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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.
 Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Department for Business and Trade: Civil Servants

John Glen:

[\[6143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, 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.

Justin Madders:

There are 10 exceptions to fair and open recruitment, details of which can be found within the Civil Service Commission's published Recruitment Principles. DBT has appointed 6 individuals under these Exceptions since 4th July 2024 with 4 of these being previous Civil Servants who were reappointed.

- 1x AO, 1x SEO and 2x Grade 7 under Exception 5 (Former Civil Servants)
- 1x EO under Exception 2 (support for government employment schemes)
- 1x SCS1 under Exception 4 (Highly Specialist Skills)

Role titles could lead to individuals being identified therefore we are not able to provide this information.

■ Innovate UK

Adam Thompson:

[\[8267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he has taken to encourage collaboration between business and universities to increase economic growth.

Sarah Jones:

The Government encourages university-business collaboration through a range of incentives, funding and knowledge exchange. The Higher Education Innovation Fund, managed through Research England, providing £280m annually for knowledge exchange, including £20m specifically for business and commercialisation activity.

The Government has also established Skills England, which is tasked with identifying and articulating the skills needed while working with other actors in the skills system to ensure provision is aligned with our industrial strategy. We are building a flexible and high-quality system that breaks down the barriers to opportunity and drives growth.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Nigel Farage:

[\[8697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to support the steel industry.

Sarah Jones:

The Government is developing a steel strategy in partnership with the steel sector and trade unions that will set out a long-term vision for a sustainable steel sector, which we plan to publish in Spring 2025.

We have committed £500mn to Port Talbot's transformation and up to £2.5bn for steel which will be available through the National Wealth Fund and other routes to help rebuild the sector.

■ Logistics

Mike Reader:

[\[9312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he will include measures to strengthen the enablers of growth in the logistics sector and the infrastructure it uses in the forthcoming industrial strategy.

Sarah Jones:

Our Strategy is unreservedly pro-business, engaging on complex issues that are barriers to investment, like skills, recruitment of international talent, data, R&D, technology adoption, access to finance, competition, regulation, energy prices, grid connections, infrastructure, and planning – all through the lens of promoting investment.

Our Industrial Strategy will channel support to eight growth-driving sectors – those in which the UK excels today and will excel tomorrow, and which present the greatest opportunity for output and productivity growth over the long-term.

We will also look across the growth-driving sectors, progressing value chain analysis to identify 'foundational' sectors which are critical to a growth-driving sector's value chain.

■ Volkswagen: Audit

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[\[8409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the report entitled Classification of the audit at SAIC-Volkswagen (Xinjiang) Automotive Ltd, published by Volkswagen in September 2024.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

No company should have forced labour in its supply chains. This Government is committed to working with international partners and businesses to ensure global

supply chains are free from human and labour rights abuses. The Government is reviewing how we can best tackle forced labour in supply chains.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Advisory Committee on Business Appointments: Standards**

John Glen: [\[8424\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 2 September 2024 to Question 2296 on Business Interests: Civil Servants and Ministers, if he will hold discussions with the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments on increasing the proportion of applications processed within (a) 15, (b) 20 and (c) 25 days.

Georgia Gould:

Officials meet with ACOBA on a regular basis to discuss its performance, including processing time of applications.

■ **Civil Service: Workplace Pensions**

John Glen: [\[8428\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme is separate to the GB Civil Service Pension Scheme.

Georgia Gould:

Yes, the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension Scheme is separate from the GB Civil Service Pension Scheme.

■ **Government Departments: Disclosure of Information**

John Glen: [\[8436\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2024, to Question 5009, on Government Departments: Disclosure of Information, whether the Government plans to publish all transparency data on a monthly basis.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Government publishes a wide range of transparency data. Reporting requirements remain in place, with data regularly being published on GOV.UK.

■ **Industrial Disputes**

John Glen: [\[8430\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024 to Question 4661, if he will (a) make an assessment of the potential impact of repealing the Trade Union Act 2016 on levels industrial action and (b) review the industrial action sections of the National Risk Register in the context of that assessment.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Government is publishing an impact assessment of the repeal of the Trade Union Act 2016 shortly. This will be in line with the HMT Green Book and the Better Regulation Framework, and consideration will be given to potential wider impacts.

All risks in the National Risk Register, including those related to industrial action, are kept under review to ensure that they are the most appropriate scenarios to inform emergency preparedness and resilience activity and to reflect the risk landscape.

■ Infected Blood Compensation Scheme**Sorcha Eastwood:**[\[7952\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to expedite the payment process for (a) elderly and (b) vulnerable people eligible for compensation under the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The Infected Blood Compensation Authority is responsible for making payments to those eligible under the scheme, and they are carefully considering all options around payments, including the prioritisation of any payments. For those who are infected, the Government expects the Infected Blood Compensation Authority to begin making payments before the end of 2024. The Authority is working on developing a service that balances speed with ease of use.

■ Ministers: Workplace Pensions**John Glen:**[\[8129\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the percentage (a) employee and (b) employer pension contribution is for Ministerial pensions.

Georgia Gould:

This information is publically available on the Parliamentary Contribution Pension Fund (PCPF) website.

■ Prime Minister: Special Advisers**John Glen:**[\[8425\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 2 September 2024 to Question 2065 on 10 Downing Street, if he will list the (a) supplementary job titles and (b) specific role responsibilities for each special adviser in 10 Downing Street.

Georgia Gould:

Special adviser appointments are published annually. In line with the approach under previous administrations, the Government does not publish specific role titles or responsibilities of individual special advisers.

■ Public Bodies

John Glen: [8119]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2024, to Question 4702 on Public Bodies, if he will outline the process in place for considering whether to approve the creation of a new public body.

Georgia Gould:

The approvals process for new arms length bodies (ALB) is outlined in the [Public Bodies Handbook - Part 2](#).

John Glen: [8426]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 13 September 2024 to Question 4702 on Public Bodies, whether the process in place for considering whether to approve the creation of a new public body is different to Classification Of Public Bodies: Guidance For Department, published on 27 April 2016.

Georgia Gould:

[The Classification of Public Bodies: Guidance For Departments](#) sets out the different categories of the UK's public bodies and provides a high-level introduction to the early decision making process for establishing a public body. There is specific guidance for the new public body approvals process in [The Approvals Process for the Creation of New Arm's-Length Bodies: Guidance for Departments](#).

■ Special Advisers: Pay

John Glen: [8127]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, on what statutory basis the salary of a special adviser is set.

Georgia Gould:

The statutory basis is that provided by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Film

Deirdre Costigan: [8280]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, If she will meet visual effects workers to discuss the role of visual effects in the creative industry.

Chris Bryant:

Yes, because the government is committed to supporting the UK's visual effects (VFX) industry. VFX is a part of the screen sector that is always on the cutting edge of innovation and creativity, and the UK is home to some of the world's best VFX talent.

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

We will work to ensure that the VFX industry remains competitive and with international reach, so that it is able to provide high quality jobs and to fulfil its potential as a key part of the creative industries and the wider UK economy.

■ Film: Scotland

Chris Kane:

[8328]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment has she made of the impact of the UK Film industry on Scotland's economy.

Chris Bryant:

Creative Industries policy is an area of devolved competency in Scotland. It is the responsibility of the Scottish Government to make an assessment of the economic impact of the UK Film Industry on Scotland. However, a report from Screen Scotland estimates that in 2021 the wider Film & TV sector in Scotland supported 10,940 FTE (full time equivalent) workers, with an overall economic contribution to Scotland's economy of £627.1 million. Furthermore, VisitScotland's research shows that up to 18% of inbound visitors from its top international markets visit a film or TV location during their trips to Scotland.

Through our Arm's Length Body the British Film Institute (BFI), the government supports the film sector across the UK. The government has worked with the BFI to ensure a wide range of funding and initiatives are available to support Scottish production and the development of talent. Examples of support for the Scottish film industry include the BFI Film Fund, the BFI NETWORK and the BFI Film Audience Network, which use National Lottery Funding for development, production, distribution and promotion, supporting Scottish films, Scottish audiences and emerging Scottish filmmakers.

The British Film Commission (BFC), a national body predominantly funded by DCMS, also supports and promotes UK-wide film and high-end television production, including in Scotland. It works in close partnership with Screen Scotland, the national screen agency for Scotland funded by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. Scotland is featured as part of all BFC marketing campaigns and assets, including show reels, websites and brochures, that are designed to facilitate film making and promote British locations. The BFC facilitates regular business development meetings with international film and television clients for representatives from all UK nations, including Scotland.

DCMS also has regular meetings on the film industry with Devolved Government officials, in particular to discuss the DCMS-funded UK Global Screen Fund which is designed to boost international development, production, distribution, and

promotional opportunities for the independent screen sector across all nations including Scotland.

■ **Film: Trade Competitiveness**

Tom Hayes: [\[8578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the competitiveness of the UK visual effects sector.

Tom Hayes: [\[8579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an estimate of the number of people employed in the UK's visual effects sector.

Chris Bryant:

The UK is a global hub of talent and is home to many of the world's biggest VFX studios. The UK's visual effects (VFX) sector is highly competitive, competing successfully with production centres in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, South East Asia, and Europe, to secure substantial inward investment.

The government is committed to supporting the UK's visual effects industry, ensuring that they are able to remain competitive and with international reach. We will continue to focus on maintaining a strong and globally competitive sector by attracting new film and high-end TV productions that require our VFX and post-production studios; providing competitive tax incentives; investing in infrastructure; supporting innovation; working with industry on skills development; and promoting independent content. The government will continue to ensure our tax incentives are modern, agile, competitive and attractive.

The government will continue to engage both with sector organisations like the UK Screen Alliance and with individual VFX studios to make sure the UK remains an attractive and competitive place to do business.

Whilst DCMS Sector Economic Estimates provide high level figures for employment within the Creative Industries, DCMS does not hold this information for each creative sub sector. However, BFI's most recent report estimates that the UK VFX sector directly employed 10,680 FTE in 2021. The same BFI report also estimates the total number of jobs supported by VFX, including indirect employment through the supply chain, was 27,430 FTE in 2021.

■ **Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme**

Edward Morello: [\[8623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme beyond March 2025.

Chris Bryant:

Future Government spending is a matter for the upcoming Spending Review.

■ Sports: Disadvantaged

Will Stone:

[8508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to (a) improve access to and (b) increase involvement in sports in deprived areas.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to improving access to sports and physical activity for everybody, wherever they live. Sport and physical activity is central to achieving our health and opportunity manifesto missions, with the biggest gains coming from supporting those who are inactive to move more. Everyone, no matter who they are or where they are in the country, should have access to the best possible sports provision, facilities and opportunities to get active.

The Government provides the majority of funding for grassroots sport through our Arm's Length Body, Sport England, which invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding each year. Sport England programmes target the greatest resource to areas with highest inactivity levels and greatest need.

The Government has also committed to continued funding for grassroots facilities which will help ensure that everyone no matter their age, background or ability, should be able to play sport and be active.

■ Sports: Rural Areas

Edward Morello:

[8622]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to take steps to increase funding opportunities for grassroots sports facilities in rural constituencies.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to expanding access to community and grassroots sport across the UK and believe it should be accessible to all people, in all parts of the country.

The Government provides the majority of support for grassroots sport through Sport England - which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding. Sport England's work focuses on bringing the health and sport sectors together at community level and to champion physical activity with local leaders to develop interventions tailored to communities.

Throughout 2024/25, the Government is investing £123 million to provide new and improved multi-sport grassroot facilities and pitches across the UK, including in rural areas. The Football Foundation plans their investment pipeline based on Local Football Facility Plans (LFFPs). These plans have been developed in partnership with local authorities and are in the process of being refreshed to reflect the current landscape. Should a constituent have an enquiry about prospective investment at a specific facility, they can get in touch with the Football Foundation directly via enquiries@footballfoundation.org.uk.

We will confirm details of future support following the upcoming Spending Review, including how we intend to distribute funding across communities in different areas of the United Kingdom.

■ Tennis: Facilities

Cat Smith: [\[8449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding her Department has provided for (a) covered and (b) indoor (i) tennis and (ii) padel courts in each of the last five years.

Cat Smith: [\[8450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help increase access to (a) affordable and (b) covered or indoor community tennis courts.

Cat Smith: [\[8451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the provision of (a) indoor and (b) covered tennis facilities, in the context of her Department's target for increasing the number of people who are physically active by 2030.

Cat Smith: [\[8452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the provision of accessible (a) indoor and (b) covered tennis courts in underserved communities.

Cat Smith: [\[8453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding her Department plans to provide for tennis facilities in each of the next three financial years.

Cat Smith: [\[8454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of access to indoor tennis facilities on the level of participation in disability tennis.

Cat Smith: [\[8455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of access to tennis facilities on the physical activity levels of (a) older people, (b) disabled people, (c) women and girls and (d) other less active groups.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to doing more to ensure that everyone, including older people, girls and women and those with disabilities, all have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities. Sport and physical activity is

central to achieving our health and opportunity manifesto missions, with the biggest gains coming from supporting those who are inactive to move more.

The Government provides the majority of support for grassroots sport through Sport England - which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding. Sport England's work focuses on increasing participation in sport and to boost diversity at a grassroots level to give more and better opportunities to all.

Sport England provides long term investment to the Lawn Tennis Association, the National Governing Body for tennis in Britain, which receives up to £10.2 million for five years to invest in community tennis and padel initiatives that will benefit everyone, including disabled people, women and girls and older people.

Sport England also works to ensure that each of their programmes impact directly on disabled people and those with a long-term health condition, with initiatives like the 'We are Undefeatable' campaign and partnerships with disability organisations.

Decisions with regards to future departmental budgets will be made as part of the upcoming spending review process.

DEFENCE

■ Defence: Employment

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:

[\[8024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to help support jobs in the defence industry.

Luke Pollard:

This Government recognises the vital role the defence industry plays not only in our national security but also to the economic prosperity and growth of the UK.

The UK's defence industry is a global leader and defence spending provides good, well-paid jobs. Ministry of Defence spending supports around 434,000 jobs across the UK, with around 239,000 of those supported by industry across the UK. The Strategic Defence Review will put personnel across defence at the core of future defence work.

Our industry partners, of all sizes, are very much at the heart of our One Defence approach. That is why this Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy aligning our security and economic priorities to boost the prosperity of our people across the country, provide resilience for the UK, and ensure the credibility of our deterrence.

■ Ministry of Defence: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b)

officials in his Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Luke Pollard:

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

The Ministry of Defence is currently allocated 18 vehicles including allocated and shared vehicles. For security reasons specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued. The average cost to a Department for a single Department Pool Car in 2024-25 financial year is £108,000 per annum.

■ **Nuclear Submarines: Decommissioning**

Graeme Downie: [\[8588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's timetable is for deciding on the next steps for the Submarine Dismantling Project.

Graeme Downie: [\[8589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to publish a timetable for the implementation of the Submarine Dismantling Project.

Graeme Downie: [\[8595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects the legacy nuclear powered submarine fleet to have been decommissioned.

Luke Pollard:

Swiftsure, the first submarine to be fully disposed of, is being used as a demonstrator to refine the dismantling and recycling processes under the Ministry of Defence's Submarine Dismantling Project. There will be a continual process of learning as Swiftsure dismantling progresses. This will inform a baseline approach and schedule for all current decommissioned Royal Navy submarines.

Swiftsure dismantling is on track and due to complete in 2026, achieving the commitment given to the Public Accounts Committee in 2019. Over 90% of the submarine will be recycled. We are currently working with Babcock in Rosyth to plan for the next two boats in sequence, with a view to being on contract next year.

Graeme Downie: [\[8591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on supporting skills development for Scottish workers to enable them to get jobs as part of the Submarine Dismantling Project.

Graeme Downie:

[\[8592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Submarine Dismantling Project on the economy in (a) Scotland and (b) the UK.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence regularly engages with Scottish Government officials on the Submarine Disposals Programme, allowing constructive dialogue on a wide range of issues including jobs.

Swiftsure, the first vessel to be disposed of, is being used as a demonstrator to refine the dismantling and recycling processes under the Ministry of Defence's Submarine Dismantling Project. Learning from this, alongside market engagement, is informing our approach to both current and future submarine disposal plans.

The Submarine Dismantling Project currently sustains more than 500 jobs across the Defence Nuclear Enterprise and, so far, has invested upwards of £200 million into Babcock International Group's Rosyth dockyard and the wider UK supply chain. It continues to provide a source of highly skilled jobs in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Graeme Downie:

[\[8593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has held with international (a) allies and (b) partners on the Submarine Dismantling Project.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continues to engage with industry partners to ensure we can deliver an optimised submarine dismantling programme. The Swiftsure demonstrator project serves as a proof of concept and benchmark against which market testing of future dismantling proposals can be assessed.

The MOD has also engaged with our international allies including the USA and France, sharing information and learning, to aid the acceleration of the UK's dismantling programme.

■ Submarines: Repairs and Maintenance

Graeme Downie:

[\[8594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure long-term availability of submarine berths for repair and maintenance in (a) Scotland and (b) the UK.

Luke Pollard:

The Government is committed to ensuring the availability of submarine berths to support submarine operations, which includes the Continuous at Sea Deterrent. We are focussed on the long-term infrastructure development of His Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde and HMNB Devonport to support the United Kingdom's submarines.

For reasons of operational security, further details on specific berths cannot be disclosed.

■ Warships: Shipbuilding

Jim Shannon: [\[7773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of a NATO-first defence strategy on the shipbuilding supply chain.

Luke Pollard:

All decisions on Defence strategy, encompassing our relationship with NATO, are fully assessed to ensure UK defence requirements are met, including the shipbuilding supply chain.

The National Shipbuilding Office works with colleagues across Government and industry to promote growth and resilience across the entire UK shipbuilding sector to enable it to meet our NATO commitments and, where possible, seize opportunities presented by working closely with allies.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices: Degrees

Adam Thompson: [\[8266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the contribution of degree apprenticeships to the delivery of skills needs (a) locally, (b) in the East Midlands and (c) nationally.

Janet Daby:

The latest figures for the 2023/24 academic year show there have been 44,060 apprenticeship starts at degree level, including 3,540 in the East Midlands.

Degree apprenticeships can provide school leavers and older learners alternative routes into degree level professions, which supports diversity and inclusion.

The department will work with Skills England to ensure that degree apprenticeships continue to offer good value for money and drive economic growth.

■ Childcare: South Holland and the Deepings

Sir John Hayes: [\[8102\]](#)

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

Stephen Morgan:

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

From September 2024, eligible working parents of children age nine months and above have been able to access 15 hours childcare a week for 38 weeks a year. From September 2025, this entitlement will be extended to 30 hours a week. The department is also growing the provision of wraparound childcare, which is before and after school provision, for primary school children.

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

For Lincolnshire County Council, the hourly rate for three to four year olds for 2024/25 is £5.47, which is an increase of 5.2% on 2023/24. For 2 year olds, this rate is £7.61 per hour and for under 2s, £10.36 per hour.

In addition to the entitlements, parents may also be eligible for childcare support through Tax-Free Childcare or Universal Credit Childcare. Parents can check what childcare support they are entitled to via the Childcare Choices website, which is accessible at: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>.

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

■ Children: Protection

Rebecca Paul:

[8379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data her Department holds on the proportion of families with children about whom (a) care and (b) protection issues have been raised who are offered a family group conference.

Janet Daby:

The department does not hold this data

Statutory guidance for local authorities, such as 'Working together to safeguard children' and the 'Children's social care national framework', encourages local authorities to consider family group decision making, such as family group conferences, from the earliest point of a family's involvement in children's social care and to repeat them, as considered appropriate, throughout the system.

■ Curriculum

Jess Asato:

[8340]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of recognising (a) non-formal and (b) experiential learning alongside academic achievements in the curriculum review.

Catherine McKinnell:

The Curriculum and Assessment Review (CAR) is being independently conducted by a group of education leaders (the review group) and chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The Terms of Reference were published in July 2024.

The review has been asked to consider how to remove barriers to learning and remove ceilings to achievement. It will support the innovation and professionalism of teachers, enabling them to adapt how they teach the curriculum to their students' lives and life experiences.

The review will also look at whether the current assessment system can be improved for both young people and staff. It will seek to deliver an assessment system that captures the strengths of every child and young person and the breadth of curriculum with the right balance of assessment methods whilst maintaining the important role of examinations.

The role of the review group is to consider the evidence, the responses to the call for evidence and widespread engagement with the sector over the coming months, and then make recommendations for the government to consider.

The review group will publish an interim report in the new year setting out their interim findings and confirming the key areas for further work. The final review with recommendations will be published in autumn 2025.

The government will consider changes to the National Curriculum and assessment in light of the recommendations of the review.

A link to access the CAR's call for evidence can be found below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/improving-the-curriculum-and-assessment-system>.

■ Department for Education: Civil Servants**John Glen:****[6124]**

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

Janet Daby:

The department has appointed four individuals to civil servant posts since 4 July 2024. Further details of the appointments can be seen in the attached spreadsheet.

Attachments:

1. 6124_attachment [6124_appointments_to_civil_servant_posts.xlsx]

■ Department for Education: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[7026]

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

Janet Daby:

The Government Car Service (GCS) offers vehicles to government departments as a shared resource. Each department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles. The arrangements relating to the using of vehicles in the Government Car Service is set out in the Civil Service Management Code. There has been no change in this policy since the general election.

■ Department for Education: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[6125]

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

Janet Daby:

Since 4 July 2024, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education directly appointed Richard Pennycook as the Interim Chair of Skills England

There have also been two public appointments made by exception over this period:

- Sir Kevan Collins was appointed as a non-executive board member at the Department for Education.
- David Behan was appointed as interim chair of the Office for Students' board.

Details of these exceptional public appointments and all other regulated public appointments at the department can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-education-non-executive-appointments/appointments-made-april-2024-to-march-2025>.

None of the department's ministerial or public appointees have been removed from their posts or asked to resign over this period.

■ Education

Patrick Spencer:

[8383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what early intervention measures her Department is taking in order to (a) identify, (b) evaluate and (c) support children who do not have SEND but require additional support throughout their education due to (i) domestic violence and (ii) other external circumstances.

Janet Daby:

This year government is investing £255 million in the Supporting Families Programme, which since 2012 has championed early intervention and helped over 800,000 families achieve successful outcomes.

In addition, through the £45 million families first for children pathfinder and family networks pilot, the department is testing whole-system reform to children's social care in 10 local authorities to help families overcome challenges, stay together and thrive, and to keep children safe. This includes testing a new model of Family Help, building on best practice from well-evidenced programmes, such as Supporting Families.

The department is working closely with pathfinder local authority areas and their partners including health, police, education, the voluntary and community sector and local children and families. The department will share learning from the programme with the wider sector and partners as the programme progresses including through an independent evaluation. Initial evaluation findings are expected in spring 2025.

■ Educational Psychology and Special Educational Needs**Mark Swards:****[8556]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to (a) improve SEND provision and (b) recruit more educational psychologists.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department recognises that the current special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system is not working and that, for far too long, too many children and families have been failed by it. This government is determined to address the problems and restore parents' trust that their children will get the support they need. The department has been restructured so that SEND is now treated as part of mainstream schooling, but the government knows that this is only a small step on the road to fixing the system. The department will listen to, and work with, families to fix the foundations and deliver long-term renewal.

The department understands the critical role educational psychologists play in the support available to children and young people, including those with SEND. Whilst it is the responsibility of local authorities, as employers, to recruit to their educational psychology services, the department is taking measures to support these services by investing in building the training pipeline.

The department is investing over £21 million to train 400 more educational psychologists from this year. This builds on the £10 million currently being invested in a cohort of over 200 trainees who began their training in September 2023.

Following graduation, trainees who have had their training funded by the department are required to remain in local authority employment for a minimum period. To support local authority services to recruit and retain their educational psychology workforce, this requirement will increase to three years for those trainees beginning

their course this year. This will allow local authority services to benefit from the public investment in training, and support their delivery of statutory assessments and wider work.

■ **Educational Psychology: Suffolk**

Patrick Spencer:

[\[8386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding she plans to provide to Suffolk County Council to increase provision of educational psychologist services.

Catherine McKinnell:

Educational psychologists play a critical role providing support to children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). However, the department knows that current workforce shortages are a barrier to delivering its ambitions for an inclusive mainstream education system. This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

The majority of the funding provided through the Local Government Funding Settlement is un-ringfenced, in recognition of local authorities being best placed to understand local priorities, including investment in educational psychology services.

The department is taking measures to support the flow of educational psychologists into local authority services by investing over £21 million to train 400 more educational psychologists from this year. This builds on the £10 million currently being invested in the training of over 200 educational psychologists who began their training in September 2023.

■ **Private Education: Special Educational Needs**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[8229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with local educational authorities on the potential costs of supporting displaced former private school children with special educational needs.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[8230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of charging VAT on independent school fees on local authority costings to support displaced former private school children with special education needs.

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.

Children with Education, Health and Care plans that provide a necessary local authority funded place at a private school will not be impacted by this policy. This is because local authorities can reclaim VAT on service expenditure through existing routes.

Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) 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>.

The IFS report also projects that transfers from the private to the state-sector will be low at equivalent to less than 1% of state funded places.

The department regularly speaks to local authorities about all local pupil place planning pressures.

Chris Hinchliff:

[8364]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 7 October 2024 to Question 5661 on Private Education: VAT, whether her Department has made a specific assessment of the potential impact of the policy on children with special educational needs in the independent sector.

Stephen Morgan:

This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy and will confirm the introduction of these changes at the Budget on 30 October. The Office for Budget Responsibility will also certify the government's costings for these measures at that time.

Children with education, health and care plans that provide a necessary local authority funded place at a private school, will not be impacted by this policy. This is because local authorities can reclaim VAT on service expenditure through existing routes.

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>.

■ Private Education: VAT

Lewis Cocking:

[7920]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of charging VAT on independent school fees on sponsorship partnerships with state academies.

Lewis Cocking:[\[7921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of enabling the financial contributions of independent schools to state academies to be offset against VAT liability.

Stephen Morgan:

The department understands that, in line with schools' charitable objectives, private schools do not typically charge for partnership work, meaning it is outside the scope of VAT. Whilst the government keeps all tax policy under review, there are currently no plans for changes that would enable independent schools to offset any financial contributions made to state academies against their VAT liability.

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 these policies will have on state and private schools. Following scrutiny of the government's costing by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility, the government will confirm its approach to these reforms at the Budget on 30 October and set out its assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes in the normal way.

■ Pupil Premium**Joe Robertson:**[\[8366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending eligibility for Pupil Premium Plus to (a) children who have not been looked after and (b) other children in kinship care.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is providing over £2.9 billion of pupil premium funding in 2024/25 to improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged pupils in England.

The criteria for pupil premium eligibility are:

- Pupils who are recorded as eligible for free school meals or who have been eligible in the past six years.
- Pupils who have been adopted from care or have left care.
- Children who are looked after by the local authority.

The portion of funding for looked-after children and previously looked-after children is often referred to as pupil premium plus.

Pupil premium is not a personal budget for individual pupils and schools do not have to spend this funding so that it solely benefits pupils who meet the funding criteria. Schools can direct spending where the need is greatest, including to pupils with other identified needs, such as children in kinship care. Schools can also use pupil premium on whole class approaches that will benefit all pupils such as, for example, on high quality teaching.

The department will continue to keep eligibility under review to ensure that support is targeted at those who most need it.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Nesil Caliskan: [8347]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department plans to take this academic year to help schools tackle absences.

Stephen Morgan:

The government recognises school absence as a key barrier to learning and tackling this must be a top priority. Thanks to the sector's efforts, more students are attending school this year compared to last. However, 1.6 million children remain persistently absent, missing 10% or more of lessons.

To address this, backed by £15 million investment, the government will expand the reach of attendance mentoring to 10,000 more children and to cover an additional ten areas with some of the worst attendance rates across the country, which will help to get more children into school where they can be supported to achieve and thrive.

The department will additionally roll out funded breakfast clubs to all primary schools so that all children get a strong start to the day and are ready to learn. The department will also introduce new annual Ofsted reviews on safeguarding, attendance, and off-rolling. Mental health support is being expanded, with specialists in every school.

The 'Working together to improve school attendance' statutory guidance promotes a 'support first' approach, encouraging schools, trusts, and local authorities to work with families to address attendance barriers. This guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>.

■ Pupils: Travellers

Kim Johnson: [7869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Education Policy Institute's Annual Report 2024, published on 16 July 2024, what steps she plans to take to tackle disadvantage gaps identified in that report for (a) Gypsy and Roma pupils in (i) primary and (ii) secondary school and (b) other pupils; and whether she plans to implement that report's (A) policy recommendations for closing disadvantage gaps and (B) other policy recommendations.

Catherine McKinnell:

Every child, regardless of background, deserves the opportunity to progress and succeed in school and beyond. This government is committed to breaking the link between young people's backgrounds and their future success.

The department recognises the issues faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children and young people and has an active GRT stakeholder group, which includes

representatives from GRT communities and the education sector. The group is a valuable source of information and challenge for the department and works to inform thinking, policy and delivery, addressing barriers faced by GRT pupils.

In line with the recommendations of the Education Policy Institute's annual report, the government has committed to developing an ambitious Child Poverty strategy, implementing several initiatives aimed at boosting children's mental health and wellbeing, as well as investing in improving inclusivity and expertise to support children with special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream schools.

To support all young people to achieve and thrive, the department has started work to recruit an additional 6,500 expert teachers and launched an independent, expert-led curriculum and assessment review that will look closely at the key challenges to attainment. The department has also committed to provide breakfast clubs in all state funded primary schools, ensuring every primary school child is well prepared for school.

In the 2024/25 financial year, over £7.8 billion of the schools' national funding formula funding has been allocated based on deprivation and other additional needs. In addition, in the last academic year, of the £7 billion allocated to support 16 to 18 year olds in education, nearly £600 million was targeted to support the needs of disadvantaged students.

■ Skills England: Cost Effectiveness

Sir John Hayes:

[\[7717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that Skills England delivers value for money.

Janet Daby:

Skills England will bring together key partners to meet the skills needs of the next decade and break down barriers to opportunity. It will play a critical part in the government's mission to drive growth across the country, supporting people to get better jobs and improve their standard of living. The skills system makes a significant contribution to enhancing productivity, and improvements in effectiveness can deliver major positive economic returns.

Skills England is currently set up in shadow form in the department with plans to be fully established next year in accordance with Cabinet Office and HM Treasury processes, which includes an assessment of value for money. Both in shadow form and when fully established, Skills England will be subject to all necessary assessments and transparency to ensure it provides value for money for the taxpayer.

■ Special Educational Needs

Nesil Caliskan:

[\[8351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to meet demand for SEND educational provision in (a) London, (b) Barking and (c) the UK.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

As part of this, local authorities must ensure there are sufficient school places for all pupils, including children and young people with SEND. The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to keep the provision for children and young people with SEND under review, including its sufficiency, by working with parents, young people and providers.

Local authorities have received high needs provision capital allocations to support them to deliver new places and improve existing provision for children and young people with SEND, or who require AP. For 2023/24 and 2024/25, Barking and Dagenham Council received £15.3 million and all inner and outer London boroughs received £467 million.

The department will work with the sector as valued partners to ensure that children and young people can access the special educational provision they need.

Patrick Spencer:**[8380]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to implement the recommendations of the paper entitled Right Support, Right Place and Right Time, CP 624, published by her Department in March 2022.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is committed to taking a community-wide approach and to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to children and young people with the most complex needs. The Change Programme, which was established in September 2023 following the publication of the Special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) Improvement Plan, is providing valuable learning across the SEND and AP system, including by informing thinking about effective, inclusive mainstream practice.

This government recognises that the SEND system is not meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. Addressing its problems will be a priority for this government.

The government cannot do this alone. It will work with the sector as essential and valued partners to ensure its approach is fully planned and delivered together with parents, schools, councils and expert staff who go above and beyond to support children.

Patrick Spencer:

[8381]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will review the High Needs National Formula for pupils with additional support needs to reduce regional disparities.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is taking time to consider the various funding formulae that both it and local authorities use to allocate funding for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. It is important that there is a fair education funding system that directs funding to where it is needed.

Budgets for the 2025/26 financial year have not yet been set, which means that decisions on the high needs and schools national funding formulae, as well as the publication of allocations for that year, are not to the usual timescales. The department will publish information as soon as possible after the Budget announcement on 30 October.

Patrick Spencer:

[8382]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to simplify the education, health and care plan (a) application and (b) assessment system; and what support her Department provides to (i) Suffolk County Council and (ii) other local authorities to help ensure that they are able to meet the 20 week timeframe for issue.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department knows that parents have struggled to get the right support for their children, particularly through long and difficult education, health and care (EHC) plan processes and is planning to work across the sector to provide support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those needing alternative provision (AP), and their families. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and AP settings, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

The department wants to ensure that EHC plan applications are processed promptly and, where required, plans are issued as quickly as possible so that children and young people can access the support they need. The department publishes annual data from the SEN2 survey in relation to every EHC plan maintained by individual local authorities and closely monitors and uses the information from the annual SEN2 data collection to inform discussions with local areas. Where a council does not meet its duties, the department can take action that prioritises children's needs and supports local areas to bring about rapid improvement. The department offers a range of universal, targeted and intensive support through department-managed programmes, such as the sector-led improvement partners which provide peer-to-peer tailored support.

The local area SEND inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for Suffolk local area partnership in November 2023 found widespread and/or

systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.

The local area partnership submitted a priority action plan to Ofsted and the CQC to address the areas for priority action, including actions to improve EHC plan timeliness, with progress monitored by the department through deep dive and stocktake meetings.

An expert SEND advisor has been commissioned by the department to support the improvement work being undertaken by the partnership, including improving EHC plan timeliness, by providing advice, guidance and challenge alongside the Regional NHS England SEND Manager.

Ofsted and the CQC introduced a strengthened area SEND inspection framework in January 2023, leading to a greater emphasis on the outcomes being achieved for children and young people. It is the primary tool to maintain a focus on high standards in the SEND system across all partners.

Patrick Spencer:

[8384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department provides to help parents of children with SEND with (a) education, health and care plans and (b) support systems.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department recognises that some parents have struggled to get the right support for their children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), particularly through long and difficult Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan processes.

The department wants to ensure that EHC plan applications are processed promptly and, where required, plans are issued as quickly as possible so that children and young people can access the support they need. We are listening to a wide range of people, such as children and young people, parents, schools, colleges and local authorities and their partners. We are reflecting on what practices could be made consistent nationally.

Under the Children and Families Act (2014) it is a legal requirement that all local authorities have a Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS), to ensure families are provided with the support necessary to enable them to participate in discussions and decisions about their support, such as through their Education, Health and Care plan, and strategically, such as through SEND local offers.

The department funds training and support for SENDIASS services through a contract with specialist charities which support parents and carers of children with SEND. This contract is led by Contact, a national charity who support families with SEND. In addition, Contact also runs a national telephone helpline which offers impartial support and advice on SEND.

The department also provides grant funding to Parent Carer Forums throughout England who provide a supportive forum for parents. They work alongside local

authorities, education, health and other service providers to ensure that the services they plan, commission, deliver and monitor meet the needs of children and families locally.

■ Special Educational Needs: Greater London

Nesil Caliskan:

[8350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the capacity is of SEND (a) schools and (b) provision within mainstream schools in (i) London and (ii) Barking.

Catherine McKinnell:

Information on school capacity in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and mainstream schools as at May 2023 is published at local authority level in the annual School Capacity statistics publication, which can be accessed at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>.

There are 1,506 places in SEND units and 4,476 places in resourced provision in mainstream schools in London. This data is also available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/91adc73e-edec-4645-a91a-08dce6ed00e6>.

There are 21,118 school places in SEND schools in London. This data is also available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/02e993b4-22c1-445e-c3ba-08dce8260458>.

There are 470 school places in SEND schools in Barking & Dagenham. This data is also available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/9c99ec5d-eea7-4b5b-c3c5-08dce8260458>.

There are 100 school places in SEND units and 282 places in resourced provision in mainstream schools in Barking & Dagenham. This data is also available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/5d08e800-fbdb-4d82-c3c6-08dce8260458>.

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

■ Special Educational Needs: Visual Impairment

Mark Pritchard:

[8116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure schools make reasonable adjustments to support children with vision impairments.

Catherine McKinnell:

The government's ambition is that all children and young people receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream

schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to children and young people with the most complex needs. This will help to restore parents' trust that their child will get the support they need.

All schools have duties under the Equality Act 2010 towards individual disabled children and young people. They must make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services for disabled children, to prevent them being put at a substantial disadvantage.

The department is committed to ensuring a steady supply of teachers of children with vision impairment in both specialist and mainstream settings. To teach a class of pupils with vision impairments, a teacher is required to hold the relevant Mandatory Qualification for Sensory Impairment (MQSI). There are currently seven providers of the MQSI.

Moreover, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education is developing a new occupational standard for teachers of pupils with sensory impairment, which is expected to be available from September 2025. This will improve the supply of those qualified to teach this important cohort and further help to improve their educational outcomes.

■ Sports: Schools

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[8281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Opening School Facilities funding programme beyond March 2025.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity to enable every child to achieve and thrive, including through expanding access to sport and physical activity. This will support our cross-government missions and help to raise the healthiest and happiest generation of children ever.

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

■ Students: Fees and Charges

Jim Shannon:

[\[8142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the current level of tuition fees.

Janet Daby:

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

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

carefully at all options and come forward with proposals. Funding plans for the HE sector will be set out at the relevant fiscal event in line with the approach to public spending commitments across government.

The department recognises the immediate financial strain that some providers are under. As such, the department will continue to work closely with the Office for Students to monitor any risks and to ensure there are robust plans in place to mitigate them.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Iron and Steel: Environment Protection

Alex Mayer: [8549]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to implement procurement rules to give greater weight to the inclusion of green steel in purchased goods and services.

Alex Mayer: [8550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will establish a definition for (a) lower emission and (b) net zero steel.

Sarah Jones:

Building demand for low carbon products is essential for achieving net zero. Public procurement is a key lever for driving demand. At COP28 the UK declared its intention to meet international green procurement pledges for low emission steel and concrete in public construction by 2030 ([link here](#)).

Ministers are considering their options to grow demand for low carbon steel, cement and concrete, the first step of which is resolving questions such as how to measure embodied emissions in products and defining what a low carbon product is.

The Government will consult on options for answering these questions in due course.

■ National Grid: East of England

James Cartlidge: [8177]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October to Question 5072 on National Grid: Costs, what estimate he has made of the potential impact on consumer energy bills of the lifetime costs of delivering the coordinated offshore design set out in the Offshore Coordination Support Scheme for East Anglia.

Michael Shanks:

As part of the feasibility work for the coordination proposal explored through the Offshore Coordination Support Scheme, independent analysis by Arup and the Electricity System Operator (now the National Energy System Operator) identified an increase in development costs by up to £890 million, and additional constraint costs

of greater than £1.5 billion over the project lifetime. While these costs would be expected to be recovered from consumer electricity bills, the interactions with other bill components mean there are uncertainties preventing a precise estimate of the impact.

■ National Grid: Infrastructure

Richard Tice: [\[8342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Great Grid Upgrade infrastructure project on (a) local communities, (b) the environment and (c) economic development in (i) Boston and Skegness constituency and (ii) the UK; and what steps his Department is taking to mitigate potential negative impacts in these areas.

Michael Shanks:

All electricity transmission network projects, regardless of location, must go through the independent and robust planning process. Developers must evidence that they have engaged and consulted with communities. They must take account of community views, environmental impacts, efficiency of the system and the cost to consumers, and consider alternative options.

■ Renewable Energy: Community Development

Fabian Hamilton: [\[8105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will include measures to increase low carbon and renewable energy schemes (a) owned and (b) part owned by community organisations in the Great British Energy Bill.

Michael Shanks:

As set out in the Founding Statement, Great British Energy will support Local and Combined Authorities and Community Energy Groups to develop up to 8GW of cleaner power by 2030 through small and medium-scale renewable energy projects. Community-owned low carbon and renewable energy schemes are already in the scope of the Great British Energy Bill, however, as Great British Energy will be operationally independent, it will be for the company to decide the activities it engages in. Such decisions will be determined in due course and influenced by available opportunities, as well as the strategic priorities that government sets out.

■ Wind Power

Josh Babarinde: [\[8293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to require all wind turbines in England to use bio-based lubricants.

Michael Shanks:

The Department has no plans to require wind turbines to use bio-based lubricants. The small amounts of lubricants used in modern turbines means the environmental risks from release of lubricants are very small.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **Animal Welfare****Victoria Collins:**[\[8722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to (a) reintroduce the Kept Animals Bill and (b) introduce a ban on snares.

Mary Creagh:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for South Devon on 11 October 2024, PQ [7135](#).

■ **Aquariums and Zoos: Animal Welfare****Dr Danny Chambers:**[\[8744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department last updated rules for (a) zoos and (b) aquariums on animal welfare.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice were last updated in 2012. Defra is currently in the process of updating these standards, to ensure all animals in zoos and aquariums are kept in conditions that reflect latest best practice. The draft updated standards were consulted on in 2022, and further discussions have been held with the sector. An updated version of the standards will be published in due course.

■ **Biodiversity****Alex Easton:**[\[8585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the UK's commitments under the United Nations Biodiversity Conference are met ahead of COP16; and what steps his Department is taking to help stop global biodiversity loss.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to delivering for nature, and taking action to meet our Environment Act targets to restore and protect our natural world. We are working towards concluding the review of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) by the end of the year. We will publish a summary of findings in early 2025, to be followed by publication of a revised EIP in spring 2025. This will play a role in framing how we will meet our domestic and international targets to help us significantly improve the natural environment in England.

The four nations of the UK and the relevant UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies worked together to submit our National Targets to the Convention on Biological Diversity on 1 August, committing us to meeting all 23 of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets at home. We will publish the full UK National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in due course, detailing further delivery plans and future ambitions.

■ **Boats: Henley-on-Thames**

Freddie van Mierlo: [\[8377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will amend the criteria relating to bathing water designation to include the (a) use of (i) non-motorised boats and (ii) paddleboards and (b) holding of (i) the Royal Regatta, (ii) events organised by Swim Henley and (iii) other such events.

Emma Hardy:

Ministers continue to consider possible changes to the Bathing water system. In light of this, applications for designations for the 2025 bathing season which were closed by the previous administration, remain closed.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Official Cars**

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[7017\]](#)

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

Daniel Zeichner:

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 general election.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Paternity Leave**

Shaun Davies: [\[7903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the average length of paternity leave taken by staff in his Department was in each of the last three years.

Daniel Zeichner:

The information requested is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Floods: House Insurance

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[8677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the provisions of Flood:Re beyond 2039.

Emma Hardy:

Flood Re is a flood re-insurance scheme that aims to ensure UK householders living in properties at high risk of flooding can access affordable home insurance. The scheme is due to end in 2039, at which point the aim is for the market to offer affordable risk-reflective pricing of flood insurance for households.

Flood Re have a statutory purpose to manage the transition to risk-reflective pricing of flood insurance for household premises between 2016 and 2039. Flood Re published their most recent Transition Plan in July 2023, outlining its progress and action on moving to affordable risk-reflective pricing by 2039 this summer. Flood Re's next Transition plan (Transition Plan 4) will be published in summer 2028.

Alex Mayer:

[\[8716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will take steps to help ensure that all domestic insurers signed up to the Build Back Better flood insurance scheme offer those provisions across all their products.

Alex Mayer:

[\[8717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will take legislative steps to ensure all domestic insurers offer Build Back Better policies.

Emma Hardy:

I hosted a roundtable in September 2024 with leaders from the insurance industry, as well as experts in research and development. At this event, the importance of Build Back Better was stressed to the insurance industry and all providers were encouraged to offer this. Flood Re and the insurance industry responded positively to this ask.

■ Larger Eight-toothed European Spruce Bark Beetles

Alex Mayer:

[\[8713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in European countries on mitigating the spread of the *Ips typographus* tree pest.

Mary Creagh:

Ips typographus is present in most of continental Europe, where it is not a regulated pest. In recent years, large populations have built up across western and central Europe causing extensive damage and mortality of spruce trees. Beetles routinely caught in traps in south-east England are probably a result of blow over from mainland Europe. It is not possible to prevent this natural dispersal, but the

Government has robust surveillance and control measures in place nationwide to detect and eradicate outbreaks as they occur.

The Forestry Commission has visited multiple countries experiencing outbreaks of *Ips typographus* to discuss different approaches to outbreak management, including participating in a pan-European workshop on outbreak mitigation, and has received critical appraisal of our approach from members of the international community. Experts actively engage with European scientists to develop research projects, including research on the susceptibility of Sitka spruce in Denmark and cross-channel dispersal from Belgium.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ British Overseas Territories: Companies

Lloyd Hatton:

[\[8363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he intends to publish a deadline for the implementation public registers of beneficial ownership in the Overseas Territories per the requirements in the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundry Act.

Stephen Doughty:

Overseas Territories' (OTs) commitments to delivering publicly accessible registers of beneficial ownership were outlined in a Written Ministerial Statement of 18 December 2023. This month, as Minister for the OTs, I wrote to OT Governments to set out UK transparency expectations. I noted that full public accessibility remains our expectation. Access filtered to those with 'legitimate interest' should be delivered to a clear timetable, as an interim step. I also outlined a set of minimum requirements that the UK Government would expect to see in any 'legitimate interest' regime. At the UK-OT Illicit Finance Dialogue earlier this month, officials discussed OTs' progress towards their commitments and technical assistance to support implementation. I expect to continue discussions, including on ambitious deadlines for implementation, at the Joint Ministerial Council in November.

■ Commonwealth: LGBT+ People

Paula Barker:

[\[8486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help promote LGBT rights across the Commonwealth.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is strongly committed to championing LGBT+ human rights and activists across the Commonwealth. This work is enabled by our £40 million LGBT+ Rights Programme, which supports the vital work of organisations such as The Commonwealth Equality Network (TCEN) to end violence and discrimination, reform discriminatory legislation, and uphold the human rights and freedoms of all LGBT+ people. Lord Collins, Minister responsible for the Commonwealth, will be meeting

TCEN and other Civil Society organisations at CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) in Samoa next week.

■ **Gubad Ibadoghlu**

Lloyd Hatton:

[\[8362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will raise the case of Dr. Gubad Ibadoghlu with Azerbaijani officials during pre-COP 29 discussions to help secure his release from detention.

Stephen Doughty:

Since Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu's arrest in July 2023, the UK has consistently advocated for appropriate medical access and the right to a fair legal process, including ahead of COP29. The UK has also called on the Azerbaijani Government to protect the human rights and freedoms of all of its citizens, and we will continue to work to ensure Dr Ibadoghlu's rights are upheld.

■ **Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief**

Esther McVey:

[\[8437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to establish a Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief on a statutory footing.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Government will champion freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all abroad. No one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. Envoy roles will be decided upon in due course. There are currently no plans to legislate on Envoy roles during this parliamentary session. We continue to use the strength of our global diplomatic network, including dedicated staff within the FCDO, to promote and protect FoRB around the world.

■ **Sub-Saharan Africa: Religious Freedom**

Esther McVey:

[\[8133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of calls to establish an international commission of inquiry into religious persecution and violence in (a) Nigeria and (b) other severely affected countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Esther McVey:

[\[8134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it is his policy to support the establishment of an international commission of inquiry by the UN on religious persecution in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK continues to champion freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, including in Sub-Saharan Africa. No one should live in fear because of what they do, or do not

believe in. We work to uphold the right to FoRB multilaterally, including through our position at the UN, and bilaterally. The UK Government remains committed to supporting Nigeria to address ongoing security challenges, including violent extremism and intercommunal violence, which continue to impinge on the rights of Nigerians to FoRB.

■ Sudan: Development Aid

Carla Denyer:

[\[8527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Development in response to the question from the hon. Member for West Worcestershire, during the Urgent Question on Sudan of 3 September 2024, Official Report, column 161, if he will publish a breakdown of the £97 million funding announced for Sudan this financial year by (a) sector (i) multilateral, (ii) non-governmental organisations, (iii) local and (iv) national responders in Sudan and (b) geographic area.

Anneliese Dodds:

As of the end of September 2024, £70 million of this year's £97 million bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Sudan had been disbursed. The rest of the UK's funding to Sudan this year will be distributed by the end of the financial year. The majority of this funding supports key UN agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF who are providing life-saving food assistance in Sudan. UK ODA also contributes to: the Sudan Humanitarian Fund, which is supporting local and national responders, including Emergency Response Rooms; a consortium of International non-governmental organisations delivering protection services, including on sexual and gender-based violence associated with conflict; and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)'s work on emergency preparedness and response, protection of civilians, and providing life-saving healthcare across Sudan.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Accident and Emergency Departments

Liam Conlon:

[\[8540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of NHS urgent and emergency care services.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to supporting the National Health Service to reduce urgent and emergency service waiting times, and to achieve the standards set out in the NHS Constitution.

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care ordered an investigation of NHS performance by Professor Lord Darzi. The report, which was

published on 12 September 2024, includes an assessment of the pressures on urgent and emergency care services, and is available at the following link:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66f42ae630536cb92748271f/Lord-Darzi-Independent-Investigation-of-the-National-Health-Service-in-England-Updated-25-September.pdf>

■ Bedford Hospital: Standards

Blake Stephenson:

[8703]

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 Bedford Hospital.

Karin Smyth:

The Government is committed to delivering a National Health Service that is fit for the future, and we recognise that delivering high quality NHS healthcare services requires safe, resilient, and effective infrastructure.

As part of the management of their estate, NHS trusts regularly assess the physical condition of their estate. The Estates Related Information Collection survey collects data from trusts on the quality of their estate annually, including the projected cost of bringing all the buildings on each NHS site into acceptable condition, recorded as backlog maintenance. The latest data on backlog maintenance is available at the following link:

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

■ Breast Cancer: Diagnosis

Edward Morello:

[8611]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the number of primary care facilities for the diagnosis of stages of breast cancer.

Karin Smyth:

The two most common routes through which breast cancer is diagnosed is following an urgent referral from a general practitioner, on the basis of signs and symptoms, or via breast screening, which happens in fixed or mobile breast screening units.

In March 2024, NHS England published guidance for local systems on implementing a timed breast cancer diagnostic pathway, setting out how diagnosis within 28-days can be achieved for the suspected breast cancer pathway.

Urgent referral pathways for people with breast symptoms who cannot be managed in primary care are also in place across England. While not on a suspected cancer pathway, these referrals should still be able to expect an outcome within 28 days of initial referral.

Since March 2024, NHS England has also been implementing breast pain pathways across England, with more than 60% of secondary care providers having established a live service. Breast pain on its own is not a sign of breast cancer. Introducing the breast pain pathways helps to ensure that patients who are at low risk of cancer receive rapid reassurance, and also helps to ensure that the urgent pathways are available for those who need them. Breast pain pathways are mainly managed within primary care or community diagnostic centres.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[8829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce delays in treatment for cancer patients.

Karin Smyth:

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

We will improve cancer survival rates and hit all NHS cancer waiting time targets within five years, so no patient waits longer than they should.

The NHS will maximise the pace of the roll-out of additional diagnostic capacity, delivering the final year of the three-year investment plan for establishing Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) and ensuring timely implementation of new CDC locations and upgrades to existing CDCs, with capacity prioritised for cancer diagnostics.

■ Cancer: Shropshire

Helen Morgan:

[8906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of patients received urgent cancer treatment within 62 days of a GP referral at Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin integrated care board since October 2023.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 17 October 2024]: Cancer waiting times data, organised by integrated care board, and published by NHS England, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/cancer-waiting-times/>

■ Coeliac Disease: Prescriptions

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[8603]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to update guidance to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) on the need to offer gluten free staples on NHS prescription for people with coeliac disease.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England has no plans to update the guidance. The Department undertook a national consultation in 2017 on the prescribing of gluten-free (GF) foods in primary care. The rationale for this was the increased availability of these products in supermarkets and other food outlets at a time when the annual cost to the National Health Service of prescribing such items was £15.7 million. The first of these proposed changes to prescribing arrangements resulted in the Government's decision to restrict NHS prescribing of such foods to only bread and mixes.

NHS England's guidance, Prescribing Gluten-Free Foods in Primary Care, was developed to communicate to local commissioners, now integrated care boards (ICBs), the changes in legislation. Wording is included in the guidance which states that commissioners may further restrict the prescribing of GF foods by selecting bread or mixes only, or may choose to end the prescribing of GF foods altogether if they feel this is appropriate for their population, whilst taking account of their legal duties to advance equality and provided they have regard to reducing health inequalities. In NHS England's guidance, there are no limits on the amount of bread or mixes that can be prescribed. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/prescribing-gluten-free-foods-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs.pdf>

Decisions about the commissioning and funding of local health services are the responsibility of local ICBs. NHS England's guidance should be taken into account when ICBs formulate local policies, and prescribers are expected to reflect local policies in their prescribing practice. The guidance does not remove the clinical discretion of prescribers in accordance with their professional duties.

■ Defibrillators: Sales

Anna Dixon:

[7203]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to prevent the sale of the CellaED personal defibrillator.

Karin Smyth:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for regulating the United Kingdom's medical devices market and works to protect and promote public health and patient safety. We undertake safety and market surveillance of all medical devices in the UK to monitor both performance and safety. We also designate Approved Bodies to undertake conformity assessments of medical devices and award a UK conformity assessed marking to sell products.

The MHRA acts on evidence and takes prompt action where necessary to protect public health. We communicate any actions taken to healthcare professionals and patients as appropriate. We encourage all users of medical devices to report any problems to us via the Yellow Card Scheme.

We are aware of issues raised by stakeholders regarding the CellaED device and we are investigating these concerns with the manufacturer.

Typically, when concerns are identified we have a number of regulatory options available to protect the public including, but not limited to, working with manufacturers to address safety concerns, negotiating a voluntary suspension of sales pending the conclusion of a safety and performance investigation, producing safety communications, or taking compliance action to prevent sales when required.

Interactions between medical device manufacturers and the MHRA are confidential. This is to promote transparent, accurate and timely flow of information to allow appropriate regulatory decisions to be made from evidence provided.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in (i) his Department and (ii) NHS England have (A) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (B) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (1) make, (2) model and (3) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Karin Smyth:

The Government Car Service offers vehicles to Government departments as a shared resource. Each Department independently determines the allocation of these vehicles to its ministerial cadre/officials, as under previous administrations. The Department is currently allocated three vehicles including allocated and shared vehicles.

For security reasons specific details of allocations including make and model of vehicles are not issued. The average cost to a Department for a single Department Pool Car in 2024/25 financial year is £108,000 per annum.

■ Health Services: Air Conditioning

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[8223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of supporting the wider roll-out of air filtration systems within NHS services.

Karin Smyth:

No such assessment has been made. National Health Service organisations and primary care providers regularly review all their estates locally to ensure they meet

the required standards for ventilation and infection, as well as the required prevention and control measures, and will invest in improvements where required. Guidance is provided to the NHS on air quality in its facilities in the Health Technical Memorandum 03-01: Specialised ventilation for healthcare premises, and the NHS Estates Technical Bulletin (NETB 2023/01A): application of HEPA filter devices for air cleaning in healthcare spaces: guidance and standards, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/specialised-ventilation-for-healthcare-buildings/>

Guidance to the NHS on air quality in its facilities is also provided in the NHS Estates Technical Bulletin (NETB 2023/01B): application of ultraviolet (UVC) devices for air cleaning in occupied healthcare spaces: guidance and standards, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/application-of-ultraviolet-uvc-devices-for-air-cleaning-in-occupied-healthcare-spaces-guidance-and-standards/>

NHS guidance is reviewed and updated in response to changes in clinical practice, technology, and risk assessments.

■ Healthcare Assistants: Recruitment

Mark Swards:

[8557]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking recruit more full-time healthcare support workers.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service has been facing chronic workforce shortages for years and we have to be honest that bringing in the staff the NHS needs will take time. The Government will make sure the NHS has the staff it needs to be there for all of us when we need it.

We are committed to training the staff we need to ensure patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it. We will launch a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the NHS and make it fit for the future.

■ Hypertension: Drugs

Jim Shannon:

[8826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of guidance issued by his Department on the best time to take blood pressure medication.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service monitors evidence on all interventions and updates our public facing guidance accordingly. The routine review of blood pressure medication guidance on the NHS website is due in December 2024. However, the timing of

medication is a clinical decision which is made by doctors, and depends on several patient factors.

■ **Maternity Services: Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes**

Melanie Onn: [\[7792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will hold discussions with striking maternity support workers in Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes constituency on their requests.

Karin Smyth:

This is a local issue and resolution should be the product of local employer and trade union negotiations. It is for employers to correctly and consistently implement the NHS Job Evaluation scheme.

■ **Midwives: Vacancies**

Nesil Caliskan: [\[8345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of trends in vacancy rates for midwives in (a) England, (b) London and (c) the North East London Health and Care Partnership.

Karin Smyth:

No specific recent assessment has been made. The Government will continue to work with the National Health Service as it delivers its three-year maternity and neonatal plan to grow the maternity workforce, develop a culture of safety, and ensure women receive safe, compassionate care. NHS England is boosting the midwifery workforce through undergraduate training, apprenticeships, postgraduate conversion, and return to midwifery programmes. Theme two of the Three Year Delivery Plan covers growing, retaining, and supporting our workforce. This includes establishing a retention midwife in every unit to co-ordinate recruitment and retention activities for their own units.

■ **NHS: Long Covid**

Steve Darling: [\[9010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of NHS employees who have (a) taken early retirement and (b) had their employment terminated as a result of long covid, by region.

Karin Smyth:

No such estimate has been made by the Department.

■ Perinatal Mortality

Helen Morgan:

[\[8908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure all NHS Trusts meet the Government's target to reduce the number of stillbirths nationally to 0.23%.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 17 October 2024]: The current rate of stillbirths per 1,000 births is 3.9.

The Government continues to work with the National Health Service as it delivers its three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services. As part of the plan, an updated version of the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle, which aims to support a reduction in stillbirths, has been rolled out. All trusts are implementing the third version of this bundle, which provides maternity units with detailed guidance and a package of interventions to reduce stillbirths, neonatal brain injury, neonatal death, and preterm birth.

■ Pharmacy: Community Health Services

Rebecca Smith:

[\[8740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing community pharmacists to substitute prescription medication for generic alternatives in cases of medicine shortages.

Karin Smyth:

If the generic name is written on the prescription, pharmacists can dispense any supplier's version of that product. However, where the prescription is written for a brand or a supplier, then the pharmacist is required to supply that specific product. Generic substitution was consulted on in 2010 but the proposals were not progressed following concerns about the potential impact on patient safety. Currently, Serious Shortages Protocols (SSPs) are a tool that has been used in recent years to manage and mitigate medicine and medical device shortages. An SSP enables community pharmacists to supply a specified alternative medicine or device, with the patient's consent, and without needing to seek authorisation from the prescriber. SSPs are developed with the input of clinical experts and are a safe, effective way to ensure medicines continue to be available for everyone who needs them.

■ Prescriptions: Fines

Alex Mayer:

[\[8720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of NHS prescription fines that have been issued to people on (a) contribution-based Employment Support Allowance and (b) Savings Credit in each of the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

The information requested is not held. Contribution based Employment Support Allowances and Savings Credits do not qualify for an exemption from prescription charges. No information is recorded on the FP10 relating to these benefits, nor at the time of issuing a penalty charge notice.

Qualifying benefits for exemption from prescription charges are Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, or Pension Credit Guarantee Credit with Savings Credit. Individuals who receive either Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit paid together, or Working Tax Credit including a disability element are entitled to free National Health Service prescriptions if the annual family income used to calculate tax credits is £15,276 or less. Individuals on Universal Credit may qualify for free prescriptions depending on the take-home pay in the last assessment period.

People on a low income who do not qualify for an exemption from prescription charges can seek help under the NHS Low Income Scheme, which provides income related help with health costs to people who are not automatically exempt from charges.

■ Protective Clothing: Procurement**Afzal Khan:****[8854]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will promote the use of (a) sustainable and (b) reusable medical garments in the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service has committed to reaching net zero by 2045 for the emissions it influences through the goods and services it buys from its partners and suppliers. This includes a greater focus on procuring and using sustainable and reusable medical garments where this is safe and effective, such as reusable sterile gowns.

NHS England is working with NHS organisations to share best practice and evidence-based approaches, understand operational challenges, for example requirements for laundry infrastructure, and support the inclusion of lots to procure reusable medical textile services within relevant procurement frameworks. NHS England supported the Royal Surgical Colleges to develop and promote the Green Theatre Checklist to encourage sustainable theatre approaches, including medical garments. The checklist is available at the following link:

<https://www.rcsed.ac.uk/professional-support-development-resources/environmental-sustainability-and-surgery/green-theatre-checklist>

NHS England is also supporting innovation through the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) Healthcare programme, which has funded a project to support reuse of surgical textiles, more information about which can be found at the following link:

<https://sbrihealthcare.co.uk/impact-case-studies/case-studies/revolution-zero>

■ Surrogacy

Frank McNally:

[8352]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to respond to the report by the Law Commission of England and Wales and the Scottish Law Commission entitled Building families through surrogacy: a new law, published on 28 March 2023, HC 1237, and draft bill.

Karin Smyth:

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Patient Safety, Women's Health and Mental Health will be meeting with the Law Commission shortly to discuss its report and draft bill on surrogacy, and to inform consideration of the Government's next steps.

■ Tourette's Syndrome: Health Services

Dan Tomlinson:

[8735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to take steps to improve training for service providers on (a) Tourette's syndrome and (b) other tic disorders.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England's e-Learning for Healthcare has produced modular online learning resources in relation to Tourette's syndrome and other tic disorders, within its neurodevelopmental disorder and healthy schools programme domains, which are freely accessible to all, including service providers.

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health and social care, including Tourette's syndrome. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality. In all areas, the amount of NIHR funding depends on the volume and quality of scientific activity.

The NIHR has funded a number of research projects on Tourette's syndrome. For example, it has funded the Online Remote Behavioural Treatment for Tics study to evaluate online behavioural interventions for children with tics and Tourette's syndrome. Researchers at the NIHR Great Ormond Street Biomedical Research Centre are also supporting the TIC Genetics programme, which aims to identify the genetic factors that cause Tourette's syndrome using a family-based approach.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has produced guidance on suspected neurological conditions, which includes recommendations on treatment for tics and involuntary movements in adults and children. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng127/>

HOME OFFICE

■ Football: Crimes of Violence

Jim Shannon:

[8138]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with police forces on tackling violence at football games.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing violence and disorder at football matches and tournaments in England, Wales and overseas. Policing is devolved in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Government funds the UK Football Policing Unit (UKFPU), a unit designed to reduce violence, antisocial behaviour and disorder at football events involving UK football teams. The UKFPU undertakes various statutory and operational national policing functions, including maintaining oversight of the football banning order regime, working with overseas policing counterparts and coordinating policing deployment at international matches, and coordinating policing's football disorder strategy.

The Home Office works closely with the UKFPU, the National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Football Policing and other police stakeholders to ensure the police are supported to tackle football-related violence and disorder.

■ Home Office: Art Works and Cultural Heritage

Nick Timothy:

[8515]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to decolonise the (a) artwork and (b) heritage assets in her Department; and what guidance she issues to her Department's Arm's Length Bodies on decolonisation.

Dame Diana Johnson:

While the Hon. Gentlemen is welcome to put forward his proposals on this matter, our immediate priorities remain the protection of national security, the restoration of neighbourhood policing, tackling the smuggling gangs responsible for small boat crossings, and clearing up the chaos left by the previous government.

■ Knives: Crime

Dr Luke Evans:

[8227]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what initial steps her Department is taking to progress the Government's objective to halve knife crime in a decade.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Halving knife crime over the next decade is a moral mission for this Government and we are already taking a range of initial steps to realise this ambition.

We implemented the ban on zombie-style knives and zombie-style machetes approved by Parliament in April. It is now illegal to manufacture, supply, sell or possess these dangerous weapons. We will also introduce a ban on Ninja swords as soon as possible. We will be launching a consultation shortly and plan to introduce the legislation afterwards when Parliamentary time allows.

Intervening early to stop young people being drawn into crime is a fundamental part of our approach and that is why we are creating a new Young Futures Programme. It is vital that we have a system to identify and support this cohort who need it most and we will be introducing Local Prevention Partnerships and Young Futures Hubs to help deliver this.

The Prime Minister launched a Coalition to tackle the scourge of knife crime last month. The Coalition will bring together key stakeholders to work with experts to develop an extensive understanding of what causes young people to be dragged into violence.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[8228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with (a) police chiefs, (b) other statutory bodies and (c) third party bodies and community organisations to progress the her Department's objective to halve knife crime in a decade.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The government has launched a coalition to tackle knife crime with campaign groups, charities and victims' families alongside key partners.

The coalition will bring together key stakeholders and work with experts to develop an extensive understanding of what causes young people to be involved in knife crime as well as holding government departments to account for progress in halving knife crime in a decade

■ **Police: Labour Turnover**

Edward Morello:

[\[8625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support (a) recruitment and (b) retention in rural police forces.

Dame Diana Johnson:

It is important that all forces recruit and retain the skills they need. Decisions about police recruitment, including how recruitment and selection processes are run, are a matter for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners and are therefore managed locally by forces.

We recognise the importance of tackling rural crime. We are committed to safeguarding rural communities, with tougher measures to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, strengthened neighbourhood policing, and stronger laws to prevent farm theft and fly tippers.

■ Police: Urban Areas**Rachael Maskell:** [\[8175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to monitor the adequacy of policing in city centres.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Secretary has made a clear commitment to strengthen neighbourhood policing through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, which will include restoring patrols to town centres.

This will also involve the addition of thousands more neighbourhood police personnel, as part of the Government's Safer Streets mission.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing: Construction****Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[8199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Pursuant to the answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 569 on Affordable Housing: Construction, what the evidential basis is that changes to national planning policy introduced in December 2023 were damaging.

Matthew Pennycook:

The supply impact of the last government's approach to planning reform is clear: homes granted planning permission fell to their lowest level in a decade in the last published quarter. The proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework which we have consulted on will reverse the changes made in December 2023 that were disruptive to the sector and detrimental to housing supply.

Mr Lee Dillon: [\[8389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of the homes her Department aims to build during this Parliament will be affordable; and what steps she plans to take to ensure that these homes meet the needs of communities.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and we will update Parliament on our progress. Our proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework aim to ensure that decisions about what to build and where are based on delivering the housing an area needs.

■ Almshouses: Affordable Housing

Manuela Perteghella:

[\[8305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to bring almshouses into the definition of affordable housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

Our consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework sought views on whether changes are needed to the definition of 'affordable housing for rent' to make it easier for organisations that are not Registered Providers, including almshouses, to develop new affordable homes.

The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.

■ Commonhold and Leasehold: Reform

David Simmonds:

[\[8491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has plans for legislation changes on (a) enfranchisement rights, (b) ground rents, (c) default tenure and (d) cladding remediation liability for (i) leasehold and (ii) commonhold ownership.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government intend to act quickly to provide homeowners with greater rights, powers, and protections over their homes by implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024. We will set out details in due course about the extensive programme of secondary legislation need to bring the Act into force.

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

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

■ Community Development: Infrastructure

James Naish:

[\[5432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, last updated on 2 August 2024,

what assessment she has made of the potential merits of applying golden rule b to non-Green Belt land.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Green Belt serves a number of specific national planning purposes, including checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another, and assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

It is precisely because the Government recognises the public value provided by the Green Belt that we believe any major development on land release from it should be subject to golden rules, including providing necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure, to ensure public benefit.

Local development plans should address needs and opportunities in relation to infrastructure and identify what infrastructure is required and how it can be funded and brought forward. This will remain the case irrespective of whether any proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework or wider national planning policy are taken forward.

When preparing a Local Plan, Planning Practice Guidance recommends that local planning authorities use available evidence of infrastructure requirements to prepare an Infrastructure Funding Statement. Such Statements can be used to demonstrate the delivery of infrastructure throughout the plan-period.

Additionally, the Government provides financial support through the £1.5 billion Brownfield, Infrastructure and Land fund which will boost local areas by transforming disused sites and investing in vital infrastructure to help create vibrant communities for people to live and work, while also protecting green spaces.

■ **Derelict Land**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[8197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 565 on Derelict Land, whether grey belt will become a formal designation.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government set out its proposed approach to grey belt in its consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework. The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.

■ Devolution

Jim Shannon:

[\[8447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to increase cross-government collaboration with the devolved Administrations.

Jim McMahon:

The Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State made clear the importance of resetting her department's relationship with devolved governments so that we are increasing collaboration on shared opportunities and challenges.

The Deputy Prime Minister has held productive meetings with First Ministers and Deputy First Ministers across the UK, and look forward to continuing positive engagement in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Ministers are also working actively with counterparts in the devolved governments, with recent meetings on housing and the Grenfell announcement.

■ Elections: Veterans

Adam Jogee:

[\[8564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has had recent discussions with the Electoral Commission on the use of photo ID issued by the Ministry of Defence by veterans when voting in elections.

Alex Norris:

On the 15th of October the government laid the statutory instrument required to add the Veteran Card to the list of photographic identifications accepted in polling stations as voter ID, thereby fulfilling a key manifesto commitment.

The Ministry consulted with the Electoral Commission on this statutory instrument in August this year – the Commission supported the amendments proposed.

■ Electoral Register

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[8194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to improve voter registration.

Alex Norris:

Pursuant to the answer to Question UIN [5627](#) on 9 October 2024, Government is committed to improving electoral registration. We are exploring a wide range of options to deliver on this commitment, including using data and online services with any potential changes based on robust evidence and user research.

■ Environment Protection

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 26 July 2024, to Question 1315 on Environment Protection, when the new framework of Environmental Outcomes Reports will be introduced.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [1315](#) on 26 July 2024.

■ Homelessness

Amanda Martin: [\[8375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential merits of establishing a cross-departmental programme led by the Cabinet Office to (a) develop a long-term strategy and (b) ensure funding for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

Rushanara Ali:

The Deputy Prime Minister is leading cross-government work to deliver the long-term solutions we need to get us back on track to ending homelessness. This includes chairing a dedicated Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG), bringing together ministers from across government to develop a long-term strategy.

The Government is working at pace to deliver these new initiatives. The Government's spending plans will be set out at the next Spending Review.

■ Homelessness: Men

Oliver Ryan: [\[8548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities, published on 22 February 2018, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the guidance on (a) priority need and (b) emergency accommodation provision for single men who (i) do not fit the priority categories and (ii) are rough sleeping.

Rushanara Ali:

Homelessness legislation and guidance makes clear people who are vulnerable have priority need. This includes a duty to provide the household with temporary accommodation until settled accommodation is secured.

Homelessness levels are far too high. We are determined to tackle this and will develop a new cross government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country, to get us back on track to ending homelessness once and for all.

■ Housing: Carbon Emissions**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[8459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the Building Regulations Act 2010 to introduce mandatory reporting on embodied carbon emissions for projects (a) with a gross internal area of 1000m² or more and (b) that create more than 10 dwellings to help meet the UK's climate change commitments.

Rushanara Ali:

Reducing embodied carbon emissions from the built environment is a key part of meeting the country's net zero targets. These emissions predominantly come from the supply chains leading to new buildings, and there is work across government to decarbonise those supply chains. The Building Regulations are one of several mechanisms that could be used to encourage reporting of embodied carbon in construction, and my department is currently considering the role they might play.

■ Housing: Construction**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[8192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to take steps to support self and custom build housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

The recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework included changes designed to strengthen support for self and custom build housing by means of encouraging mixed tenure development and strengthening the small sites policy.

The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:[\[8198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 556 on Housing: Construction, when her Department plans to make changes to nutrient neutrality rules.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [556](#) on 26 July 2024.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:[\[8207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 25 July 2024, to Question 1010, on Housing: Northstowe, if she will set out the remit of the accelerator taskforce.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:[\[8208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Pursuant to the answer of 25 July 2024, to Question 1010 on Housing: Northstowe, what the site specific reasons that the project was stalled are.

Matthew Pennycook:

The New Homes Accelerator, in partnership with Homes England, will support the delivery of Phase 2 of the Northstowe scheme in Cambridgeshire, unlocking 3,000 homes and continuing to progress proposals to unlock a further 2,600 homes in Phase 3.

As a result of issues relating to the planning process and delivery partners, Homes England will be taking a stronger leadership and delivery role to make sure that the quality of delivery matches the aspirations of the local community. This phase will include putting the new town centre in place. Homes England is entering into a new partnership agreement with the private sector to support delivery of the next stage of the scheme. The department will also provide enhanced planning capacity support.

The department will also provide enhanced planning capacity support, through an in-house team consisting of senior multi-disciplinary built environment professionals.

David Simmonds:[\[8248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's guidance entitled New Homes Accelerator programme, published on 29 August 2024, whether her Department has a planned timetable on when 300,000 new homes could be delivered.

Matthew Pennycook:

The New Homes Accelerator was first announced by the Chancellor on 8 July 2024 and is a key component of the government's commitment to deliver 1.5 million new homes by the end of this parliament. We are already working on sites in Liverpool Central Docks, Worcestershire Parkway, Northstowe, Langley Sutton Coldfield, Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community, Stretton Hall, and Biggleswade Garden Community, representing more than 28,000 homes.

A call for additional sites, launched on 29 August and closing on 31 October 2024, invites developers, local authorities and landowners to identify large-scale housing developments that are delayed or stuck so that we can better understand the scale of the challenge and evaluate what support might be provided.

■ Housing: Health**Dr Beccy Cooper:**[\[8602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of (a) newbuild housing quality and (b) housing prices on health outcomes for residents.

Matthew Pennycook:

Building Regulations set standards for the design and construction of buildings to ensure the safety and health of people in or about those buildings. The impacts of these standards are assessed when changes are made to individual parts of the Building Regulations and Approved Documents.

■ **Incinerators: Portland**

Edward Morello: [\[8613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Portland Incinerator on local infrastructure in West Dorset constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

The full reasons for the decision to grant the permission in question are set out in the published decision letter and Inspector's Report. The Inspector's Report provides a complete list of the evidence which was before the Inquiry. Having issued this decision, the Secretary of State has no further jurisdiction in the matter, and it would not be appropriate to comment further.

■ **Infrastructure**

Ben Goldsborough: [\[8358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if her Department will publish the findings of Lord Banner KC's review of national infrastructure projects.

Matthew Pennycook:

We intend to publish the review in question in due course.

■ **Levelling Up Fund**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024, to Question 1748, on Levelling Up Fund, if she will publish the details of where agreements are in place.

Alex Norris:

Details of all projects awarded funding through the Levelling Up Fund have been published on gov.uk.

The Chancellor's July 'Public Spending: Inheritance' speech forecasted an overspend of £21.9 billion above limits set by the Treasury in the Spring. We understand that will have caused uncertainty about the status of some projects and the challenge that presents locally. We must, however, ensure that we are making responsible decisions on public spending. Decisions that have fallen on this government to take. In this context, the Chancellor has set out a path to confirming plans for this year and next at the forthcoming Budget on October 30th.

■ Local Government Finance

Antonia Bance: [\[8511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the (a) equality of and (b) potential impact on councils in low income areas of the funding formula for local government; and whether she has plans to reform that formula.

Jim McMahon:

This Government is committed to fixing the foundations by reforming and rebuilding local government.

We will work hand-in-hand with councils by moving towards multi-year funding settlements and ending competitive bidding processes.

Over the coming months, we want to hear from local councils about the financial challenges they face and about improvements we can make to ensure the system works in support of local areas, not against them.

■ Local Plans

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 29 July 2024 to Question 814 on Local Government: Devolution, what role the Council of Nations and Regions will have in the development of local growth plans.

Jim McMahon:

The Council of Nations and Regions will facilitate partnership working between the UK Government, Devolved Governments, the Mayor of London, and Mayors of Combined Authorities and Combined County Authorities. It will focus on the delivery of public services and shared missions, including growth.

■ Planning Authorities: Staff

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 25 July 2024 to Question 1007 on Planning Authorities: Staff, how the 300 planners her Department plans to hire over the next five years will be funded.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Pursuant to the answer of 25 July 2024, to Question 1007, on Planning Authorities: Staff, whether the 300 planning officers will be recruited in addition to the Planning Capability and Capacity programme.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[8206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2024, to Question 1007 on Planning Authorities: Staff, what budget is being used to fund the additional 300 planning officers.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Department continues to assess options for delivering 300 additional planning officers to ensure their recruitment supports the quality of local planning services, proposed reforms to the system, housebuilding priorities and our manifesto commitments. The recruitment will be overseen by the Department's dedicated Planning Capacity and Capability team under the Chief Planner in MHCLG, in addition to its wider work to support local planning authorities.

This work includes funding the recruitment of new graduates into local planning authorities across England, and their professional training, through Pathways to Planning; as well as the national roll out of the Public Practice associate programme, which brings mid-career professionals into local authority employment to fill skill gaps in areas such as urban design.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Standards**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[8189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans her Department has to ensure that a regulatory impact assessment for the Renters' Rights Bill will include an assessment of that Bill's (a) cumulative potential impact on and (b) potential interaction with the (i) changes to Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for the private renter sector announced on 23 September 2024 and (ii) technical detail of the Decent Homes Standard for the private rented sector.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government submitted the Impact Assessment for the Renters' Rights Bill on 16 September 2024 to the Regulatory Policy Committee and we will publish it in due course. The Government has announced its intention to publish a consultation on increasing minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector by the end of the year. Measures to set a decent home standard in the Private Rented Sector are included in the Renters' Rights Bill and we have made clear we intend to consult on this. The impacts for private landlords will be considered in the respective Impact Assessments.

■ **Rivers: Environment Protection**

Liz Jarvis:

[\[8263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of including enhanced protection of chalk streams in planning reforms.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to securing better environmental outcomes alongside meeting development needs. We are considering how best to reform environmental assessment processes with that objective in mind, including whether to utilise powers in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act to introduce Environmental Outcomes Reports. Those powers make specific reference to chalk streams in the context of the environmental outcomes to be taken into account.

■ **Roads: West Dorset****Edward Morello:**[\[8620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of a new waste incinerator in Portland on (a) levels of traffic and (b) infrastructure in West Dorset constituency.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN 8613 answered on 18 October 2024.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Construction****Manuela Perteghella:**[\[8302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to introduce a national minimum requirement for developers to build social rent homes as part of medium and large developments.

Matthew Pennycook:

The government is committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and we recently consulted on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework to support this objective. Specifically, the consultation proposed setting an expectation that local housing needs assessments explicitly consider the needs of those requiring Social Rent, and that local planning authorities specify their expectations on Social Rent delivery as part of broader affordable housing policies.

The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year. We have also committed to strengthening the existing developer contributions system and further details will be set out in due course.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Rural Areas****Edward Morello:**[\[8614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department is taking to ensure there is adequacy supply of social housing in West Dorset constituency.

Edward Morello: [\[8615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of high property prices on the availability of social housing in rural constituencies.

Edward Morello: [\[8616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department is providing support to local authorities in rural areas where demand for social housing exceeds supply.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. Details of future government investment will be brought forward at the Spending Review. In addition, our recent consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework sought views on the best approach for supporting affordable housing developments within rural areas. The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses with a view to publishing a government response before the end of the year.

■ Social Services: Finance

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether (a) it remains her Department's policy to retain the social care precept on council tax and (b) past social care precepts will continue to be ring-fenced; and what plans she has to increase the threshold above which a council tax referendum must be held.

Jim McMahon:

The Government is committed to keeping taxes on working people as low as possible. Future decisions on council tax will be taken at the spending review in which we are fully engaged.

■ Supported Housing

Amanda Martin: [\[8376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps has she taken to ensure that the drive to build new social housing will include (a) an assessment of how much additional supported housing is required and (b) provision to deliver the correct level of supported housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. We will bring forward details of future investment at the Spending Review.

Minister Ali set out on 10 September that the Government will publish shortly additional research on the supply and demand for supported housing. We will set out our plans for supported housing in due course.

■ Veterans: Housing

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[8191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) estimate her Department has made of the cost of and (b) her Department's planned timetable is for providing homes to all veterans; and what are the metrics by which it will be assessed.

Matthew Pennycook:

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to Question UIN [6842](#) answered on 9 October 2024.

JUSTICE

■ Crown Court: Finance

Mark Ferguson: [\[8507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department takes to determine the level of funding required to facilitate an adequate number of crown court sitting days in each financial year.

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.

■ Crown Court: Kent

Tristan Osborne: [\[8581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to increase Crown Court capacity in Kent.

Heidi Alexander:

The Crown Court outstanding caseload remains one of the biggest challenges facing the Criminal Justice System. The caseload has risen in recent years as a result of the pandemic and an increase in cases coming before the criminal courts.

To address this, we plan to sit 106,500 working days at the Crown Court this financial year and continue to keep 18 Nightingale courtrooms open for 2024/25. Alongside this, we consistently invest in the recruitment of c.1000 judges and tribunal members annually and are also considering further measures to speed up justice.

HMCTS receives a specified level of funding each year to operate the courts and tribunals. This level of funding is agreed by the Lord Chancellor and Lady Chief Justice via the Concordat process. Sitting days are subsequently allocated to regions and local courts.

In 2024/25, Maidstone Crown Court is scheduled to sit at its maximum capacity in line with the number of judges and courtrooms it has available. We continue to explore the prospect of increasing the number of courtrooms available at the Court.

Canterbury sits below capacity, but this reflects the improving performance picture at the court.

■ **Dangerous Driving: Life Imprisonment**

James Wild:

[8681]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders have received a life sentence for causing death by dangerous driving.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Sentencing outcomes at court for offenders prosecuted for the offence of causing death by dangerous driving and other offences can be obtained through published data: [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2023](#).

Provisions in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 increased the maximum penalty from 14 years' imprisonment to life for the offences of causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs, and causing death by dangerous driving. These measures came into force on 28 June 2022 and apply to offences committed on or after that date.

The Sentencing Council has reflected these changes in the sentencing guidelines and the starting point for cases falling into the highest level of seriousness is now 12 years' imprisonment, a significant increase from the previous 8 years' starting point. The sentence range for the most serious instances is now 8 to 18 years' imprisonment.

Although the starting points and sentence ranges for this offence have increased, the courts still retain the discretion to sentence outside of this range and impose a life sentence where the seriousness of the offence is such that they consider it more appropriate.

We continue to work alongside the Department for Transport to ensure sentencing law for driving offences is appropriate.

■ Evictions: Barking**Nesil Caliskan:** [\[8349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many households in Barking constituency have faced eviction proceedings since April 2019.

Heidi Alexander:

The Ministry of Justice only holds data on possession proceedings issued at court. We do not hold data on all eviction proceedings, such as those where a tenant leaves the property voluntarily following receipt of a notice.

Statistics on the number of possession claims are published here: [Mortgage and landlord possession statistics: April to June 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Data is published covering the period to June 2024.

The Ministry of Justice does not publish statistics by constituency area. They are published by Local Authority areas. For the period that we have published data, the Local Authority that covers the Barking constituency is the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

■ Life Imprisonment**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[8354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were serving life sentences for second listed offences in prisons in England and Wales on 30 June 2024.

Ben Goldsborough: [\[8355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people serving life sentences for second listed offences in prisons in England and Wales on 30 June 2024 were sentenced (a) on or before 9 November 2000, (b) between 9 November 2000 and 4 April 2005 and (c) after 4 April 2005.

Ben Goldsborough: [\[8356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people serving life sentences for second listed offences in prisons in England and Wales on 30 June 2024 (a) were serving a recall and (b) have never been released.

Ben Goldsborough: [\[8357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the minimum tariff lengths were for people serving life sentences for second listed offences in prisons in England and Wales on 30 June 2024 who were sentenced (a) on or before 9 November 2000, (b) between 9 November 2000 and 4 April 2005 and (c) after 4 April 2005.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Information that would enable us to answer this question robustly is not collated centrally and to obtain it would involve a manual interrogation of courts and prison records which would result in a disproportionate cost to the Department.

■ Ministry of Justice: Written Questions

Edward Argar: [\[8148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what percentage of her Department's (a) ordinary and (b) named day written parliamentary questions were answered within the required timeframes between 12 July and 12 September 2024.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Ministry of Justice attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of Written Parliamentary Questions (PQs) and the Department remains committed to providing the highest level of service.

During the period requested, the Ministry of Justice answered 207 Written PQs. Including both Commons and Lords Ordinary Written PQs, 96% were answered within the required timeframes in this period. 91% of Named Day Written PQs were answered within the required timeframes in this period.

Please note that these figures have been pulled from the Ministry of Justice's internal data and may not be a fully accurate representation of the Department's timeliness.

■ Prison Officers

Jim Shannon: [\[8137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of prison workforce numbers.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We know that sufficient and skilled frontline staffing is fundamental to delivering safe, secure, and rehabilitative prison regimes. In England and Wales, we are currently above our target staffing levels for prison officers, although challenges remain in some sites with higher numbers of vacancies. Recruitment efforts will continue at all sites with a current or projected future need, and we have a number of targeted recruitment interventions that can be deployed where needed. Where establishments feel that their staffing levels will affect stability or regime, we look to provide short-term tactical support.

HMPPS has also commissioned a workforce delivery project to refresh the current staffing model for prisons, and to help improve our analysis of resource allocation across the system, so we are better able to prioritise our staff resources to improve delivery.

■ Prisoners' Release

Edward Argar: [\[8143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have been released in error under her Department's early release scheme since 10 September 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

All of the 37 people released in error because of being incorrectly sentenced for breaching restraining orders under outdated legislation are now back in custody.

Data on releases in error since 10 September 2024 forms a subset of data intended for future publication.

Edward Argar: [8144]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have been released with 40% of sentence served under her Department's early release scheme since 10 September 2024.

Edward Argar: [8146]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of the prisoners released at the 40 percent of sentence point under her SDS40 early release scheme, have subsequently been accused of committing a further offence since 20 September 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

On 25 July, the Lord Chancellor announced that around 5,500 offenders will be released, in two tranches, in September and October. Further detail is set out in the Impact Assessment.

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

Edward Argar: [8145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisoners released at 40% of sentence point under her Department's early release scheme have been recalled to prison since 10 September 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data on SDS40 releases, including number of recalls, forms a subset of data intended for future publication.

Prisoners' Release: Families**Mr Richard Holden:** [9034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the new Early Release Scheme on the families of those released.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government was forced to introduce SDS40 to avoid the collapse of the criminal justice system. At the point when SDS40 came into effect on 10 September, the use of End of Custody Supervised Licence came to an end. In designing the SDS40 measure, we took every possible step to communicate with victims about the change and the impact it could have. We also put in measures to mitigate risk including an 8-week implementation period, clear offence exclusions, and a huge amount of collaboration with partners across the Criminal Justice System.

We considered the impact of SDS40 on the families of those released in our Impact Assessment highlighting how it may help resettlement and rehabilitation of eligible offenders, as earlier release into the community will mean they will be able to support themselves and their families earlier in their sentence.

■ Prisoners' Release: Housing

Edward Argar: [\[8147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of the total numbers of prisoners released early under the SDS40 release scheme have not had accommodation to go to on day of release since 10 September 2024.

Edward Argar: [\[8149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to her oral contribution on 10 September 2024, Official Report, column 690, whether probation directors have contracted hotel accommodation for prisoners released under the SDS40 scheme since 10 September 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

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

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice confirmed to the House on 10 September that Probation Directors could arrange for the temporary use of hotels, where required, and I can confirm that in a small number of cases hotels have been used.

■ Prisoners: Special Educational Needs

Clive Lewis: [\[8662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if her Department will publish data on how many and what proportion of young people in prison in Norfolk had special educational needs and disabilities in (a) 2022-23, (b) 2021-22, (c) the last five years and (d) the last ten years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data relating to special educational needs and disabilities are not collected in a format that would enable the specified information to be provided.

■ Prisons: Food and Prescription Drugs

Carla Denyer: [\[8297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what mechanisms are in place to ensure that prisoners are (a) being routinely provided with meals that meet the recommended daily allowance calorie intake and (b) receiving prescribed medication on time.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

All establishments are required to ensure prisoners receive three nutritionally balanced meals a day as set out in PSI 44/2010 Catering - Meals for Prisoners:

[Prisoner meals: PSI 44/2010 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). These must meet the religious, cultural, and medical needs of all prisoners.

All health treatment in custody is the responsibility of NHS England and NHS Wales. NHS services are commissioned on the basis of equivalence with those received in the community by the general public. His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service is committed to ensuring that people in prison are able to access NHS commissioned services in custody in a timely manner. Should any issues arise, established governance arrangements provide the means for Governors, NHS Health and Justice Commissioners (England) or Local Health Boards (Wales) and providers to address concerns about local healthcare delivery.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Animal Experiments

Alex Mayer: [\[8711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to set a target date for the long-term replacement of animal experiments in medical research with human-specific technologies.

Feryal Clark:

The manifesto commits us to partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing, and we are currently engaging with the sector as to how to take this commitment forward. Any policy changes as a result of this work will be assessed appropriately.

It is not yet possible to replace all animal use due to the complexity of biological systems and regulatory requirements. Any work to phase out animal testing must be science-led, in lock step with partners, so we will not be setting arbitrary timelines for reducing their use.

■ Bioengineering

Andrew Griffith: [\[8254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to publish a new National Vision for Engineering Biology.

Feryal Clark:

DSIT has not announced any intention to publish a new National Vision for Engineering Biology.

■ Broadband: East of England

Alex Mayer: [\[8718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what information her Department has on the number of miles of (a) copper wire and (b) fibre in the internet

network in (i) Central Bedfordshire and (ii) the East of England; and how many miles of existing copper wire are planned to be replaced by fibre by the end of 2024.

Chris Bryant:

The Department does not hold this information. Openreach's annual review for 2023-24 provides some information for the largest wholesale broadband and network provider, though this does not reflect the market as a whole and does not provide regional breakdowns. This report estimates that delivering broadband across the UK involves more than 250 million kilometres of fibre optic cable and copper wire. This is available via: <https://www.openreach.com/about/our-company/annual-review-and-reports>

■ **Broadband: Infrastructure**

Cat Eccles:

[9050]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he (a) is taking and (b) plans to take steps to (i) require broadband companies to share underground infrastructure and (ii) help reduce disruption to residents ahead of the full fibre rollout.

Chris Bryant:

We want operators to use existing underground ducts and share infrastructure, wherever possible. There are requirements on operators to share apparatus and to use underground lines where practicable; and there are regulations in place to support this.

The Government also published the Street Works Toolkit, which contains practical guidance for telecoms companies and highway authorities who coordinate street works in their area on how to keep disruption to a minimum.

I recently met with broadband operators to ask them to share infrastructure wherever possible, and I have been clear I am prepared to regulate if providers do not take action.

■ **Children: Monmouthshire**

Catherine Fookes:

[8598]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent children in Monmouthshire being exposed to pornography.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to keeping children safe online. Our priority is the effective implementation of the Online Safety Act so that children benefit from its wide-reaching protections.

The Act requires that all in scope services that allow pornography use highly effective age assurance to prevent children from accessing it, including services that host

user-generated content, and services which publish pornography. Ofcom has robust enforcement powers available against companies who fail to fulfil their duties.

■ Cybersecurity

Liam Conlon: [\[8543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help protect people online.

Feryal Clark:

The Government is committed to keeping people safe online. Our priority is the effective implementation of the Online Safety Act so that users, especially children, can benefit from its wide-reaching protections.

In-scope services will have to take effective action to reduce the risk their service is used for illegal activity, and they must take appropriate measures to protect children against harmful or inappropriate content such as pornography and the promotion of self-harm and eating disorders. Ofcom has robust enforcement powers available against companies who fail to fulfil their duties.

■ Data Protection and Digital Information Bill

Andrew Griffith: [\[8500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has met his counterparts in the EU to discuss the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill.

Chris Bryant:

The Secretary of State met with the European Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders on 16 September and 15 October to discuss a new Data Bill and the importance of efficient and safe personal data sharing between our two jurisdictions.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Civil Servants

John Glen: [\[6109\]](#)

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

Feryal Clark:

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 requires that selection to the Civil Service must be on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition. There may be instances where a role may meet the requirements for use of a Civil Service Commission (CSC) exception. The Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) uses these exceptions to draw on scientific and technical expertise and talent, including through the Expert Exchange Programme.

Since 5 July 2024, DSIT has made 34 appointments without open competition. Personal data such as salaries cannot be released under data processing policies.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Departmental Responsibilities

Andrew Griffith: [\[8495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what proportion of his time the Minister of State for Data Protection and Telecoms dedicates to his ministerial role within his Department.

Chris Bryant:
Half.

■ Government Departments: Digital Technology

Jim Shannon: [\[8445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to increase the use of digital technologies across Government; and what steps he plans to take to improve the training for such technologies.

Feryal Clark:

We are fully committed to the goal of driving a modern digital government and harnessing data and technology to help deliver the government's five missions.

To achieve this goal, this government is creating a new digital centre of government within DSIT, bringing together several expert teams. The new digital centre of government will champion digital and data across government, accelerating the use of digital technologies in order to deliver a modern digital government that gives citizens a better experience. This modern digital government will also build on existing programmes such as the Digital Excellence Programme and Tech Track to recruit, develop and retain digital talent across government.

■ Government Departments: Telecommunications

Andrew Griffith: [\[8503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the use of ISDN phone lines across Government.

Chris Bryant:
No.

■ Information Commission

Andrew Griffith: [\[8499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with the Information Commissioner's Office on the future development of an Information Commission.

Chris Bryant:

The Secretary of State for the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) has been in contact with the Information Commissioner regarding the future development of the Information Commission. They met on 30 July and discussed the Digital Information and Smart Data Bill announced in the King's Speech, and its implications for the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Internet: South Basildon and East Thurrock**James McMurdock:**[\[9096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to help improve internet connections in the South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

Chris Bryant:

According to the independent website ThinkBroadband.com, over 98% of premises in the South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency have access to superfast broadband speeds (≥ 30 Mbps) and over 90% can access a gigabit-capable (>1000 Mbps) connection.

Remaining premises that are not expected to receive a gigabit-capable connection through suppliers' commercial rollout are being considered for support through Project Gigabit. Under a cross-regional framework agreement with Openreach, we plan to procure a contract to deliver fast, reliable broadband to eligible premises in the area.

Life Sciences**Clive Jones:**[\[7087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to support the life science industry in (a) Berkshire and (b) the UK.

Feryal Clark:

The government has supported Lonza's plans to relocate and expand their Centre of Excellence for biologic molecules to Thames Valley Park, Berkshire. More broadly the government has published [Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy](#) to drive long-term sustainable, inclusive and secure growth – securing investment into crucial sectors of the economy including life sciences. By ensuring the NHS works hand-in-hand with life sciences companies and research institutions, we will drive the development of new treatments and help grow our industries across every region of the UK.

Mobile Phones: Bromsgrove**Bradley Thomas:**[\[8353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of mobile phone coverage for cellular calls in Bromsgrove constituency.

Chris Bryant:

It's inadequate, but the government wants all areas of the UK to benefit from mobile connectivity.

Ofcom's recent reporting shows that 98% of Bromsgrove has 4G geographic coverage from all four mobile operators, and that basic (non-standalone) 5G is available from at least one mobile operator outside nearly 100% of premises.

I am aware that Ofcom's data does not always reflect consumers' experience of mobile networks. I recently wrote to Ofcom, asking them to set out steps to improve their reporting.

Our ambition is for all populated areas to have high-quality standalone 5G by 2030. We are committed to ensuring we have the right policy and regulatory framework to support investment and competition.

■ Pornography: Lowestoft**Jess Asato:**[\[8338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the harmful effects of pornography in Lowestoft constituency.

Feryal Clark:

Under the Online Safety Act, platforms must proactively tackle the most harmful illegal content including extreme pornography, much of which disproportionately affects women and girls. The Act requires services in scope to understand risks from illegal content online and take mitigating action.

Separate to provisions in the Online Safety Act, the Independent Pornography Review, led by Independent Lead Reviewer Baroness Gabby Bertin will explore the effectiveness of regulation, legislation and the law enforcement response to pornography. The government expects the Review to present its final report by the end of the year.

Jess Asato:[\[8339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent children in Lowestoft constituency being exposed to pornography.

Feryal Clark:

Under the Online Safety Act platforms must proactively tackle the most harmful illegal content including extreme pornography, much of which disproportionately affects women and girls. The Act requires services in scope to understand risks from illegal content online and take mitigating action.

Separate to provisions in the Online Safety Act, the Independent Pornography Review, led by Independent Lead Reviewer Baroness Gabby Bertin will explore the effectiveness of regulation, legislation and the law enforcement response to

pornography. The government expects the Review to present its final report by the end of the year.

■ Project Gigabit: Finance

Sir John Whittingdale: [\[8094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much and what proportion of funding for Project Gigabit has yet to be (a) allocated and (b) spent.

Sir John Whittingdale: [\[8095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much and what proportion of the remaining budget for Project Gigabit has been allocated to rural areas.

Sir John Whittingdale: [\[8096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what proportion of the remaining budget of Project Gigabit will be assigned to urban areas.

Chris Bryant:

Almost £2 billion of Project Gigabit contracts are in place, with a further £750 million allocated in live and planned procurements.

Project Gigabit spend is reported in Building Digital UK's (BDUK) annual report and accounts. Total capital Project Gigabit spend in 2021/22 and 2022/23 was £90.9 million. Spend for 2023/24 will be published in BDUK's next annual report and accounts.

The purpose of Project Gigabit is to fund the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband to UK premises that would otherwise not be reached by suppliers' commercial plans. Most of these will be in rural locations, but to achieve full gigabit coverage, and consistent with the programme's original design, we will also need to address any pockets of poor connectivity in urban areas, removing barriers to efficient build plans and allocating funding where it is needed.

■ Project Gigabit: Rural Areas

Blake Stephenson: [\[8523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make it his policy to ringfence Project Gigabit funding for rural areas.

Chris Bryant:

No. Project Gigabit is designed to subsidise the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband to premises that would otherwise not be reached by suppliers' commercial plans.

These premises will predominantly be in rural areas, but the evidence from our regular engagement with the market indicates that we will also need to intervene in some urban areas in order to achieve the target of full gigabit coverage by 2030.

■ Quantum Technology: Regulation

Andrew Griffith:

[\[8255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has met with the National Quantum Technologies Programme Strategic Advisory Board to discuss how to reduce the potential impact of regulation on the levels of innovation in the quantum sector.

Feryal Clark:

The Department of Science and Innovation and Technology regularly consults the National Quantum Technologies Programme Strategic Advisory Board (SAB) on all aspects of the National Quantum Strategy, including regulation.

SAB members have advised on and inputted into the government response to the Regulatory Horizons Council (RHC) report on quantum regulation.

Officials in my department have also consulted with a wide range of industry representatives from the quantum sector ahead of publication to ensure that the government's regulatory strategy enables innovation in quantum.

Andrew Griffith:

[\[8492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the response made to recommendation 5 in his Department's policy paper entitled Regulating quantum technology applications: government response to recommendations made by the Regulatory Horizons Council, published on 8 October 2024, what other classes of pro-innovation regulatory tools he has identified.

Feryal Clark:

The government response to the Regulatory Horizons Council review outlines a phased and proportionate approach towards quantum regulation in order to support the responsible development of the sector. This includes:

- Influencing industry-led standards and international governance frameworks
- Convening a Quantum Regulators Forum to increase the understanding of the opportunities and risks of quantum technologies
- Supporting the development of Responsible Innovation principles through industry-led initiatives such as the Responsible Quantum Industry Forum.

The government will make announcements about other classes of pro-innovation regulatory tools as appropriate.

More broadly, the Regulatory Innovation Office will play a key role in supporting regulators to develop the capability they need to enable innovation and ensuring different regulatory bodies can work together effectively.

■ Robots: Investment**Mark Swards:** [\[8561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department has made an (a) estimate of the potential private sector investment in (i) autonomous delivery robots and (ii) other autonomous technologies by 2030 and (b) assessment of the potential implications of such investment for the Government's economic growth agenda.

Feryal Clark:

A 2021 BEIS report estimated the total economic impact of robotics and autonomous systems uptake across a range of selected sectors (logistics, agriculture, food & drink, construction, energy, infrastructure and health; and excluding manufacturing) to be worth £6.4 billion by 2035 on current adoption trends, and £150 billion under full automation. The department has not undertaken a formal assessment of private sector investment estimates by 2030 in autonomous technologies, including delivery robots.

■ Science and Innovation: China**Andrew Griffith:** [\[8257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in China.

Feryal Clark:

Since taking office, I have been in contact and exchanged views on the UK-China Science and Technology relationship with Minister Yin Hejun, my counterpart in China's Ministry of Science and Technology.

TRANSPORT**■ Bus Services: South Basildon and East Thurrock****James McMurdock:** [\[9091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to improve bus services in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency.

Simon Lightwood:

Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities. As announced in the King's Speech on 17 July 2024, the government will introduce a Buses Bill later this parliamentary session, which will put decision-making into the hands of local leaders across England, including in South Basildon and East Thurrock. 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.

■ Buses and Large Goods Vehicles: Carbon Emissions

Alex Mayer:

[\[8554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of extending the zero emission vehicle mandate to include (a) trucks and (b) buses.

Lilian Greenwood:

To meet net zero, both the HGV and bus sectors will need to decarbonise. The Government has not made a detailed assessment of the merits or feasibility of extending the zero emission vehicle mandate.

■ Cycling: Commuters

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[8289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what percentage of people choose cycling as a mode of transport for commuting to work in (a) England, (b) the borough of Ealing and (c) Ealing Southall constituency.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department holds information on the proportion of people in employment using a bicycle as their usual mode to commute to work by region of residence.

In 2022, 3.6% of people in employment living in England used a bicycle as their usual mode to commute to work. For those in employment who live in one of the Outer London boroughs 3.1% of people used a bicycle as their usual mode to commute to work.

The department does not hold equivalent estimates for individual boroughs or constituencies.

■ Driving Tests: Recruitment

Mark Swards:

[\[8558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help recruit more driving examiners to tackle the backlog of outstanding practical tests.

Lilian Greenwood:

In response to increased demand for car practical driving tests, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has reviewed its recruitment process and increased its recruitment effort to bring in 450 new driving examiners over the next 12 months.

As part of this, DVSA has already recruited and is training 250 new examiners this year, and is working to recruit and train another 200, focusing on areas where the demand is highest.

■ Electric Scooters: Basildon**James McMurdock:** [\[9095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the trial of e-scooters in Basildon.

Simon Lightwood:

The national evaluation of the e-scooter trials was published in 2022 and was a comprehensive review of the e-scooter trials. The Essex trial was one of the 10 trials selected for the user and resident survey.

■ Electric Scooters: Hire Services**Mike Reader:** [\[8391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her planned timetable is for determining whether to bring forward legislative proposals to make e-scooter rental trials permanent.

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 what legislative changes may be required in future.

■ Electric Vehicles: Sales**Jim Shannon:** [\[8141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of trends in the number of sales of electric vehicles in the last 12 months.

Lilian Greenwood:

The total number of EVs registered in the UK continues to increase, amidst a growing overall market. Just under 270,000 battery electric cars have been sold so far this year, according to industry statistics, 13% higher than the number sold this time last year. The battery electric vehicle share of the new car market in the year to date is 17.8%, and in the month of September 2024 this was 20.5% - a record high.

■ Electric Vehicles: South Basildon and East Thurrock**James McMurdock:** [\[9088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many EV charging points there are in South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency; and what estimate her Department has made of the potential demand for the future installation of such charging points.

Lilian Greenwood:

Data on electric vehicle charging devices in the UK, held by the Department for Transport (DfT), are sourced from those installed or funded under Government approved grant schemes and from the electric vehicle charging platform Zapmap. The latest data available for the South Basildon and East Thurrock parliamentary constituency is at 1 July 2024, and reflects the constituency boundary at that point. This shows there were 15 public charging devices and that the Government has

historically supported installation of 401 residential chargepoints, plus 41 workplace charging sockets. DfT does not collect data on private household charging except when installed or funded under a Government grant, therefore the true number of charging devices may be higher than recorded in these figures.

To support the electric vehicle transition more charging infrastructure will be needed across the country. The exact number in a location will depend on a variety of factors such as availability of off-street parking, future charging behaviour and local driving patterns.

South Basildon and East Thurrock constituency is part of Thurrock Council and Essex County Council. Under the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund, Thurrock Council has been allocated £843,000 in capital and resource funding and Essex County Council has been allocated £9,102,000. This will help them work with industry to rollout additional local public chargepoints supporting future demand.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Vans**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[8238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an recent assessment of the potential merits of extending the plug-in grant for vans.

Lilian Greenwood:

The plug-in van grant has been in place since 2012 to help reduce up-front purchase costs, supporting almost 90,000 zero emission vans and heavy goods vehicles across the UK. Plug-in vehicle grants will continue for vans, trucks, motorcycles, taxis and wheelchair accessible vehicles until at least the end of the current financial year.

■ **M25: Repairs and Maintenance**

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[8234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what powers she has to (a) ensure the timely delivery of the M25/A3 works and (b) prevent unnecessary disruption from the works while they are under way.

Lilian Greenwood:

National Highways has public commitment dates for delivery in their Delivery Plan and they are held to account on these dates by the Highways Monitor, Office of Rail and Road. Additionally, through the Department's established governance framework with National Highways, there is regular reporting and meetings with ministers and officials.

National Highways will continue to look at ways of minimising disruption as much as possible.

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas

Rebecca Paul: [\[8914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 October 2024 to Question 5796 on Parking: Pedestrian Areas, if she will set a target date to respond to the consultation entitled Pavement Parking: options for change, which closed in November 2020.

Lilian Greenwood:

We are currently considering the views expressed in the consultation responses. Our plan is to publish a formal response to the consultation, summarising the views received and announcing the Government's next steps for pavement parking policy in due course.

■ Port of Ramsgate

Ms Polly Billington: [\[8532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of reopening Ramsgate Port to international passengers on levels of (a) capacity pressure experienced by (i) the Port of Dover and (ii) other ports in the South East of England and (b) congestion on the M20.

Ms Polly Billington: [\[8533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of reopening Ramsgate Port to international (a) trade and (b) passenger transit on economic growth in (i) South East England, (ii) Kent and (iii) Thanet district.

Ms Polly Billington: [\[8534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of reopening the Ramsgate Port to international (a) trade and (b) passenger transit on job creation in the local economy.

Mike Kane:

New commercially viable freight-only or passenger-carrying services from ports have the potential to contribute positively to local, regional and national economies. The scale of impacts upon the economy and employment, upon other ports and upon congestion on the M20 and other roads, would depend on the nature, capacity and frequency of the service. Such a service could also contribute to national trade resilience overall.

■ Railways: Concessions

Ayoub Khan: [\[8402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of rail ticketing arrangements under which Anytime Singles have been offered for sale at peak times to people with 16-25 railcards.

Simon Lightwood:

I am aware of the recent coverage of a number of prosecutions undertaken by one rail operator. We expect operators to ensure their policy on ticketing is clear and fair for passengers at all times and have instructed an urgent review of the cases in question, with a view to resolving them.

Ticketing has become far too complicated, which is why we plan to simplify it as part of the biggest overhaul of our railways in a generation.

Railways: Stratford-on-Avon**Manuela Perteghella:**[\[8303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she is taking steps with Chiltern Railways to reinstate direct rail travel between London and Stratford-upon-Avon.

Simon Lightwood:

Chiltern's current timetable offers a service between London and Stratford Upon Avon with one change.

Whilst noting that this is not a direct service, timetable decisions are for operators to make, balancing passenger demand, track availability, infrastructure constraints, and operational considerations. With these considerations in place, the operator has no current plans to offer a direct service from London Marylebone.

Road Traffic**Lewis Cocking:**[\[9244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to help tackle congestion on roads.

Lilian Greenwood:

This Government is committed to maintaining and renewing our road network so it can serve all road users, is safe, and tackles congestion. Traffic management on local roads is the responsibility of local traffic authorities who are best placed to understand local needs.

Local traffic authorities are subject to the statutory network management duty which requires them to manage their roads to secure the 'expeditious movement' of all traffic including pedestrians, with a view to reducing congestion, and they have a wide range of tools already available to them to enable this.

Road Works: Public Consultation**Alex Mayer:**[\[8552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to publish the results of the consultation on Street works: fines and lane rental surplus funds.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport consulted earlier in 2024 on reforms to street works fines and the use of surplus lane rental funds. Publication of this response was

delayed due to the general election. We plan to publish the response to this consultation in due course.

■ Roads: Horses

Dr Luke Evans: [\[8881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will introduce a road safety campaign to reinforce the importance of safe driving around horses and their riders.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government's flagship road safety campaign, THINK!, aims to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads.

The THINK! Campaign plays an important role in raising awareness of, and encouraging compliance with, new road safety legislation. This has recently included changes to The Highway Code, which were made on 29 January 2022 and aimed to improve road safety for people walking, cycling and horse riding.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Andrew Rosindell: [\[8777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress she has made on increasing the number of potholes that are repaired in (a) Romford constituency and (b) England.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network. Havering Council is the local highway authority for the Romford constituency, and it is therefore responsible for the maintenance of its local road network. Havering Council has received £333,000 from this Department during 2024/25 to help it carry out its local highway maintenance responsibilities: it is up to the Council to decide how that funding is used. For England as a whole, the Government has a commitment to enable local highway authorities to fix up to a million more potholes a year.

■ Taxis: VAT

Alex Mayer: [\[8707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the adequacy of the level of VAT charged on fares for (a) demand responsive transport and (b) other public transport services that use private hire vehicles with fewer than 10 seats.

Simon Lightwood:

The government has consulted on the potential tax impacts on the sector and its passengers of court judgments on the interpretation of private hire vehicle (PHV) legislation. The consultation considered the VAT treatment of PHVs when used for conventional services and demand responsive transport. The Department for

Transport and HMT are considering the responses to the consultation and will respond in due course.

■ **Transport: Innovation**

Mark Swards: [\[8559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions her Department has had with relevant stakeholders on (a) autonomous delivery robots and (b) other emerging technologies in transport systems.

Lilian Greenwood:

I have attended the Cenex Expo, focused on Net Zero and Connected Automated Mobility. At Cenex I attended a roundtable to discuss next steps for the CAM sector and how to ensure public understanding. I also participated in a demonstration of an Ohmio vehicle. I have also visited Wayve, a UK developer of self-driving technology.

As you will appreciate, the new Government is still in its early stages, and I am carefully considering next steps in this policy area and the stakeholders I should meet to inform those decisions.

TREASURY

■ **Further Education: VAT**

Alex Burghart: [\[8846\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the VAT status is of further education colleges.

James Murray:

Education services supplied by an “eligible body” are exempt from VAT. For VAT purposes, an “eligible body” broadly refers to most regulated, publicly funded, or not-for-profit education providers. This means no VAT is charged on supplies of education made by further education colleges, nor are further education colleges able to recover the VAT they have incurred on their expenditure.

We are ending the VAT exemption for private schools. The government will introduce 20% VAT on education and boarding services provided for a charge from 1 January 2025. This will include education and vocational training provided either at sixth forms attached to private schools or stand-alone private sixth form colleges. However, education and vocational training provided by further education colleges will not be subject to VAT.

■ **Ian Corfield**

John Glen: [\[8122\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will publish the declaration of interests of the International Investment Summit Adviser.

James Murray:

Declarations of interests have been made in the usual way. The Treasury does not comment on individual declarations of interests.

Public Expenditure**John Glen:**[\[8432\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 8 August 2024 to Question HL519 on Public Expenditure, for what reason parts of that speech were redacted; and whether the Permanent Secretary had a role in that redaction.

James Murray:

The speech was redacted to remove political content.

Following the recognition of an administrative error within hours of the Chancellor's speech being uploaded to GOV.UK, HM Treasury swiftly amended the text, and an updated, redacted version was uploaded, having been reviewed by senior officials.

HM Treasury remains committed to full transparency. The department have reviewed and strengthened its procedures within the communications team to avoid such an administrative error being repeated.

WORK AND PENSIONS**Household Support Fund: Government Assistance****Lisa Smart:**[\[8521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to deliver a long-term (a) funding settlement and (b) strategy for local crisis support when the Household Support Fund ends in March 2025.

Alison McGovern:

The Government announced funding to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

As set out by the Chancellor in July, the Government has inherited a number of significant pressures within public spending and took immediate action to reduce spending in-year and set out a clear process to a Budget this autumn and a full Spending Review to follow. The Government will set out its overall fiscal and spending plans then.

Housing Benefit and Universal Credit**Neil Coyle:**[\[8154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much (a) housing benefit and (b) UC equivalent allowance was paid directly to councils in each of the last three years.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The information requested for Universal Credit is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

The information requested for Housing Benefit may be found by using the Detailed Housing Type and the Payment Destination fields in the "Housing Benefit - Data from April 2018" dataset in Stat-Xplore (([Stat-Xplore - Log in \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk)). Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/index.html>. An account is not required to use Stat- Xplore; the 'Guest Login' feature gives instant access to the main functions.

The Department is working towards developing these statistics internally so that we will be in a position to answer similar Parliamentary Questions in the future.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HOME OFFICE

■ Home Office: Civil Servants

John Glen:

[\[6126\]](#)

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 October 2024. The correct answer should have been:

Dame Diana Johnson:

Between 4th July and 4th October 2024, the Home Office made 109 appointments by exception to the Civil Service Commission's published Recruitment Principles.

The legal requirement for appointment to the Civil Service (CS) is for selection to be made on merit based on fair and open competition. Under section 12 of the 2010 Constitutional Reform and Governance Act, the CS Commission has the power to Except a selection from the requirement to appoint on Merit based on a fair and open competition. This must either be justified by the needs of the CS or be necessary to enable the CS to participate in a government employment initiative. Departments must be able to justify why, in any appointment, it has not been possible to select someone on merit through a fair and open competition.

The Civil Service Recruitment Principles set out the circumstances in which appointments can be made as Exceptions to Fair and Open Merit based appointments.

The roles appointed to during the period requested were grades AA to Grade 7. The following Exceptions were used:

- Exception 1 – Temporary appointments
- Exception 2: Support for government employment programmes
- Exception 3: Secondments
- Exception 5: Former civil servants
- Exception 10: Conversion to permanency of suitable candidates appointed under Exceptions 1 and 2

Summary of salary bands by grade and number of appointments.

GRADE	NUMBER	PAY BAND
Intern	17	£22,446

GRADE	NUMBER	PAY BAND
AA	23	£22,180 (N), £26,180 (L)
AO	39	£24,800 (N), £28,880 (L)
PO3	9	£24,800 (N), £28,880 (L)
EO	17	£28,000 (N), £32,000 (L)
HEO	1	£34,350 (N), £38,350 (N)
SEO	1	£41,600 (N), £45,600 (L)
G7	2	£57,000(N), £61,000 (L)

N = National, L = London

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Departments must be able to justify why, in any appointment, it has not been possible to select someone on merit through a fair and open competition. The Civil Service Recruitment Principles set out the circumstances in which appointments can be made as Exceptions to Fair and Open Merit-based appointments.

Between 4th July and 4th October 2024, the Home Office made 109 appointments by exception to the Civil Service Commission's published Recruitment Principles:

- 78 were made under Exception 1 for temporary appointments;
- 27 were made under Exception 10 for conversion to permanency of suitable candidates appointed under Exception 1 above, and Exception 2 (support for government employment programmes);
- Two were made under Exception 3 for secondments; and
- Two were made under Exception 5 for the appointment of former civil servants.

The roles appointed during the period requested were to grades AA to Grade7. Below is a summary of the salary bands for these appointments by grade and number of roles.

GRADE	NUMBER	PAY BAND
Intern	17	£22,446
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