth Fund: Private Equity**Clive Lewis:****[8840]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether private equity firms will be eligible to receive funds via the National Wealth Fund.

Tulip Siddiq:

As the UK's new impact investor, the National Wealth Fund will mobilise private investment – including from institutional investors such as private equity firms – and catalyse investment that would not have otherwise taken place.

The National Wealth Fund may also outsource management of its capital to third party managers, such as private equity firms, where doing so provides the best route to deploy capital into the UK's world-leading clean energy and growth industries and to support the delivery of our new Industrial Strategy.

■ Off-payroll Working

Neil Coyle: [\[8151\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a quality assurance process for status determination statements.

Neil Coyle: [\[8152\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if her Department will consult stakeholders on the adequacy of its guidance on the status determination statement process.

James Murray:

The Government keeps all tax policy and legislation under review.

To help customers make an informed decision on a worker's status for tax, HMRC provides comprehensive [online guidance](#) that explains the relevant factors and tests and how to apply them.

HMRC also provides the Check Employment Status for Tax tool (CEST) for free to help customers determine the employment status for tax of an engagement. CEST was developed alongside tax specialists and HMRC will stand by a determination from CEST if the tool was used in accordance with HMRC guidance.

HMRC regularly engages with stakeholders and reviews its guidance products.

HMRC will amend or add to guidance in response to stakeholder feedback where this improves the content or customer experience.

■ Overseas Residence: Taxation

Nigel Farage: [\[8695\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many millionaires have left the UK since the announcement of changes to the tax status for non-UK domiciled individuals.

James Murray:

The Government does not hold this information. The independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) published their assumptions on the behavioural response of the affected population to the previous government's announced policies in their Economic and Fiscal Outlook in March.

This Government is committed to addressing unfairness in the tax system, so that everyone who makes their home in the UK pays their taxes here.

The Government will therefore remove the outdated concept of domicile status from the tax system and implement a new residence-based regime, which is internationally competitive and focused on attracting the best talent and investment to the UK.

Further details of this policy will be announced at the Budget.

■ Private Education: VAT

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[8945\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Exchequer Secretary's oral contribution during the debate on VAT: Independent Schools of 8 October 2024, Official Report, column 171, if she will publish the Government's own analysis on the potential impact of adding VAT to school fees on pupils and their families across the state and private school sectors.

James Murray:

The government has carefully considered the impact these policies will have on pupils and their families across both the state and private sector, as well as the impact they will have on state and private schools. Following scrutiny by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), details of the Government's assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes will be published at the Budget on 30 October in the usual way.

■ Public Houses: Business Rates

Luke Taylor:

[\[8298\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will extend the 75% business rates relief for pubs beyond March 2025 in the Autumn Budget.

James Murray:

Any decisions on future tax policy will be announced by the Chancellor at a fiscal event.

■ Sanctions: Russia

Sarah Green:

[\[8990\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure effective enforcement of the UK's financial sanctions regime for UK companies suspected of breaching sanctions on Russian oil.

Tulip Siddiq:

The action taken by the UK and its Coalition partners to limit Russian energy revenues is having a significant impact, with data from Russia's Ministry of Finance showing there was a 30% reduction in Russian government tax revenues from oil in 2023 compared to 2022.

HM Treasury's Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) is the authority responsible for implementing financial sanctions and the Oil Price Cap. OFSI takes a proactive enforcement approach based on its enhanced intelligence and monitoring capabilities, and is currently undertaking a number of investigations into suspected breaches of the price cap, using powers under the Sanctions and Anti Money Laundering Act (SAMLA) to request information and working closely with our international partners in the G7+ Oil Price Cap Coalition.

Industry compliance is further strengthened through guidance and alerts, for example the compliance and enforcement alert issued in February 2024 on the Oil Price Cap, which highlighted to industry red flags for sanctions evasion.

Enforcement outcomes are never immediate, as complex investigations, including following due process, take time. The length of OFSI's investigation process is consistent with international standards. OFSI assesses every instance of reported non-compliance and takes action in all cases where it is appropriate to do so. This was demonstrated by OFSI's penalty against the British company Integral Concierge Services Limited on 27 September, for committing serious breaches of UK sanctions imposed as a result of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The UK has also taken action directly targeting shadow fleet vessels and entities that seek to undermine UK sanctions and facilitate the trade and transportation of Russian oil and oil products.

■ **Spirits: Excise Duties**

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[8762]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate the Office for Budget Responsibility made of revenues for spirits excise duty in the 2024-25 financial year; and what those revenues are to date.

James Murray:

The Office for Budget Responsibility spirits alcohol duty receipts forecast can be found in table 3.9 of the 'detailed forecast tables: receipts' publication accompanying the Economic and Fiscal Outlook published in March 2024: [OBR Economic and Fiscal Outlook Detailed Forecast Table Receipts - OBR \(obr.uk\)](#)

The year-to-date spirits duty receipts for April to August 2024 can be found in the statistics table accompanying HMRC's 'tax receipts and National Insurance contributions for the UK' publication: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmrc-tax-and-nics-receipts-for-the-uk>

The OBR will be publishing updated forecasts on 30 October 2024.

■ **Tobacco: Excise Duties**

Andrew Rosindell:

[8778]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to help tackle tobacco duty avoidance.

Andrew Rosindell:

[8779]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the annual tax revenue loss from (a) illicit and (b) non-duty paid tobacco.

James Murray:

The new joint HMRC and Border Force strategy to tackle illicit tobacco was published earlier this year, '[Stubbing out the problem](#)'. The strategy:

- targets the demand for illicit trade (the consumers that criminals seek to exploit) as well as the supply (the criminals themselves)
- is supported by over £100 million new funding over the next 5 years to boost HMRC and Border Force enforcement capability
- establishes a new, cross-government Illicit Tobacco Taskforce – combining the operational, investigative and intelligence expertise of various agencies, and enhancing our ability to disrupt organised crime.

HMRC estimates the size of the illicit market using tax gap data, which is reported annually.

The duty gap for tobacco duty is 14.5% of the theoretical tobacco duty liability, or £1.7 billion in absolute terms, in tax year 2022 to 2023.

The tax gap for tobacco includes losses from the importation or production of illicit tobacco products and tax evaded on the smuggling of non-duty paid tobacco and genuine tobacco products sourced overseas.

The link to the tobacco tax gap is here [Measuring tax gaps 2024 edition: tax gap estimates for 2022 to 2023. Measuring tax gaps 2024 edition: tax gap estimates for 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Bereavement Support Payment

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[8304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to extend the length of time within which bereaved families can claim Bereavement Support Payments.

Andrew Western:

The 3-month time limit to claim the full amount of Bereavement Support Payment is consistent with most other benefits. An individual would need to be 21 months late in claiming Bereavement Support Payment to forfeit the entire benefit.

■ Databases

Steve Darling:

[\[8272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data banks will have to share under the Fraud, Error and Debt Bill.

Andrew Western:

The Fraud, Error and Debt Bill will introduce a range of measures that will interact with banks and Financial Institutions. Information shared will vary by each measure but will always be proportionate, and include strong safeguards being put in place for each.

Further details will be set out when the Bill is introduced to Parliament shortly.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Paternity Leave

Shaun Davies:

[\[7906\]](#)

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

Andrew Western:

This data has been taken from a live system. Staff have 52 weeks to take paternity leave following the birth of the child, so figures for 2024 may rise.

The average working days taken (AWDT) is shown in the table below:

YEAR	AWDT
2021	6
2022	9
2023	7
2024 (1-Jan - 30-Sep)	7

■ Employment: Disability

Liam Conlon:

[\[8545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support people with (a) learning and (b) other disabilities who are seeking paid employment in Beckenham and Penge constituency.

Sir Stephen Timms:

In the Beckenham and Penge constituency, we have a dedicated Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) who supports learning disabled and neurodiverse customers alongside partner organisations that we work closely with.

We have a range of specialist initiatives to support people with learning disabilities and other disabled people into work. Measures include support from Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres, Access to Work grants, and joining up health and employment support around the individual through Employment Advisors in NHS Talking Therapies.

As part of the Get Britain Working plan, we will be devolving more power to local areas so they can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer that suits the needs of the people they serve.

Employers play a key role in increasing employment opportunities and supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, to thrive as part of the workforce. Our support to employers includes promoting [a digital information service for](#)

[employers](#) to help them support disability at work and the Disability Confident scheme.

■ Maternity Allowance and Maternity Pay: Scotland

Melanie Ward:

[\[9112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many women claimed statutory (a) maternity pay and (b) maternity allowance in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Andrew Western:

Statutory Maternity Pay is delivered through HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), rather than the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Figures provided by HMRC on the number of new claims for Statutory Maternity Pay in Scotland in each financial year from 2019/20 to 2023/24 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The number of Statutory Maternity Pay spells starting in Scotland in financial year

YEAR	NUMBER OF STATUTORY MATERNITY PAY SPELLS IN SCOTLAND STARTING IN EACH FINANCIAL YEAR
April 2019 - March 2020	27,600
April 2020 - March 2021	25,700
April 2021 - March 2022	27,500
April 2022 - March 2023	24,900
April 2023 - March 2024	24,900

Statistics on the number of Maternity Allowance spells starting in each quarter in Scotland from February 2010 to November 2023 are published and can be found at [Maternity Allowance: quarterly statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/maternity-allowance-quarterly-statistics). The latest release covers September – November 2023 and data from March 2019 – November 2023 are shown in Table 2. These figures are based on a 5% sample of Maternity Allowance Claims and should be treated with caution. This is because a recent review determined that the available sample used to estimate the Maternity Allowance statistics at a regional level was too small to provide a sufficient level of confidence.

Table 2. The number of Maternity Allowance spells starting in Scotland in each quarter

QUARTER	NUMBER OF MATERNITY ALLOWANCE SPELLS IN SCOTLAND STARTING IN EACH QUARTER
September - November 2023	840
June - August 2023	880
March - May 2023	920
December 2022- February 2023	1,020
September - November 2022	880
June - August 2022	740
March - May 2022	NA
December 2021- February 2022	700
September - November 2021	1,000
June - August 2021	600
March - May 2021	760
December 2020- February 2021	780
September - November 2020	660
June - August 2020	840
March - May 2020	1,000
December 2019- February 2020	1,140
September - November 2019	920
June - August 2019	880
March - May 2019	900

Notes

1. Figures for Statutory Maternity Pay are rounded to the nearest hundred and figures for Maternity Allowance are rounded to the nearest ten.
2. Figures for Statutory Maternity Allowance were collected using HMRC Real Time Information (RTI) and were extracted in August 2024. RTI is subject to revision or updates. The location of the claim is based on the taxpayers' residential address as recorded on RTI.
3. It is not possible to identify when an employee has started a second claim for Statutory Maternity pay within twelve months from the data so these figures may

exclude a small number of claims where someone has given birth twice within a twelve month period.

4. Figures for Maternity Allowance should be treated with caution because they are based on a sample of Maternity Allowance claims that has since been found to be too small to provide a sufficient level of confidence. They also exclude a small proportion of clerical cases.
5. Maternity Allowance statistics for March - May 2022 were not published as planned due to a data production error so no figures are provided for this time period.

■ **Maternity Pay: Multiple Births**

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[8274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of maternity pay for people with (a) twins and (b) multiples.

Andrew Western:

We want new mothers to be able to take time away from work. Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance rates are reviewed annually and were raised again by 6.7% in April 2024 from £172.48 to £184.03.

Maternity pay is primarily a health and safety provisions for pregnant working women. It is not intended to replace a woman's earnings completely, nor is it intended to assist with the costs associated with the birth of a new child or children. Rather it provides a measure of financial security to help pregnant working women take time off work in the later stages of their pregnancy and in the months following childbirth.

Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance are not paid in respect of each child but in respect of each pregnancy. The qualifying conditions for both are generally based on a woman's recent employment and earnings.

Maternity pay represents only one element of state-funded support available to new families in the first years of their child's life. Depending on individual circumstances, additional financial support, for example Child Benefits and Sure Start Maternity Grant, may also be available.

In terms of wider support for parents, the Government committed [in its manifesto] to review parental leave to ensure that it best supports working families. Further details of the review will be announced in due course.

■ **Universal Credit: Children**

Victoria Collins:

[\[8569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of the two-child limit in Universal Credit on affected families' long-term (a) health, (b) social and (c) economic outcomes.

Sir Stephen Timms:

There are no plans to make such an assessment.

The Child Poverty Taskforce will explore how we can harness all available levers to reduce child poverty, including by listening to stakeholders on potential changes, before publishing a strategy in Spring 2025.

■ Winter Fuel Payment: British Nationals Abroad

Sir John Hayes:

[\[5855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people eligible for Winter Fuel Payments live overseas, broken down by country.

Emma Reynolds:

For winter 2024/25, to be paid Winter Fuel Payments abroad, customers must be in scope of the Withdrawal Agreement and equivalent agreements with the EEA-European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states and Switzerland, and the 2019 Convention with Ireland. Customers must also be in receipt of a benefit equivalent to Pension Credit or another qualifying benefit and be able to show that they have a Genuine and Sufficient Link to the UK. A Genuine and Sufficient Link to the UK can include having lived or worked in the UK and having family in the UK. Statistics for winter 2024/25 do not yet have a confirmed date for release.

Annual statistics on the number of Winter Fuel Payments made to individuals and households are publicly available via [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). The latest statistics cover winter 2023 to 2024. The table below shows the number of Winter Fuel Payments paid to eligible customers living in the European Economic Area and Switzerland by country, for winter 2023 to 2024. Please note that we do not hold or publish statistics on the underlying numbers who may be eligible, only on recipients.

COUNTRY	TOTAL PAYMENTS
Ireland	26,226
Germany	2,185
Italy	1,632
Bulgaria	778
Netherlands	586
Switzerland	497
Poland	381
Belgium	312
Austria	309
Sweden	309

COUNTRY	TOTAL PAYMENTS
Hungary	191
Denmark	156
Norway	129
The Czech Republic	123
Finland	113
Luxembourg	69
Republic of Latvia	62
Romania	52
Republic of Lithuania	49
The Slovak Republic	47
Republic of Slovenia	36
Republic of Estonia	29
Croatia	25
Iceland	8
Liechtenstein	[low]
Total	34,307

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects

Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Ed Miliband): [\[HCWS144\]](#)

This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by North Lincolnshire Green Energy Park Limited for development consent for the construction and operation of a combined heat and power (CHP) enabled energy generating development, with an electrical output of up to 95 megawatts (MWe), incorporating carbon capture, associated district heat and private wire networks (DHPWN), hydrogen production, ash treatment, and other associated developments on land at Flixborough Industrial Estate, Scunthorpe.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Planning Act 2008 to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it. The current statutory deadline for the decision on the North Lincolnshire Green Energy Park application is 18 October 2024.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 14 March 2025 for deciding this application. This is to ensure there is sufficient time for the Department to consider and consult Interested Parties on a Residual Waste Infrastructure Capacity Note that Defra officials intend to publish by the end of 2024.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.